The Spread of Islam

Islam emerged in Arabia in the 600s A.D. and grew into a major world religion.

- Muhammad was the founder of Islam. He was both a political and a religious leader.
- The early leaders of Islam built large empires. Many of the people they conquered became followers of Islam, or Muslims.
- Later, through trade, Islam spread into regions that were not ruled by Muslims.

What's Islam?

Islam is a religion based on the teachings of Muhammad, who was a prophet. Muslims believe that he was a messenger of Allah, the god of the Islamic faith. The term 'Islam' means submission to Allah. It is the most widely practiced religion today.

![Map of the Spread of Islamic Empires](image)

- **622** Muhammad's journey to Medina begins the spread of Islam.
- **661** Capital moves from Medina to Damascus, later to Baghdad.
- **732** Franks stop Muslim advance. (See page 67.)
- **751** Muslims prevent Chinese conquest of Islamic lands.

Islam first expanded through military conquest. The rulers of the Islamic Empires were also religious leaders.
After 850 the Islamic Empire had begun to lose power, but Islam continued to spread. Muslim traders introduced Islamic culture into China, Southeast Asia, and Africa.

1. After 850, Islam also spreads by trade and conversion.

2. By 1500, many Muslims live outside Muslim-rulled lands.

Mecca, the birthplace of Muhammad, is one of the holy cities of Islam. Traveling to Mecca to pray is a religious duty for Muslims.