Lesson 3 Muslim Rule in Spain

BEFORE YOU READ
In Lesson 1 you read about how, after the Abbasids took power, Umayyad leader Abd al-Rahman escaped to Spain. In this lesson you will learn how Abd al-Rahman and his successors built a new Umayyad kingdom on the Iberian Peninsula.

AS YOU READ
Use a chart like the one below to note the issues and problems that Abd al-Rahman III faced when he came to power and how he responded to them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues and Problems</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal revolts</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attacks from Christian forces to the north</td>
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<tr>
<td>Threats from North Africa</td>
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The Return of the Umayyad
(pages 131-132)

How did the Umayyads create a strong Muslim kingdom on the Iberian Peninsula?
When Abd al-Rahman came to Spain, he united the many Muslim groups fighting for control. Then he attacked and defeated the ruling factions. In 756 he declared himself ruler of Al-Andalus, Muslim Spain. He made Córdoba the capital of his kingdom. When news of his success reached Abbasid lands to the east, many Muslims loyal to the Umayyads came to Spain. Their support gave Abd al-Rahman greater control of the government and army. By the time he died in 788, the kingdom of al-Andalus was strong and united.

The kingdom reached the height of its power during the rule of Abd al-Rahman III. He strengthened Umayyad rule by overcoming internal revolts and attacks by Christian forces. He kept firm control by building a strong bureaucracy and a huge standing army. Many of his fighters were non-Muslims. They were mercenaries, or soldiers paid to fight.

1. What changes did the Umayyads bring to Spain?

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The Glory of Córdoba

How did Córdoba become a thriving economic and cultural center under the Umayyads?

By 1000, Córdoba was the largest city in Western Europe. The city’s growth was based on its thriving economy. Under Umayyad rule, the city became a center of industry and trade. Craftworkers in the city’s workshops produced silk, leather, carpets, and other goods. Merchants sold these goods throughout Europe and as far away as Central Asia and India. Farming flourished in the countryside around the city.

During the 1000s and 1100s Córdoba also became a major center for culture and learning. It had libraries with thousands of books. Muslim scholars translated many books into Latin. In time, Christian scholars in other parts of Europe read these books. The city’s leaders encouraged respected Muslim scholars from Baghdad to come to al-Andalus. They brought fresh ideas and new ways of learning.

2. What made Córdoba a great city during Umayyad rule?

A Golden Age in the West

What cultural developments took place during the golden age in al-Andalus?

A golden age of culture developed in al-Andalus in the 1000s and 1100s. Scholars made key contributions to mathematics, astronomy, geography, medicine, and philosophy. They used mathematics to create accurate calendars. In astronomy, they created tables to show where the planets were located at various times of the year. They also built instruments to view the skies and a planetarium with planets that moved.

A scholar named al-Idrisi contributed to the study of geography. In 1154 he completed an encyclopedia of geographic knowledge with maps and descriptions of many world regions.

In medicine, doctors in al-Andalus wrote medical studies on relations between doctors and patients and on ways to treat diseases. In the late 900s, a doctor named al-Zahrawi wrote a medical encyclopedia on everything from surgery to the care of teeth. Ibn Rushd, another doctor, contributed to philosophy. His studies of Greek thinkers Plato and Aristotle were translated into Latin. They helped reintroduce Greek philosophy to Europe.

Under Umayyad rule, Jews in Spain were welcomed, not persecuted. They contributed greatly to the golden age in al-Andalus. Some held high government offices or acted as advisers to Muslim rulers. The brilliant Jewish scholar Maimonides made contributions to the understanding of science, medicine, religion, and philosophy.

By the early 1200s, the golden age had ended. Different factions fought for control of al-Andalus. Other groups broke away and formed their own smaller kingdoms. In time, Christian forces slowly regained control of the Iberian Peninsula.

3. Why are the 1000s and 1100s a golden age in Al-Andalus?