

History

Enquiry: How was Baghdad connected to the wider world?

The Decline of the Abbasid Caliphate

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End of the Golden Age

For a while, the Islamic world was united and a peaceful place. As a result, it gradually grew in wealth. However in the first half of the ninth century this started to change. There was a war between two brothers for the role of caliph. This caused a lot of problems for people living in the empire. Then, the fighting with the Eastern Roman Empire, known as Byzantium, became more serious. Major battles were fought throughout the ninth century which weakened both sides.



Too big to run

The Abbasid Caliphate was huge, stretching from Spain in the West to India in the East, and took it months to travel across it. The caliphs gave lots of power to local men because they couldn't run it all themselves. This worked for a while, but by the end of the ninth century, the caliphs in Baghdad were finding it difficult to hold their huge empire together.



New challenges

In the east, they faced a major challenge from Persian families who wanted more independence. Another region to break away from Baghdad was North Africa. Here a powerful family called the Fatimids took control.



Fight for control

Baghdad remained the most important city in the Muslim world for many years. Because it was so important there was lots of fighting between different groups of people who wanted to control the city.



Fight for control

In the 9th century, a group from Persia took power in Baghdad. Then in the 10th century, a tribe from Central Asia called the Seljuks seized power. In 1157, they laid siege to Baghdad, causing much damage to the city. A century later, the Mongols did the same, causing even more damage. After the Mongol attack, Baghdad never fully recovered.



Glossary

A caliph: The man in charge of the Islamic Empire.

Byzantium: The name of the Eastern Roman Empire.

Persia: An area in the eastern part of the Islamic world.



Comprehension Questions

1. What did two brothers do that caused problems for the caliphate?
2. What did the caliphs in Baghdad do to control their empire?
3. Which was the first region to break away from the Abbasid Caliphate?
4. Who attacked Baghdad in 1157?
5. Who attacked Baghdad in 1258?

