



BAGHDAD 900AD KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



Diagram – Baghdad c.900-1200









The City Structure of Baghdad c.900-1200AD

The city was known as 'The Round City.' It was built as two giant semicircles with a mosque at the centre. It housed the caliph's palace, government and military buildings. Residential areas for common people was outside the city walls.

Early Baghdad Overview

- The Abbasid Caliphate, under the Caliph al-Mansur, moved the capital of the Muslim world to 'Madinat al Salam' in 762 AD.
- It later became Baghdad.
- It is estimated that between c.900-1200, the population reached between 1.2 and 2 million people (the largest city in the world at the time).
- It was a world centre of learning, including the 'House of Wisdom', which attracted many scholars from all around the world.
- At this time, Islamic law and Arabic grammar were standardised.
- The city was destroyed by Mongols in 1258.

Prominent Figures in Early Baghdad

 <p>Caliph Al-Mansur - 714-775 AD</p> <p>Al-Mansur was the second Abbasid Caliph, who reigned from 754 to 775CE. He is often thought of as the first real founder of the Abbasid Caliphate, for his role in growing and stabilizing the dynasty's rule. He is known for founding the 'Round City' of Madinat Al-Salam (now known as Baghdad). Al-Mansur assassinated several of his rivals to strengthen his reign, for example the powerful army commander Abu Muslim.</p>	 <p>Al-Farabi – c.872-950/951 AD</p> <p>Al-Farabi (known throughout the west as Alfarabius) was a well-known philosopher, who added a great deal of knowledge to the fields of politics, ethics, and logic. He was also a well-respected scientist, mathematician, and cosmologist. He is credited with preserving a number of original Greek texts through the middle ages. He also influenced many other famed philosophers, for example Avicenna and Maimonides.</p>
 <p>Ibn al-Haytham – c.965-c.1040 AD</p> <p>Hasan Ibn al-Haytham was an Arab mathematician, astronomer, and scientist of the Islamic Golden Age. He is sometimes referred to as the 'Father of Modern Optics' due to his contributions to the understanding of how humans and animals see. He was the first to identify that light bounces off an object and then travels to the eye. He was also the first to point out that vision occurs in the brain, not the eyes.</p>	 <p>Avicenna – 980-1037 AD</p> <p>Avicenna (also known as Ibn Sina or Ibn Ali Sina) was one of the most important physicians and scientists of the Islamic Golden Age, and also one of the most important people in early modern medicine. We wrote around 450 works, of which 240 have survived until the present day. He wrote two famous encyclopedias: <i>The Book of Healing</i> and <i>The Canon of Medicine</i>, the latter of which was used as standard at medical universities until 1650.</p>
 <p>Al-Tabari – 839-923 AD</p> <p>Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari was a scholar and historian, who composed all of his works in Arabic. He is best known for his knowledge of world history and understanding of the Qur'an, however he also wrote about subjects as diverse as poetry, grammar and mathematics. He was exceptionally gifted – he memorized the Qur'an at the age of 7 and was a prayer leader by 8!</p>	 <p>Al-Jahiz – 776-868/9 AD</p> <p>Al-Jahiz was an Arabic prose writer and author of works of literature and political/ religious texts. He was born into a poor family, however this did not stop him from gaining an insatiable appetite for learning. He became extremely knowledgeable about history and the sciences, amongst other topics. He wrote over 200 texts, of which around 30 are still in existence today.</p>

Places, Events, and Daily Life in Early Baghdad

House of Wisdom		The House of Wisdom was a large library and intellectual centre throughout the Abbasid period during the Islamic Golden Age. It housed rare books, and was a leading location for translating old Greek texts into Arabic.	Where? Within the walls of the Round City (no longer in existence)	Key Fact: Scholars from all over the world moved to Baghdad to study in the House of Wisdom.
The Four Gates		The city had four gates: Bab al-Kufa, Bab al-Sham, Bab al-Khorasan and Bab al-Basra. The walls and gates were designed to protect the city from foreign invasions. The most important buildings were all placed inside the gates.	Where? Four equidistant points around the city walls.	Key Fact: The four gates were all eventually destroyed, and new ones built elsewhere.
The Golden Gate Palace		At the centre of the city stood the two finest buildings, the Golden Gate Palace and The Great Mosque. Surrounding the palace was a promenade, where only the caliph was allowed, riding on horseback.	Where? Centre of the Round City (no longer in existence)	Key Fact: In the central part of the building was a dome 39 metres high.
The Tigris River		The Round City was built alongside the River Tigris. It is the easternmost of the two great rivers that define the Mesopotamia region. The river granted easy access to traders and travellers to and from the Persian Sea.	Where? Runs from southeastern mountains of Turkey to Persian Gulf.	Key Fact: The Tigris is about 1,750km long!
Founding the City		The city was founded by the caliph Al-Mansur, with the intention of creating a new capital; after defeating the Umayyads, the Caliphate wanted to rule from his own seat.	How? Al-Mansur used thousands of engineers, surveyors, carpenters and blacksmiths.	Key Fact: Al-Mansur consulted astrologers before beginning construction!
Siege of Baghdad		The Siege of Baghdad lasted from January 29 th until February 10 th , 1258. Led by Hulagu Khan (brother of the ruler, Mongke) the Mongols held a 12 day siege of the city. The caliph, Al Musta'sim, then surrendered. The Mongols executed Al Musta'sim, destroyed the city, and massacred citizens. The event is considered the end of the Islamic Golden Age.	How? The caliph's complacency appears to have cost him. His soldiers were ill-prepared, and others from across the caliph did not arrive to rescue the city.	Key Fact: Mongke had planned to spare the city, until Al Musta'sim refused to submit to his power and provide troops to help him!
Farming		The gathering of new minds meant an increase in agricultural knowledge and techniques. The introduction of new crops and foods signalled a sharp rise in population growth.	How? Islamic scientific knowledge aided the developments.	Key Fact: Every June, farming stopped as the Nile flooded.
Literacy		Literacy was highly valued – people were expected to learn Arabic so that they could read the Qur'an. The spread of literacy meant that ideas could now reach a wider audience.	How? The rise of using paper helped to share texts.	Key Fact: The numbers system we use now was perfected at this time.
Clothes		Both Islamic beliefs, and protection from the sun, required people to cover up their bodies (particularly women). Long, loose, cool clothing was therefore worn, made from cloth and linen.	How? Cloth wrapped around the head as a turban protected people from the sun.	Key Fact: Silk was first used in this area throughout this period.
Health		Hospitals of the time treated all patients without charge, and provided them with accommodation until they were cured. Studies of the anatomy led to improvements in surgical techniques.	How? They used the scalpel and cat to open and sew wounds.	Key Fact: Modern hospitals have their origins in hospitals of this period.
Art and Design		Islamic art and design flourished throughout this period. Complex geometric designs were fashionable, including tessellating patterns on roof and floors. Notable developments were also made in ceramics and calligraphy.	Why? Islamic decoration avoids using figures, so focuses on patterns.	Key Fact: Beautifully designed gardens with water features cooled the city.

Early Baghdad Timeline

750AD – Abbasid dynasty becomes the rulers of the Muslim Empire

762 AD – Caliph Al Mansur founds the city of Baghdad. Construction begins.

706-809 AD – House of Wisdom and Baghdad hospital are founded.

950 AD – Al-Farabi, philosopher and resident of Baghdad for most of his life, dies.

1021 AD – Ibn al-Haytham publishes his book of optics. Many scholars live in Baghdad.

1037 AD – Death of Avicenna, who made important discoveries about disease.

1055 AD - Baghdad captured by Seljuk Turks.

1096 AD– Crusades begin.

1258 AD – Mongols sack Baghdad.