

Islamic Caliphates

Context: What led up to this?

- Islam began with Muhammad's revelation through his visit from the Angel Gabriel in a cave outside of Mecca in 610 CE
- The *umma* (community of believers) grew under Muhammad as he spread his revelation (the word of God, especially the belief in one god)
- Muhammad and his followers were driven from Mecca, went to Yathrib (later called Medina) in 622- this journey was called the *hijrah* and marks Year 1 in the Islamic community since this is where we see Muslims come together bound by faith.
- Resistance to Muhammad's message necessitated the development of an army to ensure the faith survived (*jihad of the sword*)
- Muhammad's army took Mecca and destroyed the idols at the kaaba in 630, unifying Mecca under Islam and marking a break from the past and the beginning of a new future

Context: What led up to this?

- The Prophet Muhammad died in 632 CE. This created a crisis within the Islamic community- who would become the next *caliph* (successor) to lead the young Islamic Empire?
- Resulted in a difference in opinion which led to the Sunni-Shi'a split (branches within Islam).
- Sunni chose Abu Bakr, Muhammad's close friend, while the Shi'a wanted Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law.
- The Sunni majority named Abu Bakr first caliph.

The Four “Rightly Guided” Caliphs

- The first four caliphs (successors) after Muhammad’s death in 632 were called the “Rightly Guided” caliphs because they had all known Muhammad and followed in his example and by the Quran.
- Their rule was known as a *caliphate*.
- They expanded the empire rapidly, extending the faith to new peoples. They invoked jihad (defensive jihad, or *jihad of the sword*) against non-believers who tried to resist their expansion. Once the empire was established, they demonstrated tolerance to conquered peoples. Conquered peoples were able to continue worshipping their respective faiths, but had to pay a tax called the *jizya* to be exempt from military service.

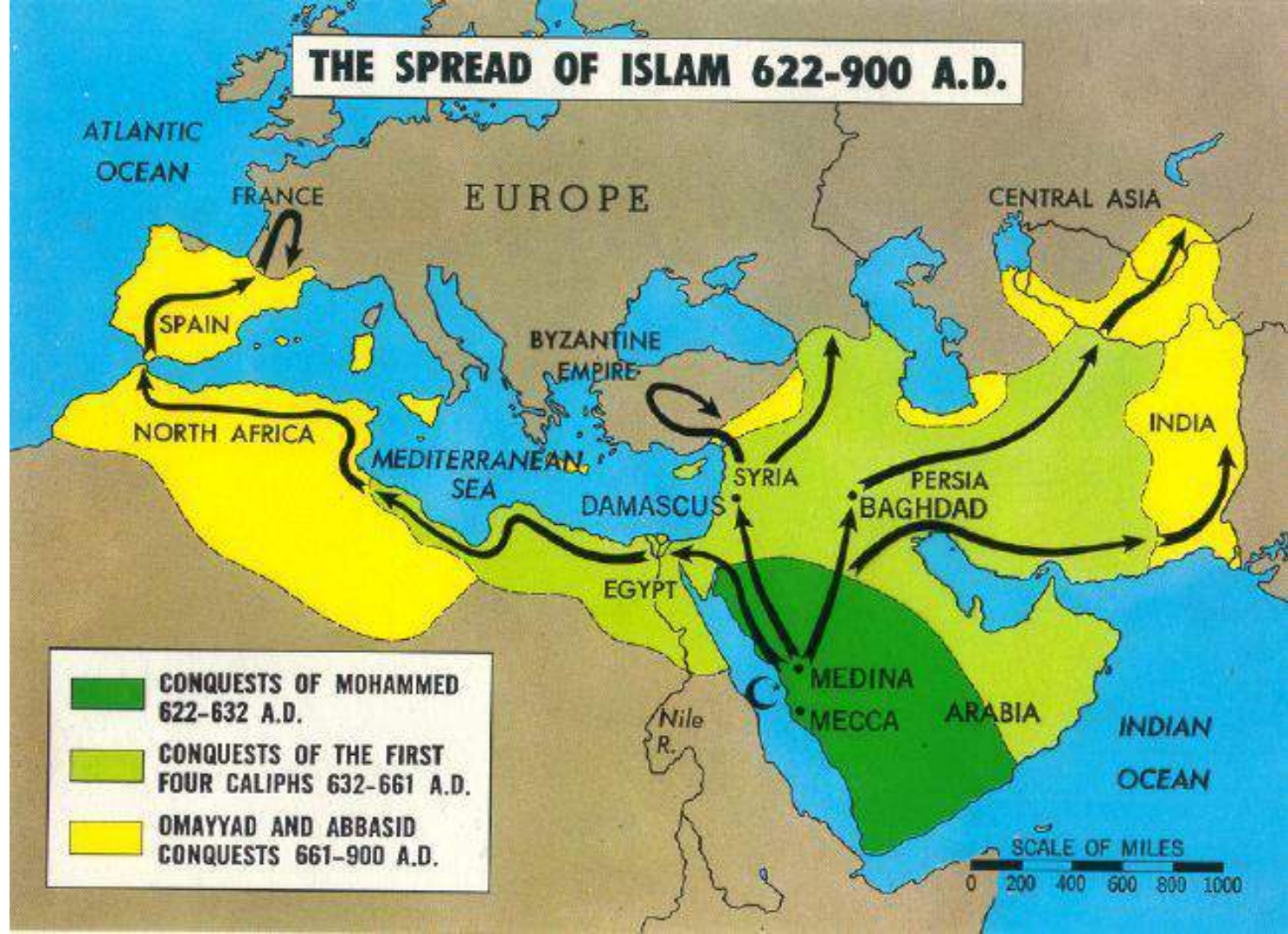
The Four “Rightly Guided” Caliphs

The order of the first four caliphs:

- Abu Bakr (632-634)
- Umar (634- 644)
- Uthman (644-656)- was assassinated
- Ali (656-661)- was assassinated

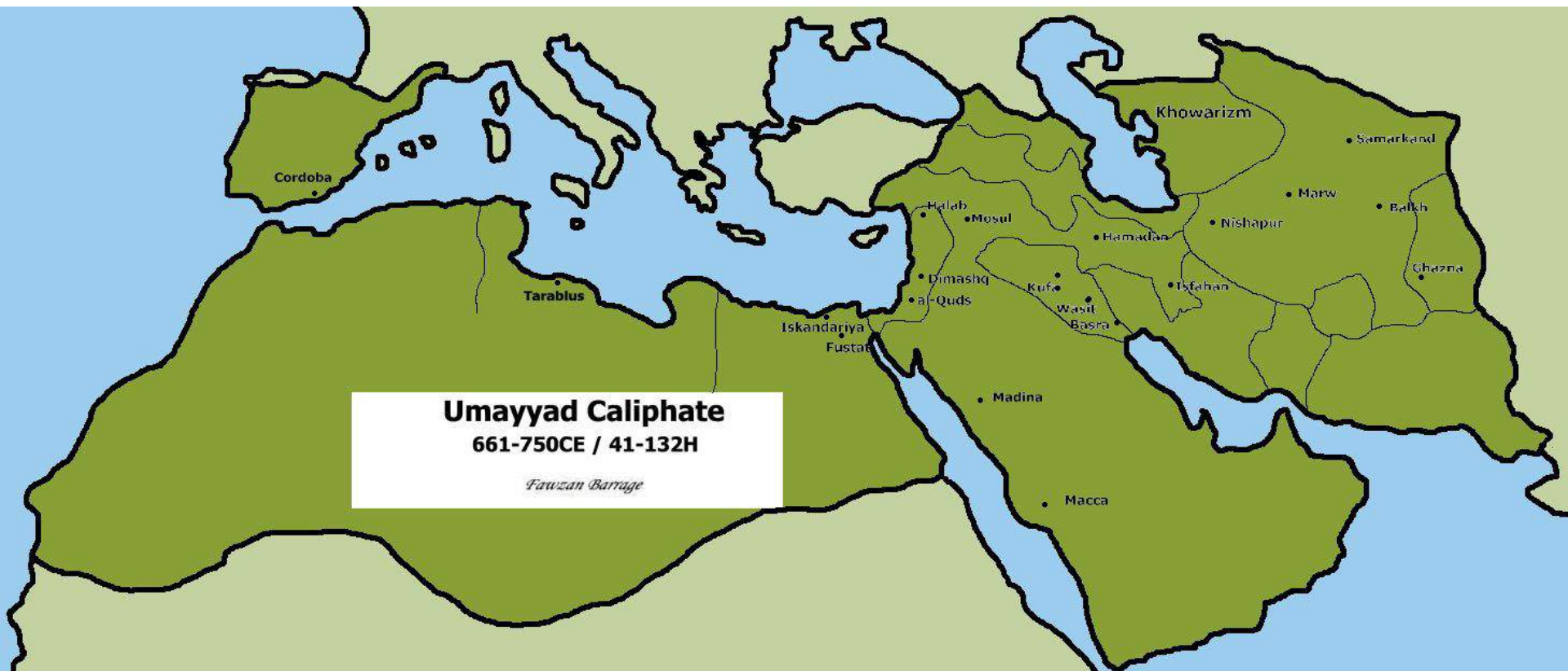
*After Ali was assassinated, the elective system of choosing caliph (taken from ancient tribal custom where the community elects a leader) ended.

THE SPREAD OF ISLAM 622-900 A.D.



The Umayyad Caliphate (661-750)

- The Umayyad family (dynasty) took over rule of the Islamic Empire after the death of Ali
- Moved the capital of the empire from Mecca to Damascus (Syria)- easier to control conquered lands
- Arab Muslims felt it was too far from their lands
- Umayyads abandoned the simple life of devotion of earlier caliphs- began to surround themselves with wealth and ceremony similar to other civilizations
- Furthered the Sunni-Shi'a split: Sunni were OK with Umayyad rule, the Shi'a were not- felt the Umayyads were too distant from Muhammad (remember, they wanted caliphs that were related to Muhammad)
- Serious religious and political opposition to the Umayyad Caliphate led to its downfall- rebel groups overthrew the Umayyads by 750. The most powerful of those groups, the Abbasids, took control and created a new dynasty



Umayyad Caliphate
661-750CE / 41-132H
Fawzan Barrage

The Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258)

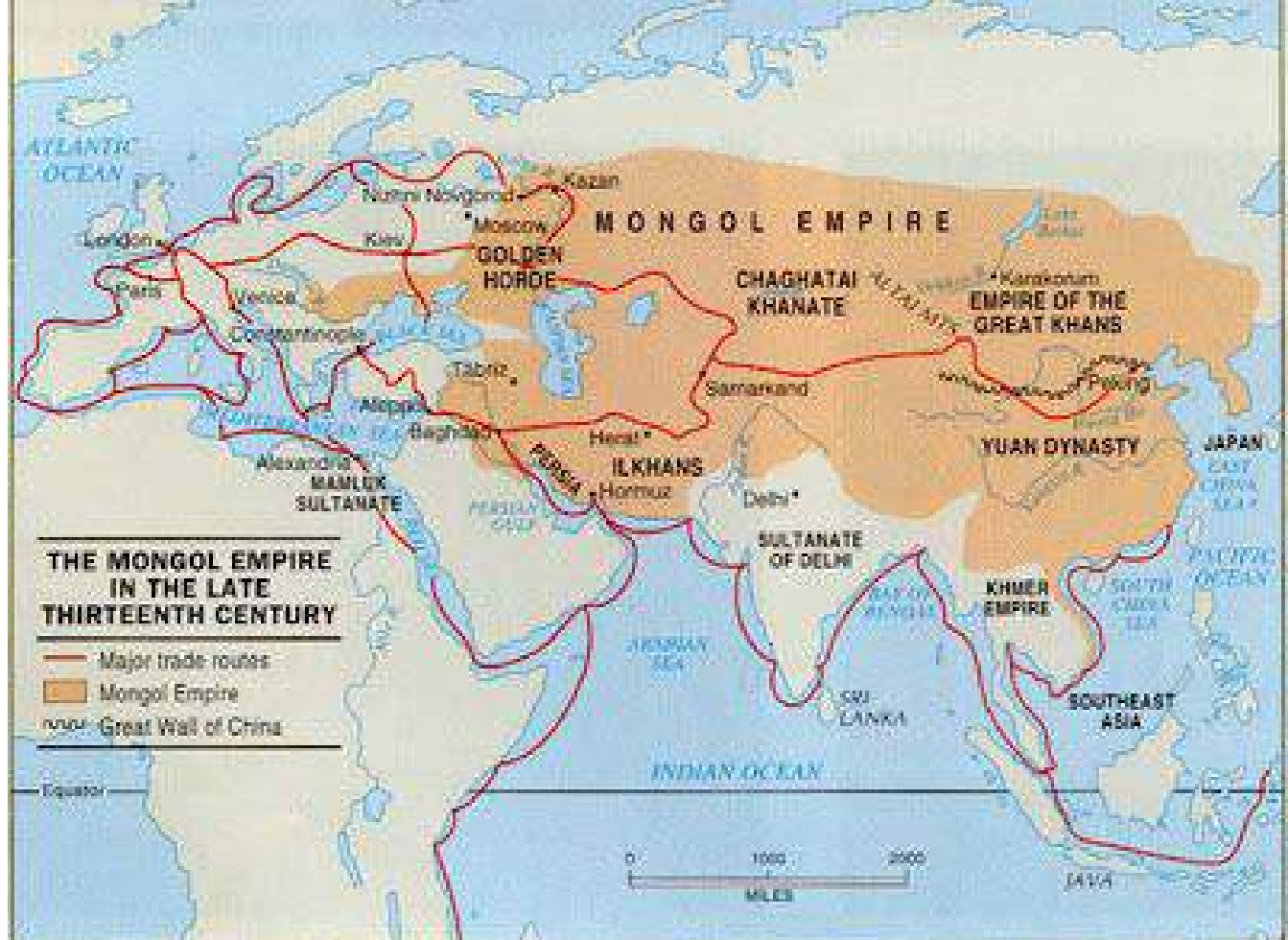
- Murdered the remaining Umayyad rulers when they took power- one Umayyad, a prince named Abd al-Rahman, fled to Spain, where he set up a new Umayyad caliphate (centered at Cordoba)
- The Abbasids moved the capital to Baghdad, mainly due to proximity to trade routes
- Developed a bureaucracy to manage the business of the empire
- Failed to keep complete political control of the huge empire: independent Muslim states sprang up, and local leaders dominated many smaller regions.
- Still, the smaller caliphates were connected to the Abbasids through religion, language, and trade.



The Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258)

- Presided over the Islamic golden age- a culture of knowledge thrived in Baghdad
- Wealth from trade enabled the Abbasids to build luxurious cities and support the scientists, mathematicians, and philosophers their cities attracted.
- Ended with Mongol expansion in 1258

The Mongols ended Abbasid rule.



The Mongols extended their hegemony over a major part of the Eurasian landmass, from the Danube to the Pacific for the better part of two centuries.

Why did Islam Expand?

- Desire to spread the faith to new places
- Desire to control key trade routes