

A Brief History of Islam

The Time Before Islam

The Arabian Peninsula before Islam has been a trading route in Silk Route which connected the Indo-European region to Asia in the east. Most of the Arabs back then believed in pagan deities and some of them were Jewish and Christian. Mecca was the sacred place for the Arabs back then, there were statues of the pagan idols, Zamzam Lake, and the most important of all was Ka'bah. The society in pre-Islamic era known as The *Jahiliyah*, meaning ignorant people. The ignorant does not mean in terms of their intelligence, but the moral of them.

Pre-Islamic Arab

Islam begin in 611 A.D. when the first revelation revealed to the last apostle of Islam, the prophet Mohammed bin Abdullah in the cave of Hira, Saudi Arabia. Mohammed was born in Mecca in 12 Rabi' al-Awwal in 571 A.D. (known as The Year of Elephant). He was born among the Quraisy tribe amidst the Jahiliyah people whose tradition includes fighting the neighbouring tribes and worshipping idols. The Quraisy was a tribe well-known for of their love for poetry. They recite poetry in social gathering.

Mohammed was born orphaned, his father died when he was in his mother's womb. When he was 6 years old, his mom, Aminah passed away. He was raised by his grandfather Abdul Muthalib and later with his uncle Abu Talib, after his mother's demise.

Mohammed later married a widow named Siti Khadijah and live a humble life. Mohammed's first sign of revelation was when he was 40 years old, revealed by the angel Gabriel. He preached the revelation in private to his small circle of friends for 3 years. Then he began to preached it openly to the citizen of Mecca albeit the diverse response from them.

In 622A.D., Mohammed and his followers moved to Medina. The event when Mohammed and his followers immigrated to Medina known as the *Hijrah* and thus begin the calculation of Islamic lunar calendar.

In Medina, Mohammed unified the Ansar (indigenous tribe of Medina) and the Muhajirin (Meccan immigrants), thus strengthen the Islam's solidarity. Muslims troops always triumphed in every wars against the *kafir* (infidels/non-believer of Islam).

In the earliest phase of the da'wah (Mohammed's preaching of Islam), the war between the believer and non-believer were inevitable. The diplomatic advantage Mohammed gained from the treaty of *Hudabaiyah*, caused the muslims to enter the crucial phase. Many residents of Mecca who had previously rejected Islam, along with the conquest of Mecca by Mohammed and his army, converted to Islam, resulting in no bloodshed happened. By the time of Mohammed's death, the entire Arabian Peninsula have already accepted Islam.

The Rashidin Caliphate

The Rashidin Caliphate (*Khulafaur Rasyidin*) also known as The Good Government, began with the leadership of Abu Bakar then continued by Umar bin Khattab, Utsman bin Affan and Ali bin Abu Thalib. At this time Islam has reached the political and economic stability. Abu Bakr strengthen the foundation's of Islamic statehood and had overcome rebellions by Arabi tribes after the death of Mohammed. Umar bin Khattab, Utsman bin Affan and Ali bin Abu Thalib had succeeded leading the army of muslims to spread the teaching of Islam to Syria, Egypt and Iraq.

The Next Caliphate

After the Rashidin Caliphate, Islamic leadership passed down to the leader figure known by many names such as "*Khilafah*", "*Amirul mukminin*", or "*Sultan*". Later the Khilafah were no longer appointed a competent person best suited for the leadership, but passed down from generation to generation in one dynasty ("*Bani*" in Arabic) therefore making it recognized as monarch; like the caliphate of Bani Umayyah, Bani Abbasiyyah, to Bani Utsmaniyyah.

The enormous power of the Islamic Caliphate has made it one of the strongest and most powerful political forces in the world at that time. The emergence of schools of that taught its pupils religion, sciences, philosophy and Arabic in various regions of the Islamic world, have created a legacy of the peak of Islamic history.

Many well-known scientists emerged from various Islamic countries, especially in the golden age of Islam around the 7th century to the 13th century A.D.

The vast territory of the spread of Islam and the splitting of the caliphate in the 8th century, led to the rise of Islamic empire across the world in the form of Sultanate (empire in Arabic) some of them were Safawi Sultanate, Seljuk Sultanate, Mughal Sultanate, Samudera Pasai Sultanate and Malacca Sultanate, their legacy have big influences on their respective countries up until today. Despite being miles away from the centre of caliphate in the Middle East, the sultanates still consider themselves part of the Islamic caliphate.

In the 18th and 19th Century, some Islam colonies fell into the hands of European. The Uthmaniyyah Sultanate (Ottoman Empire), considered to be the last Islamic caliphate, collapsed after World War I. Sultan Mohammed V who led the Ottoman empire back then was deemed less assertive by Turkish youth movement led by Mustafa Kemal Pasha or Kemal Attaturk who reformed the khilafah system and replaced with republic.

The Islamic Faith

The basic belief of Islam lies in the *shahādātāin* ("two sentences of testimony") for a person to be a muslims he/she first has to utter the *shahadah* by saying "*Laa ilaha illallah, Mohammdar Rasulullah*" - which means "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is the messenger of Allah". If someone believes and recite the *shahadah*, it means that he/she is considered a Muslim or a *Mualaf* (a person who has just converted to Islam from his old belief).

Muslims believe that Allah revealed the Koran to Mohammed as *Khataman Nabiyyin* (The Last of the Prophets) meaning there will be no more prophets after Muhammad and Muhammad is the last of prophets that closed the long list of the Abrahamic religion's prophets; and consider the Koran and the *Sunnah* (Mohammed's every word and deed) to be the fundamental sources of Islam. The muslim did not regard Mohammed as the founder of a new religion, but as a reformer of the monotheistic faith of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and other prophets who preached the teaching of Abrahamic religion. Islamic tradition asserts that Judaism and Christianity have distorted the revelations that God gave to these prophets by changing texts or introducing false interpretations, or both.

Muslims also believe that the Koran is the holy book and their way of life that was conveyed by Allah to Mohammed through the angel Gabriel and with the perfect messages—the words of God and there's no doubt in it (Al-Baqarah [2]:2). Allah also promised to keep

the authenticity of the Qur'an until the end of time in a verse. As stated in the Koran, Muslims are also required to believe in the holy book and God's words that were revealed before the Koran through the previous prophets and apostles from The Book of Psalm, Torah, The Gospel and the preaching of other prophets, to be true.

Muslims also believe that apart from the Koran, all previous words of Allah have been changed by humans. Muslims believe that the Koran is the only truly original book of Allah and as a complement to the previous Abrahamic scriptures. Muslims also believe that the religion practiced by all the prophets—messengers of Allah's messenger since the time of Adam is a monotheistic religion, thus of course Abraham also practiced monotheism in a *Hanif* (The Pure Faith) then made him automatically a Muslim.

This view puts Islam together with Judaism and Christianity in a religious family that believes in Prophet Abraham. In the Qur'an, Jews and Christians are often referred to as *Ahlul Kitab* or The People of the Book.

Almost all Muslims belong to one of the two largest schools of thought, Sunni (85%) and Shia (15%). Islam is the predominant religion throughout the Middle East, as well as in parts of Africa and Asia. Large communities are also found in China, the Balkan Peninsula in Eastern Europe and Russia. There are also large communities of Muslim immigrants in other parts of the world, such as Western Europe. About 20% of Muslims live in Arab countries, 30% in the Indian subcontinent and 15.6% in Indonesia—the largest population-based Muslim country. The countries with the majority of Sunni Muslims are Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, while the countries with the majority of Shia Islam are Iran and Iraq.

The doctrine between Sunnis and Shiites differs on the issue of *Imamat* (leadership) and the placement of *Ahlul Bait* (a family of descendants of Mohammed). However, in general, both Sunnis and Shi'ites believe in the two basic principles of Islam, The 5 Pillars of Islam and the 6 Pillars of Faith, although with different terminology.

Today there are an estimated 1,250 million to 1.4 billion Muslims scattered throughout the world. Around 18% live in Arab countries, 20% in Africa, 20% in Southeast Asia, 30% in South Asia, namely Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. The largest Muslim population in a country can be found in Indonesia. Muslim populations can also be found in significant numbers in the People's Republic of China, the United States, Europe, Central Asia and Russia.

The growth of Muslims themselves is believed to reach 2.9% per year, while world population growth is only 2.3%. This magnitude makes Islam a religion with the fastest growing adherents in the world. Some opinions attribute this growth to high birth rates in many Islamic countries (six of the ten countries in the world with the highest birth rates in the world are Muslim-majority countries). However, recently, a demographic study has shown that the birth rate of Muslim countries is decreasing to the level of Western countries.

Conclusion

Islam is the last religion of Abrahamic faith

Prophet : Mohammed (peace be upon him)

Holy Scriptures: Al-Qur'an

Muslim houses of worship called mosques.

Worship that is usually performed at the mosque includes congregational prayers, religious lectures, Islamic holiday celebrations, religious discussions, Koran study, etc.