

Sui, Tang and Song Dynasties

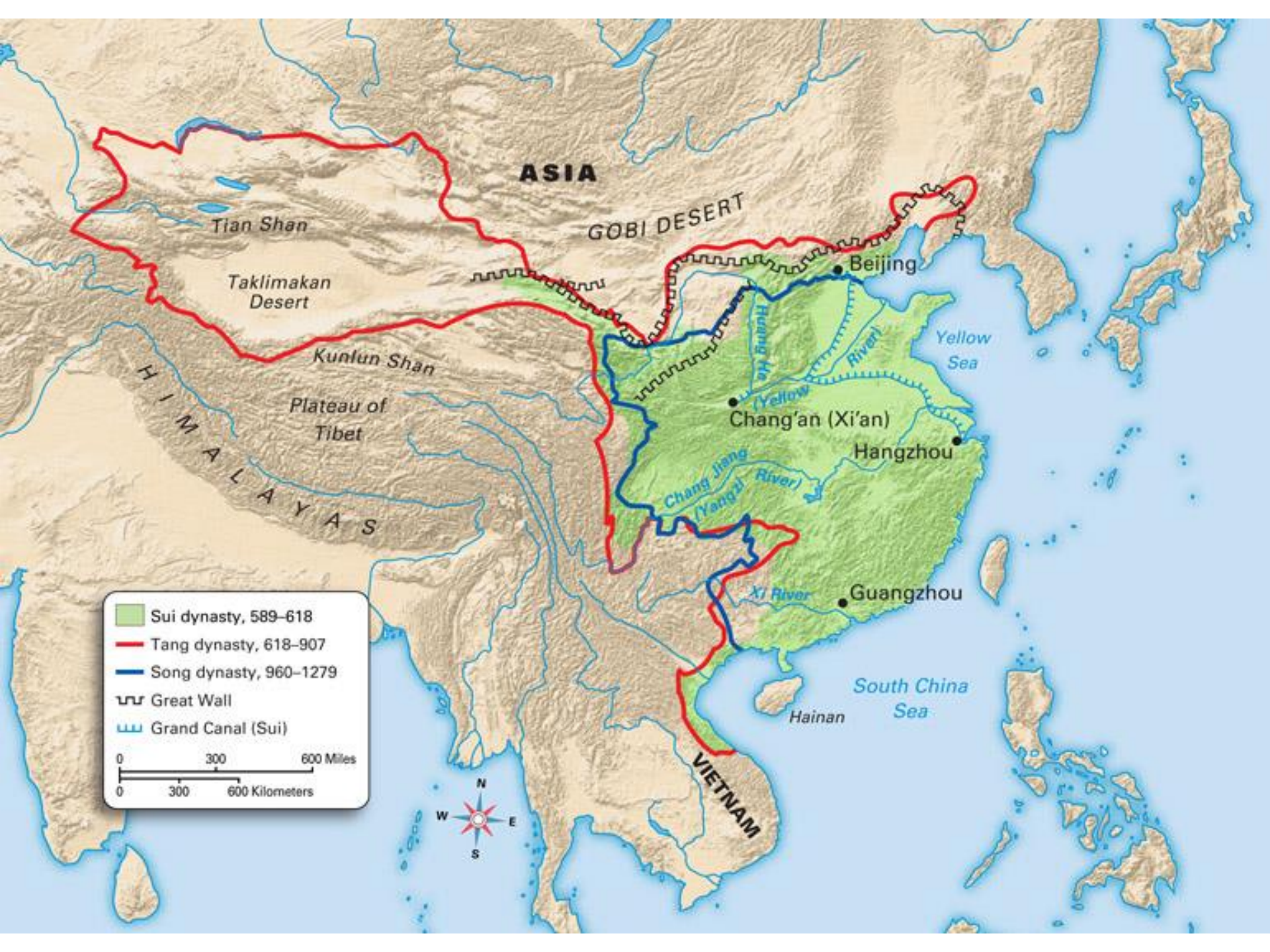
Sui Dynasty (589-618)

After collapse of the Han Dynasty (220AD), no emperor strong enough to hold China together.

centuries of fragmented power; who in society enjoys more privilege and power as a result of fragmentation?

By 589, emperor Wendi had united northern and southern China once again, restoring strong central government;





Sui Dynasty

Wendi – first emperor of Sui Dynasty;
lasted through two emperors; 581-618

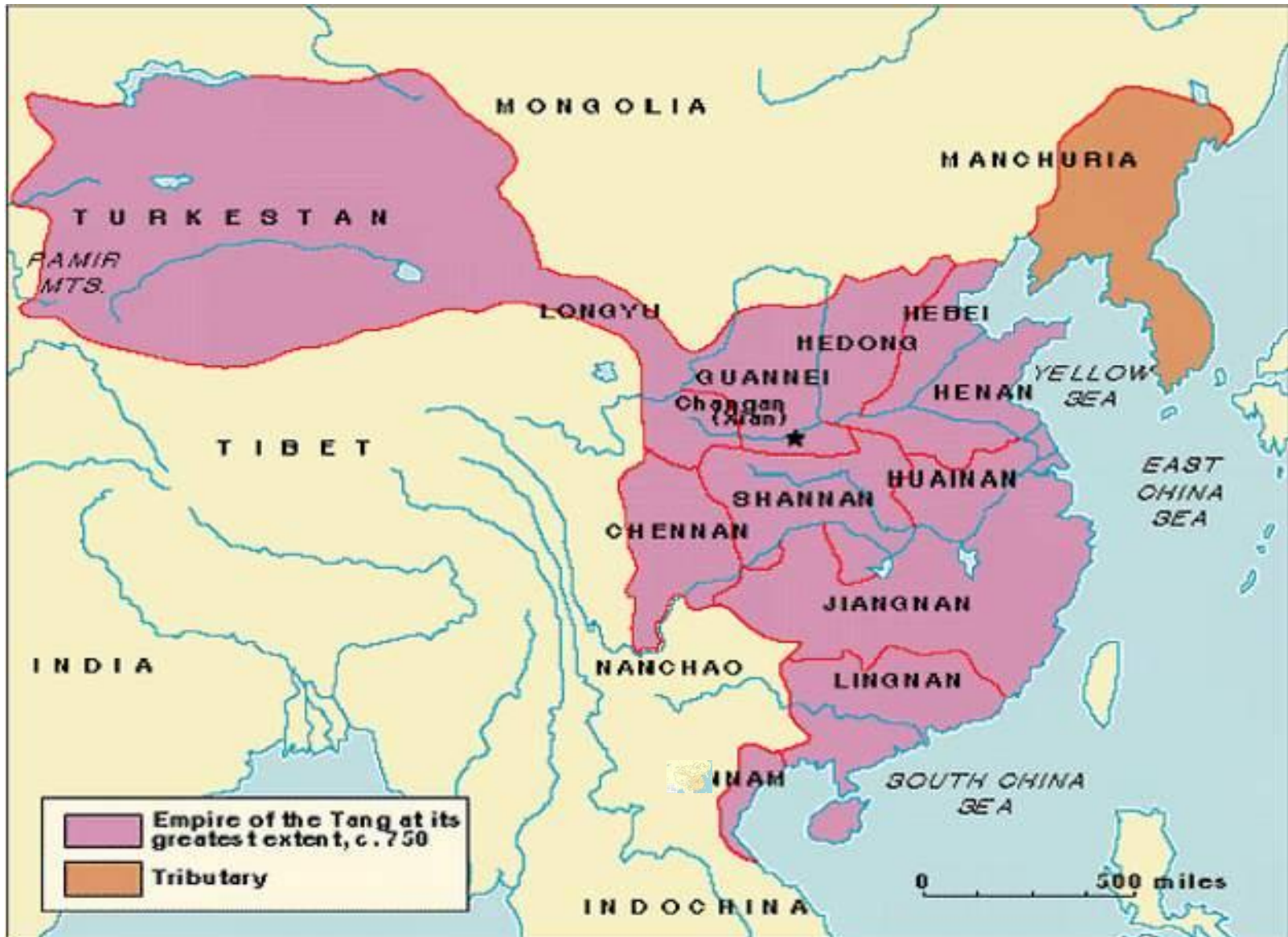
Greatest Accomplishment: completion of the
Grand Canal – connecting Huang He and Chang
Jiang Rivers

- vital route for internal trade between northern cities and southern rice producing regions;
- million peasants – 5 years – 1,000 mile waterway;

Foundations

The Sui Dynasty, though short-lived, lays the foundation for centralized power, expansion and prosperity under the Tang and Song Dynasties.

Tang China





Tang Dynasty Creates a Powerful Empire

300 years; 618-907

Tang Taizong – 626-649

A. reconquered northern and western lands that China had lost;

B. Wu Zhao position of influence by 660; 690 empress; only female empress;

C. Tang rulers strengthened the central government with an expanded network of roads and canals; Benefit??

Tang Dynasty

C. vast bureaucracy consisting of scholar-officials; based on Confucianism;

1. revived and expanded civil service exam;
2. in theory open to all; in reality???

Empress Wu Zhao

- Maintained a rule of terror over the innermost circle of government;
- Ruled more benignly over 50 million commoners;
- Ruthless; “heart like a serpent and a nature like that of a wolf”; physically cruel and erotically wanton;
- Allowed commoners and gentry to take civil service test;

Achievements of Empress Wu Zhao

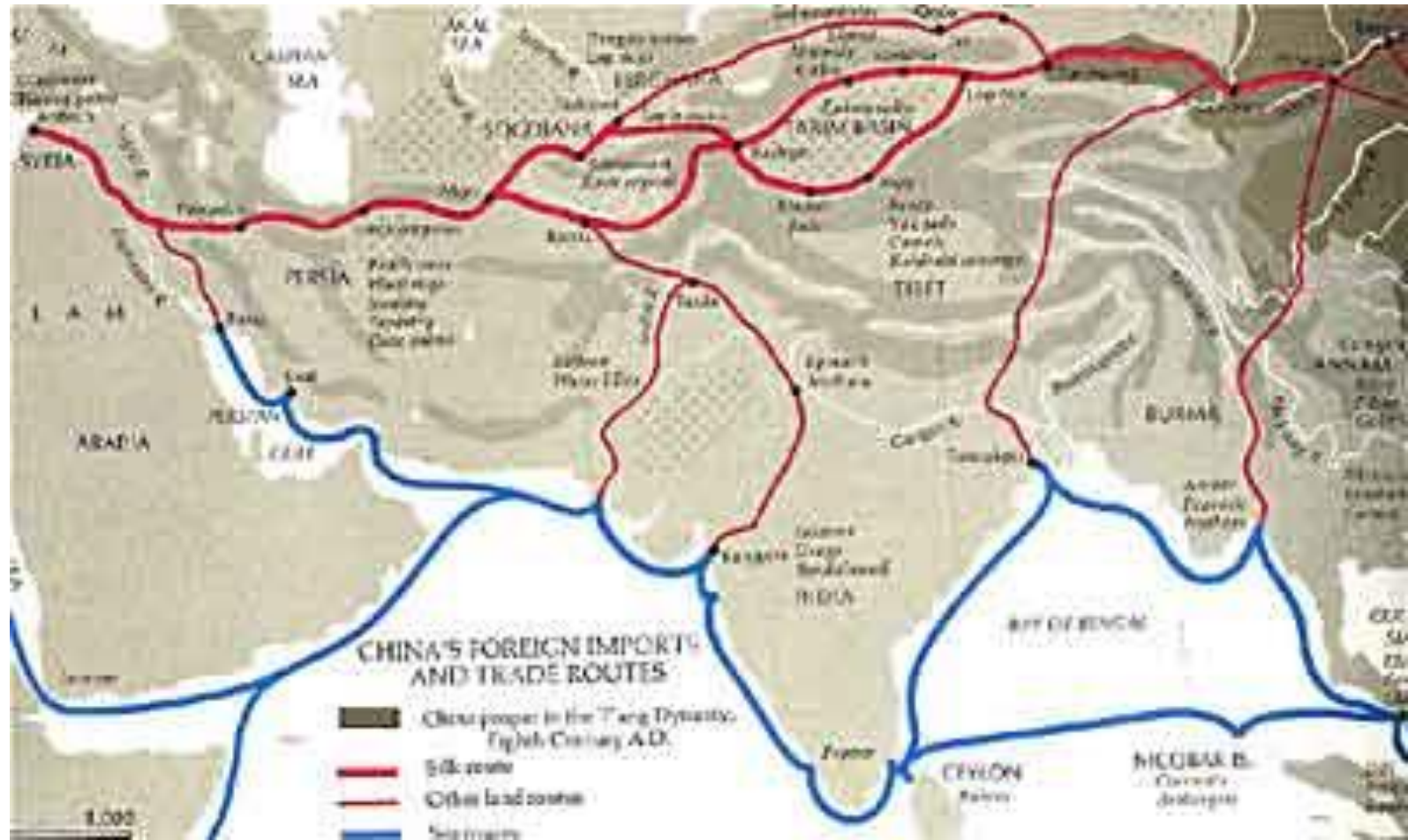
- Contributed to stabilizing and consolidating the Tang Dynasty;
- Major expansion of Chinese Empire deep into Central Asia; annexed Korea;
- Provided state support for Buddhism, Taoism, education and literature; her court a center of poetry;

Extent of the Tang Empire

Tang warriors expanded the Chinese Empire to its then greatest territorial extent: almost all of China proper; parts of southeast Asia, Manchuria, Mongolia, and Tibet; and a vast region in Central Asia.

The Chinese came into contact with most Asian peoples and even with eastern Europeans. The Chinese developed a flourishing international commerce(trade).

They also transmitted culture, most notably to the Japanese.



Great Cultural Era

The tang emperors encouraged a revival of scholarship and the arts. Tang writers produced a great literary outpouring, especially of poetry.

Tang artists excelled in portrait and landscape paintings.

They often decorated pottery, examples of which are highly prized in Western museums.

Legacy

In governmental stability, territorial extent, economic prosperity and cultural progress, the Tang Era rivalled the Han. Many Chinese consider the Tang Dynasty their country's most brilliant period.

Decline

Tang Dynasty eventually declines:

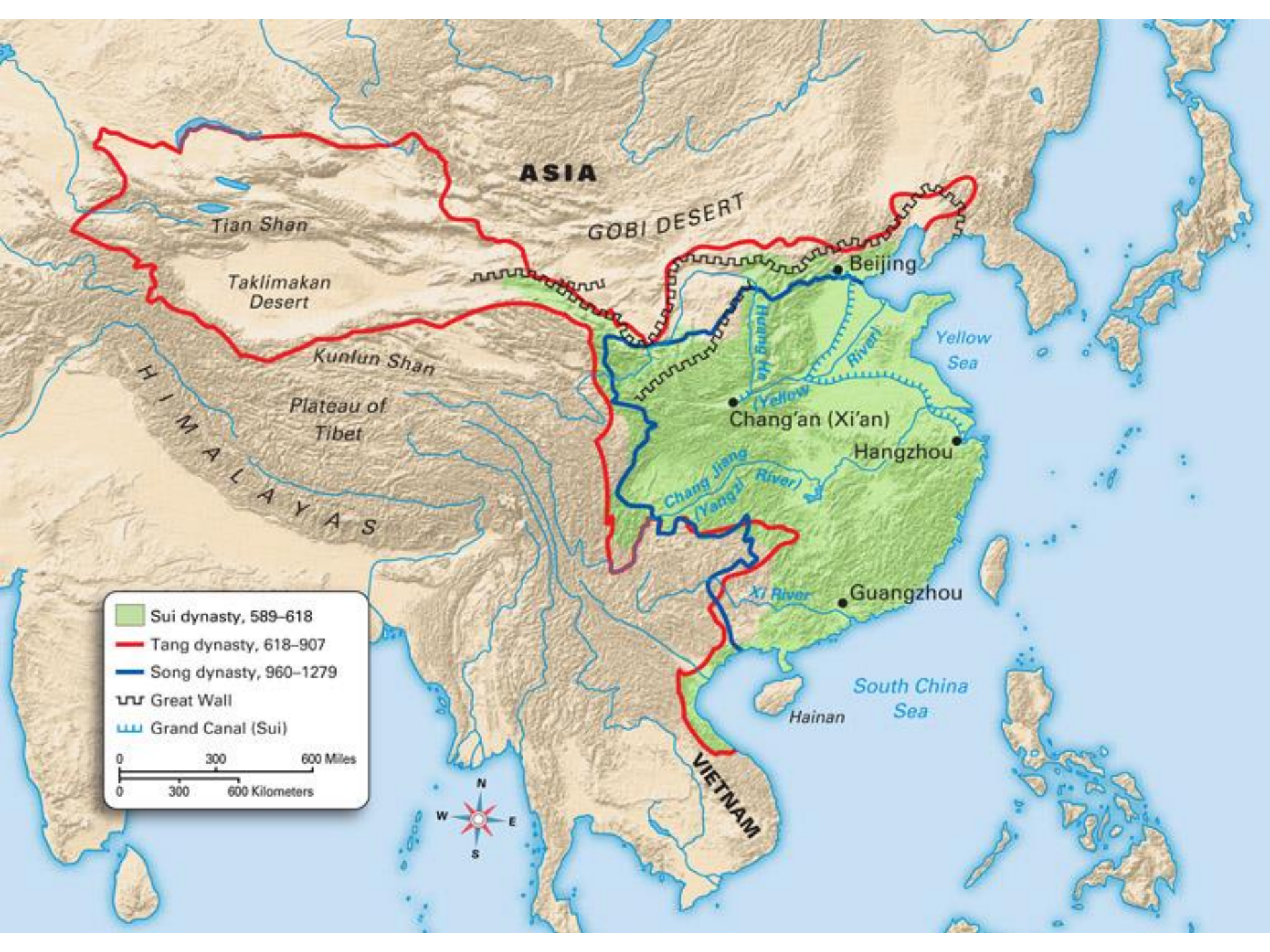
1. rising costs of government and crushing taxes;
2. struggled to control vast empire;

Song Dynasty (960-1279)

1. Reduced in Size and Consolidated

Out of the half century of political turmoil that followed the downfall of the Tang emerged the Song Dynasty;

Song rulers, surrounded by powerful warlike neighbors, never controlled all of China proper and, in their later period, retreated southward below the Yangtze River.

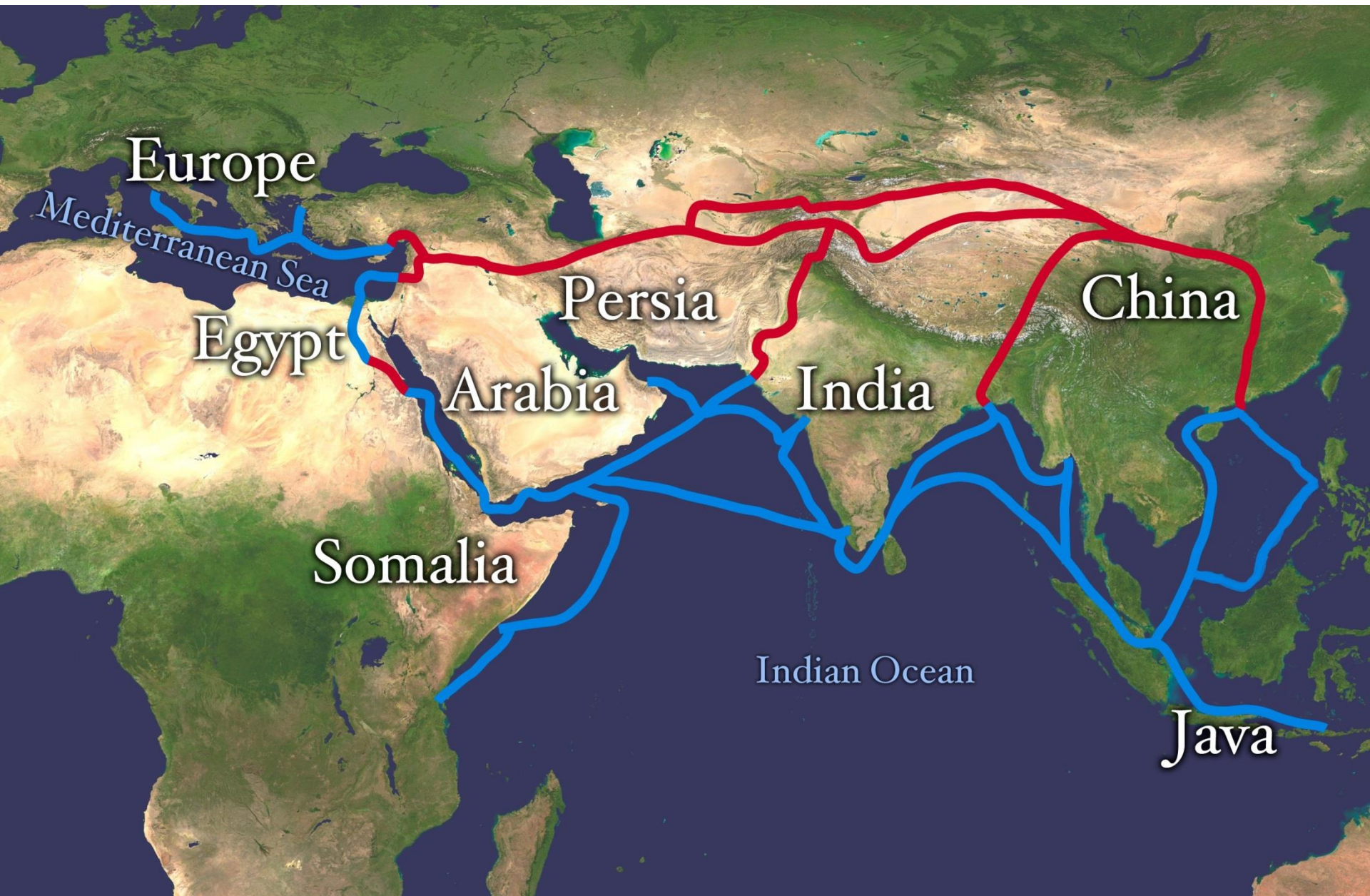


A Maritime Power

Since land trade routes were in hostile hands, China became a maritime nation.

Its merchant ships sailed southward in the Pacific as far as Java and westward in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea as far as east Africa.

By the 11th century Chinese sailors were navigating by means of a **mariner's compass**.



Europe

Mediterranean Sea

Egypt

Persia

China

Arabia

India

Somalia

Indian Ocean

Java

Social and Economic Reforms

In the 11th century, under Chief Minister Wang An-shih, the Song state imposed a program of reform that

- a. centralized the control of finances, commerce and transportation;
- b. spread the tax burden more equitably among all classes;
- c. employed hired hands, instead of conscript labor, on state projects;
- d. Provided government loans at low interest rates to needy farmers, and
- e. Stored food surpluses for distribution during periods of shortage

The reform program encountered upper class opposition and generated great fear of too much government. It was soon abandoned.