

History

Enquiry: How was Baghdad connected to the wider world?

The Islamic Golden Age

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A centre of learning

Baghdad became hugely rich and powerful thanks to its location on the Silk Road. The caliphs also wanted the city to become a centre of learning. They invited well educated and intelligent people to move to Baghdad. We call these people **scholars**. Baghdad's scholars came from all over the world and were paid well even if they were not Muslim.



The work of scholars

These scholars translated very old texts about science and philosophy into Arabic. They did their work in a place called the House of Wisdom. Some of these texts were lost in Europe for centuries and the only reason we have them today is because of the scholars in Baghdad.



A centre of books

Baghdad became a city full of libraries and bookshops. From China, people in Baghdad learnt how to make paper and to print using wood blocks. This meant that all the learning that happened in the House of Wisdom was made available for others to read.



Thousands of books

By the end of the 10th century, there were over a hundred book sellers. Historians have found a list of books in one library that ran to the thousands! Meanwhile in Europe, very few people could read or write, and the only books to be made were copies of the Bible and lives of holy people.



The spread of knowledge

Scholars in the Muslim world made huge advances in many different areas of learning. For example, they developed a new way of counting, including the idea of zero. They also developed the science of astronomy: one scholar worked out that the Earth and the planets revolve around the Sun, not the other way round.



Medical advances

There were also big advances in medicine and how the human body worked. One scholar worked out how the eye and the brain were connected, while others worked out how to make childbirth less dangerous.



Comprehension Questions

1. Who did the caliphs invite to Baghdad?
2. What did these people do?
3. What did people in Baghdad learn to do from China?
4. What was the difference between Europe and the Islamic world at this time?
5. What advances did scholars in Baghdad make?

