

The Third and Fourth Caliphs

With the election of the third caliph, Uthman ibn Affan, came the first serious tensions within the Islamic community. Although a Muslim, Uthman's family, the Umayyads, had initially opposed Muhammad, and some followers resented his leadership. Despite spreading the forces of Islam through Egypt and into Northern Africa, (see map below) opposition to Uthman grew. Finally, in 659 CE Uthman was assassinated, slain by the sword of an enemy.

The Fourth Caliph was Ali ibn Abi Talib, the son of Muhammad's uncle, Abu Talib. Ali was the second convert to Islam and had waited forty-six years to succeed Muhammad, a position he felt he deserved. In fact, Ali's followers believed it was God's will that only those belonging to the lineage of Muhammad should rule the Muslim community. Soon civil strife began between Ali and Uthman's remaining family, led by Mu'awiyah, Muslim governor of Syria. Rather than destroy his enemies, Ali chose negotiations, a decision which infuriated his fundamentalist followers. They formed a group, the Kharijites, who were responsible for the stabbing death of Ali in 661 CE. Ali was the last caliph who knew Muhammad personally.

The Orthodox Caliphs		
Islamic Calendar	Caliphs	Gregorian Calendar
11-13 AH	Abu Bakr	632-634 Ce
13-23	Umar	634-644
23-35	Uthman	644-656
35-41	Ali	656-661

The Spread of Islam 644-661 CE

