



The rise of Islam in the seventh century CE



See p. 24 of the Syllabus:

- ❖ pre-Islamic Arabia as the historical and cultural context for the development of Islam
- ❖ what we know of the life of the Prophet Muhammed
- ❖ the development of Islam in this early era, under the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs

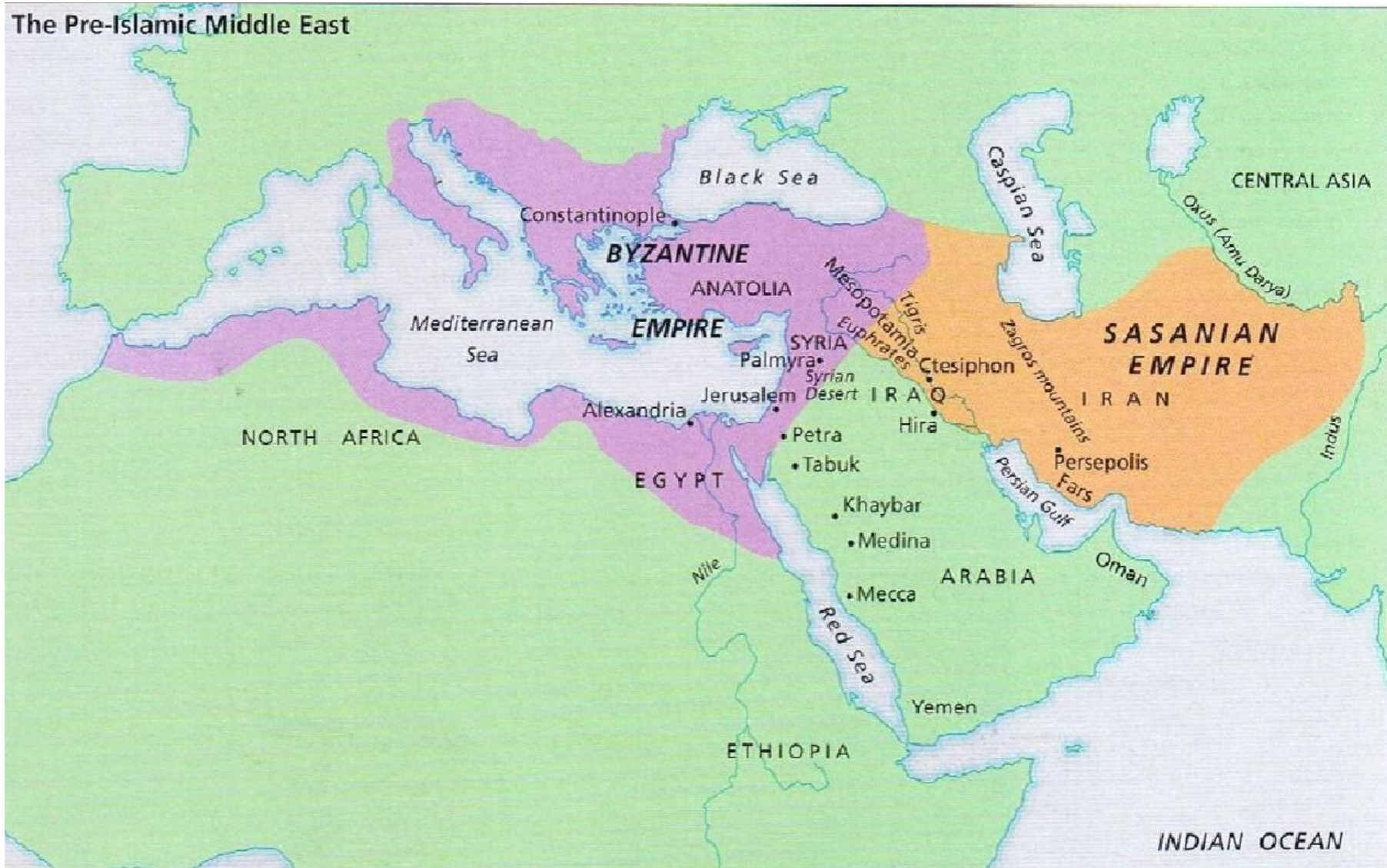
The Basics

- ❖ the Islamic tradition traces its origins to the reception of divine revelation by Muhammed, roughly 1400 years ago
- ❖ the body of revelation received by Muhammed is known as the Qu'ran
- ❖ Muhammed belonged to an Arabic tribe known as the Quraysh, the principal tribe of the town of Mecca in north-western Arabia

Pre-Islamic Arabia



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The Two Superpowers of Late Antiquity

- ❖ the eastern Roman empire, also known as Byzantium, with its capital focused on the city of Constantinople
- ❖ the Persian or Sassanian empire, with its capital city of Ctesiphon on the Tigris river in Mesopotamia

The differing religions of the two superpowers

- ❖ Christianity in the Roman or Byzantine empire
- ❖ Zoroastrianism in the Persian empire, an ancient Persian faith which venerated Ahura Mazda, the god of light



DEUS ADIUTA ROMANIS (May God help the Romans)
coin issued by the Emperor Heraclius c. 615CE

Pre-Islamic Arabia

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- ❖ a tribal society with an important role in regional trade
 - ❖ tribal affiliations provided a sense of identity and community
 - ❖ tribes were organised in terms of kinship, with blood ties binding clans together
 - ❖ leadership in most Arab tribes was hereditary, but suitable candidates usually selected on the bases of ability rather than seniority
 - ❖ the successful chief required to demonstrate generosity, physical courage, a sense of justice and to act as a mediator in disputes

the Ka'ba



The Prophet Muhammed

- ❖ earliest sources describing the life of Muhammed date to the early ninth century, but Muhammed died in 632
- ❖ Important texts we can use:
 - ❖ the *Hadith*, the record of the Prophet's works and deeds
 - ❖ the *Qu'ran*, the essential guide to Muslim thought and worship

The Life of Muhammed

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- ❖ Born in c. 570CE into the Quraysh tribe and became a merchant
 - ❖ His first marriage was to a woman by the name of Khadija bint Khuwaylid
 - ❖ According to Islamic tradition, Muhammed's mission began in his fortieth year, in 610CE, when visited by a figure usually identified in Islamic tradition as the Archangel Michael, who informed Muhammed that he was the messenger of God
 - ❖ The angel later recited to him the first words of the revelation, the body of teaching that would become the *Qu'ran*

The *Qu'ran*

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- ❖ Muhammed would continue to receive revelations at different times throughout the rest of his life
 - ❖ only after his death in 632 however that the first official version of the revelations – the *Qu'ran* - was written down
 - ❖ the *Qu'ran* is made up of 114 *suras* (chapters), each of which is made up of a number of verses
 - ❖ It is held by the Islamic tradition to be the divine and unalterable word of God
 - ❖ Islam itself means ‘submission’ – a Muslim therefore is one who submits or surrenders

The Five Pillars of Islam

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- ❖ the profession of faith - “no god but Allah; Muhammed is the messenger of Allah”
 - ❖ prayer - a faithful Muslim turns towards Mecca five times a day for ritual prayer
 - ❖ Almsgiving (or *zakah*)
 - ❖ penitential fasting
 - ❖ pilgrimage

The Dome of the Rock



The *Hijra*

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- ❖ In 622 Muhammed fled from Mecca to the town of Medina, an event known in the Muslim tradition as the *Hijra* (or flight)
 - ❖ the *Hijra* of 622 would at a later point in Islamic tradition be adopted as the founding moment of the Islamic *umma* (or community), and the dawn of a new era
 - ❖ the Islamic dating system which developed in following centuries therefore takes the year 622 as its starting point

The *Hajj*

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- ❖ in 630 Muhammed and his followers returned to Mecca and captured his home town
 - ❖ although he returned to live in Medina, he undertook a pilgrimage to Mecca in 632 shortly before his death, in a ritual now known the *hajj*
 - ❖ When Muhammed returned to Mecca in 630, he immediately ‘purified’ the *Ka’ba*, removing pagan idols from the sanctuary, and incorporating it into the ritual patterns of the new faith

The *umma*

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- ❖ an *umma* was a community of believers
 - ❖ differed from the tribe, in that it was a relationship based on shared religious belief rather than kinship
 - ❖ tribes and tribal loyalties still existed, but transcending those loyalties was now a greater connection in the form of a shared ideology

The caliphate

- ❖ Caliph: from the Arabic *khalifa*
- ❖ means successor, representative or deputy

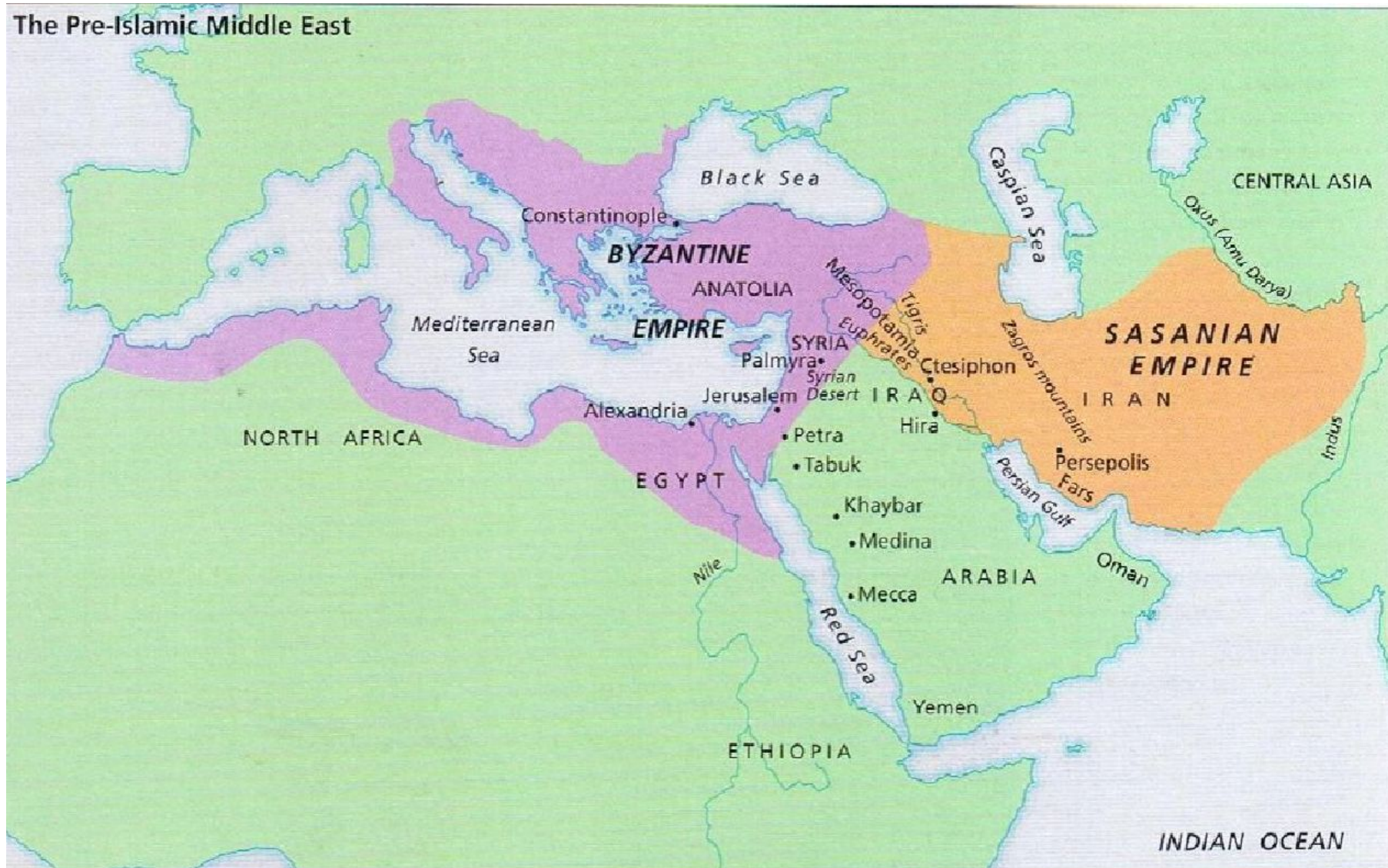
Early Islamic Expansion

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- ❖ 632-634: conquest of Syria and Palestine
 - ❖ 636: defeat of the Byzantine army at the battle of Yarmuk
 - ❖ 638: capture of Jerusalem
 - ❖ 639: fall of the Persian capital Ctesiphon
 - ❖ 641: capture of Egypt

Pre-Islamic Expansion (c. 600CE)



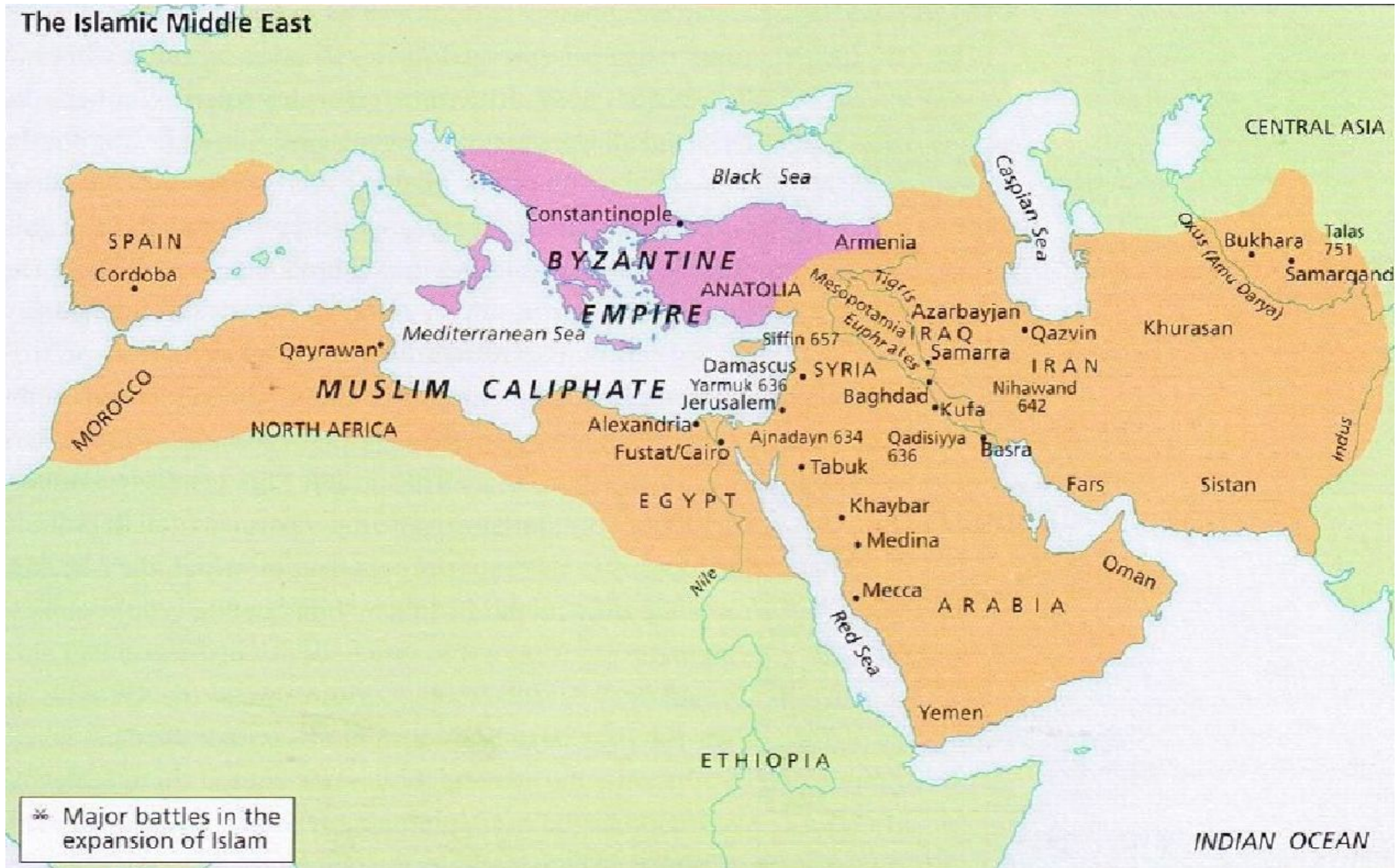
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Islamic Caliphate by c. 850CE



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“We believe in God and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and that which was vouchsafed unto Moses and Jesus and the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered. And whoso seeketh another religion other than the Surrender to God it will not be accepted from him, and he will be a loser in the Hereafter.”

(Quran, sur. 3.84-5)



“In the name of God, the Merciful and the Compassionate. This is the safe-conduct accorded by the servant of God ‘Umar, the Commander of the Faithful, to the people of Aelia [Jerusalem]. He accords them safe-conduct for their persons, their property, their churches, their crosses, their sound and their sick, and the rest of their worship. Their churches shall neither be used as dwellings nor destroyed. They shall not suffer any impairment, nor shall their dependencies, their crosses, nor any of their property. No constraint shall be exercised against them in religion nor shall any harm be done to any among them... The people of Aelia must pay the poll tax in the same way as the people of other cities... This document is placed under the surety of God and the protection of the Prophet, the Caliphs and the believers, on condition that the inhabitants of Aelia pay the poll tax that is due from them.”

(Al Tabari)

Early Islamic Coinage



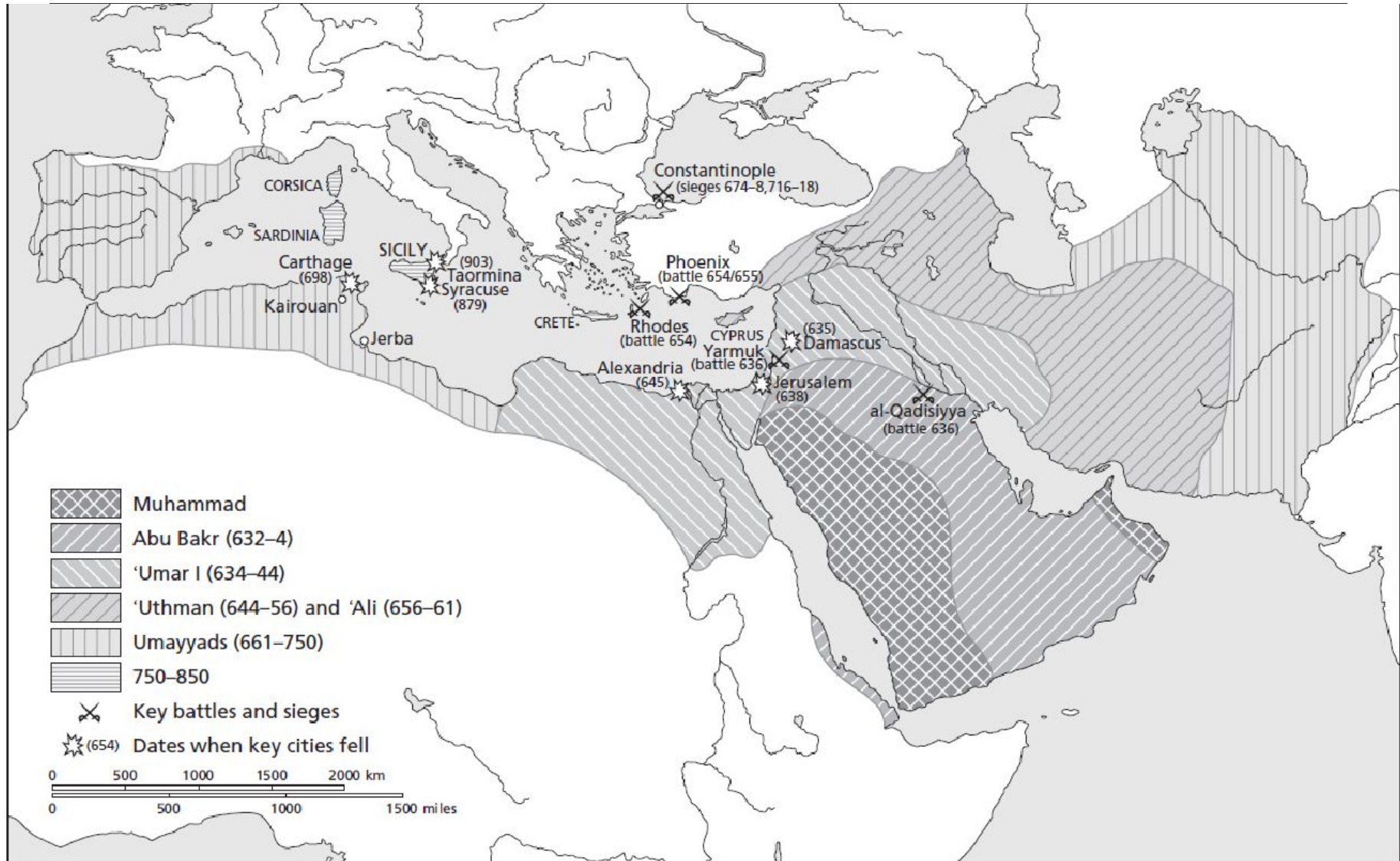
The 'Rashidun' or 'Rightly-Guided Caliphs'



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- ❖ Abu Bakr (632-634CE)
- ❖ 'Umar (634-644CE)
- ❖ 'Uthman (644-655CE)
- ❖ 'Ali (656-661CE)

Early Islamic Conquests



The Dome of the Rock



“O my little son, you do not understand. Verily al-Walid was right, and he was prompted to a worthy work. For he beheld Syria to be a country that had long been occupied by the Christians, and he noted there the beautiful churches still belonging to them, so enchantingly fair, and so renowned for their splendour, as are the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the churches of Lydda and Edessa. So he sought to build for the Muslims a mosque that should be unique and a wonder to the world. And in like manner is it not evident that ‘Abd al-Malik, seeing the greatness of the martyrism of the Holy Sepulchre and its magnificence, was moved lest it should dazzle the minds of the Muslims and hence erected above the Dome of the Rock which is now seen there.”

(Al-Muqaddasi, The best divisions for knowledge of the regions)

The Ka'ba

