The fundamental difference between Sunni and Shi’a is their acceptance or denial of Mu’awiya as a caliph. Mu’awiya succeeded ‘Ali ibn abi Talib after his assassination. Sunnis accept this succession and the consecutive caliphs after him. Shi’as, on the other hand, believe that ‘Ali was the rightful caliph and only his descendants should follow him, refuting Mu’awiya as caliph.

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From the mid-eighth century, during the Abbassid period, the world witnessed a “scientific renaissance”. The translation movement, where scholars were sent around the world to gather and translate books into Arabic, was the starting point. Knowledge about mathematics, medicine, and engineering became crucial to running a successful empire. Math was used in administrative work, primarily in calculating taxes. Architectural, and mathematical, knowledge was vital for constructing monuments and buildings, and medicine was learned for the well-being of the elite.

In mathematics, one caliph was particularly known for his contributions: Caliph Al-Ma’mun, who greatly funded a wide range of scientific research. Al-Ma’mun was deeply interested in map-making, and the need to know direction to Mecca (Qibla) led him to question how big the earth actually was. He used measuring techniques inherited from the Greeks to estimate the earth’s circumference, but his method was unreliable as the measuring of distance involved counting paces between one place and the other.

A new measuring technique was required, and one was proposed by Abu-Rayhan Al-Biruni. The success of the translation movement provided him with basic mathematical and scientific knowledge that enabled him to figure out a technique to measure the circumference. His technique was 99% accurate.

As the Abbassid Empire expanded, trading boomed and alchemy practices flourished. Abdel-Malik, with the help of alchemists, created a common currency to be used to trading. The coin-making was an example of how people turned magical practices, like alchemy, into practical chemistry. Other inventions using chemistry also included soap-making, glass-making, colors and dyes, perfume-making, and weaponry.

Afterwards, scientists continued to create new forms of reliable knowledge that took rules and theories and applied them to daily life practices. Experimentations turned abstract theories into concrete practical science, and were the first steps in a new direction of science, ultimately leading to today’s scientific knowledge.

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The following are changes that influenced women and non-Muslim minorities, such as Jews and Christians, during and after the Arab conquests.