

# Astronomy

Before Islam, the Arabs had no scientific astronomy. Their knowledge was limited to the division of the year into precise periods on the basis of the rising and setting of certain stars.

Throughout Muslim history, Muslims have needed to know the times of the daily prayers that depend on the sun's position, the direction of Holy Kaaba from every geographical location and the moon's cycle for the Muslim lunar calendar. From these motivations, Muslims made astounding discoveries such as the first record of a star system outside our own galaxy and the third inequality of the moon's motion. They also developed instruments that laid the foundation for modern-day astronomy.

Muslims were not the first to study astronomy but they were the first to do it on a large scale, with massive instruments in observatories, building on ancient Greek ideas. Caliph Al-Ma'mun, who ruled Baghdad from 813 C.E. to 833 C.E., was the first person to set up observatories in history, giving astronomy the patronage to become a major science.

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