Islamic Empires

Spiritual, Religious, and Cultural Flowering
Umayyad Caliphate

- Much like Christianity held together a splintered W. Europe, Islam held together M.E world.
  - Sunni-Shia division (7th Century)
  - Creation of *Umma* (community of believers)
  - Expansion of *Dar al-Islam*
Growth of Umma

- Africa fell by 711 – conversion of Berber tribes (Semitic peoples of N.Africa) and assimilation through intermarriage.
  - By mid 8th Century- Arab conquest of Spain
- 732* Battle of Tours – Halt of expansion Westward
  - Charles Martel (Charles the Hammer)
Administration of Empire

- Copied Byzantine/Persian Empires
  - Opulent court life
  - Monumental architecture
  - Bureaucracy

- Like all Empires-overextension and taxation led to Civil War and fall of Caliphate

- Abbasid Clan (N. Iran) – held power in name till 1258.
Abbasid Caliphate c. 750–1258

- Rule of heterogeneous peoples
- Rotation of officers to prevent corruption
- Regularized/Equalized taxes
  - No favor to rich or poor
- Maintained good relationships with locals
Problems facing Abbasids

• Recruiting troops (loyalty problems)
  – Similar to Romans
• Slave troops
• Rulers became increasingly remote / secular
  – Stray from Islamic ideals of equality and simplicity
  – Erosion of core values
  – Similar to the 3rd Century Crisis in Rome
Islamic cultural achievements: History

- Ibn Khaldun 1332-1406: (from Tunis) 1st to apply social science theory to the study of history
  - Universal History / Cyclical theory of history:
    - Nomadic people-settled, cultured, contented, then conquered.
- Differences between people arise principally from the differences in their occupation
- Scholars are of all men those least fitted for politics and its ways
Islamic cultural achievements: Philosophy

• Translation of Greek authors: including:
  – Aristotle
  – Plato
  – Galen
  – Euclid

• Christian thinkers are indebted to Muslims for keeping alive the Hellenistic traditions.
  – Dark Ages meant intellectual achievements and resources were neglected.
Islamic cultural achievements: Math, Astronomy, and Medicine

- Arabic is common language of scholarship
- Much of the knowledge comes from Indian scholars (770, 8th Century)
  - Adapted:
    - Hindi numerals, decimal system, number zero “Arabic numerals”
    - Algebra (al-jabr) “restoration”
- Copernican Theory (heliocentric) based upon Arab astronomical findings
- Cannon of Medicine – Ibn Sina
  - Herbal remedies
  - Functioning of organs, fevers, surgery
  - Influenced medical science for 300 years
Transmission of Tech

• Papermaking (from China)
• Crops & Foodstuffs
  – Wheat, rice, sugarcane, bananas, oranges, lemons, limes, cotton*
• Largest agricultural exchange in World History up to this time!
  – More food = more people.
City Design and Architecture

- **Baghdad** = Largest city in world (outside China) half million people (25 sq miles)

- Religious architecture – mosques.
  - 1325 (Mansa Musa’s Sahelian Mosque)
  - *Outside time period but:
    - 1632 - Taj Mahal India by Shah Jahan for his wife Mumtaz Mahal
African Society and Trade

Post Classical World
Ghana, Mali, Songhai
Trade in Sub-Saharan Africa

- West Africa
  - Camel domesticated c. 2nd-5th century C.E
  - Regular caravan trade across Sahara
  - Creation of three large empires
    - Ghana (c. 700 - c.1100)
    - Mali (c. 1100- c.1400)
    - Songhay (Songhai) (c. 1300 - c.1600)
Ghana

- Rose to power through taxing salt and gold exchanged along the Sahel
- Fusion of Islamic / African ideas
- Strong patriarchs / groups of rulers
- Weakened by Almoravid armies which invaded from N. Africa
Mali

- Malinke (founders)
- Economic basis = agriculture
  - Juula (Merchants)
- Sundiata (Sunjata) & oral tradition
  - Griots and the tale of the “Lion Prince”
  - Mansa (ruler) who divided up the world
    - Created social order / set up political institutions
    - Secured Travel / Punished crime severely
- Mansa Kankan Musa
  - Contact w/ outer world brings changes
    - Ishak al-Sahili (Granada, Andalucía {Muslim Spain}) - 1321
    - Ibn Batuta 1304 - 1369
***Ibn Batuta***

- Muslim from N. Africa
- Trained as judge (Quran) in Shar’ia
- Writes in journals
  - Logged some 60,000-70,000 miles of travel and writes about it
  - Shows the cultural unity of Dar al-Islam
  - Where he goes-expects to be gifted
    - His impressions of place are based upon gift
    - One of his final trips is to Mali
    - Scandalized by Muslims in Mali – where men and women are co-mingling
Mali

- Development of cosmopolitan court
- Trade cities
  - Jenne
  - Timbuktu
- Book trade and knowledge
- 80% still rely on farming
  - Polygamy
  - Communal clearing of land
Songhay

- Gao (capital)
- Farmers, merchants, fisherman, herders
- Sunni Ali (1464 - 1492)
  - Great tactical commander, ruthless leader
  - Develops system of provincial admin.
  - Persecutes those who oppose him, even Muslims
- Local interpretation of **Shar’ia**
  - Men and women
- 1591 – Muslim army invades (Gunpowder)
East Africa

- Fourth Century C.E: Axum (Ethiopia) dominated trade
- Encroachment of Arab traders
- Arabs took control of East African-Indian Ocean trade
- Establishment of trade towns
  - Great Zimbabwe, Sofala, Kilwa, Mogadishu
Muslim and Jewish traders

- Both formed important international trade communities
  - Joined by religion and ethnicity
- Jews
  - Dispersed as far away as China
- Muslims
  - Dominant force in Indian Ocean Trade
  - Gradual conversion of much of S.E Asia
  - Hajj (need for international travel)
Asian trade

- Series of interlinked systems
- Polynesians
  - Astonishing ocean voyages
  - Not large-scale trade systems
- Malays
  - Developed enormous cargo ships – jongs
  - Innovation in sails
  - Worked monsoon winds
  - Settlement in Madagascar
Asian Trade

- Indian Ocean
  - 8th – 16th centuries (dominated by Arabs)
  - Displaced Hindu and Buddhist influence in S.E Asia
- China – by 1500 had most advanced economy in the world
  - Highly developed internal markets
  - China took part in international trade 4th century C.E on
  - Powerful navy developed in 12th century
Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)

- "Hyper Chineseness"
  - Why? Followed Yuan (Mongol) dynasty
- Encouraged Sea Power
  - Voyages of Zheng He (1405-1433)
  - Policy abandoned? Why
    - Competition between eunuchs/Confucian elite
    - Internal trade more lucrative
    - Prohibition of international travel – much information lost / burned by Confucian scholars.
- Internal Trade
  - Creation of paper money
  - Credit mechanisms
  - Supplied luxury goods for internal trade
  - System of waterways (Canal)
Gavin Menzies - 1421

- Radical theory
- Voyages of Zheng He reach Americas, Africa, and Australia
- Secondary Source
- Controversial theory / rejected by many historians