

Complete Essay on The Roman Empire in Syria (64 BCE-476 CE)

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Modern civilization began in the ancient Levant (contemporary Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria). Crop agriculture was first practiced in the Levant – the western arc of the Fertile Crescent – beginning about 10,500 years ago. Agricultural surpluses led to the leisure time that underpinned the eventual rise of cities, writing, bureaucracy, and empires. The Levant thus had a head start over its competitors in the Nile and Tigris-Euphrates Valleys. But the river valleys in the Levant were too small to support large agricultural populations, and so the world's first ancient empires arose in Syria's neighboring regions.

The imperial struggle for control of Syria (and the Levant) during the past five millennia is chronicled in this essay. Primary attention is paid to the period when Syria was under the control of the Roman Empire (64 BCE-476 CE). The first part of the essay investigates the three millennia of the Levant's history before the Roman Empire (31st-1st centuries BCE), the second analyzes the rise, rule, and fall of the Roman Empire (1st century BCE-5th century CE), and the third examines the aftermath – the Byzantine

and Islamic periods in Syria from the 5th century through the present.

The major task of the first part is to understand how modern civilization arose in the ancient Levant and why the region lost its early lead as an innovator and became a coveted possession of more powerful empires. Before 3000 BCE, the ancient Levant had developed into a major center of agriculture, craftsmanship, and trade. In the third millennium BCE, the region was divided into numerous trade-based city-states – most of them prosperous but none able to consolidate regional control and form a large, consolidated polity. The Syrian city-states maintained their independence largely because the nascent empires in neighboring Mesopotamia and Egypt were still consolidating their river-valley centers.

That situation changed in the second and first millennia BCE, when the Levant became a battleground. About 2,000 BCE, Syria began 4,000 years of almost continuous foreign domination. First the Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Hittite empires and later their

Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian counterparts fought for control of the rich and strategic Levant. The center of Syrian control shifted from Asia to Europe in the 4th century BCE. Alexander the Great of Macedonia defeated the Achaemenid Persian Empire, and for nearly three centuries his Hellenic successors ruled Syria from Alexandria (the Ptolemaic Empire) or Antioch (the Seleucid Empire).

The second part of the essay shows how the Roman Empire gained control of the Levant in 64-62 BCE and how it ruled in the eastern Mediterranean region for more than four centuries. The thrust eastward was part of Roman strategy to expand the empire to its natural frontiers – the Euphrates River and Syrian Desert in the east, the Sahara Desert in the south, the Atlantic Ocean in the west, and the Rhine and Danube Rivers in the north. Rome hoped to break even in the Greek-speaking eastern part of the empire, including the Levant, and to develop and tax the rich agricultural regions in Egypt and in the western part of the empire (northern Africa, Iberia, and southern France). The wealth and power of the

Roman Empire thus was based on conquest and taxation of the newly expanded agriculture of the western Mediterranean and northern Africa. The Romans encouraged private commercial activity and taxed foreign trade, but trade in goods from outside the empire mainly provided luxuries for Roman aristocrats.

The Roman Empire declined because of internal erosion, arising from succession struggles leading to political instability, aristocratic extravagance in Rome, and over-taxation in the provinces. In 395 CE, the empire was divided into two parts – one governed from Rome and the other from Constantinople – in the vain hope of providing better governance and defense. Syria became part of the Byzantine (eastern Roman) Empire and was ruled from Constantinople for two and one-half centuries. The western Roman Empire fell in 476 when invading Germanic tribes destroyed the tottering edifice.

The third part of the essay documents changes in the Levant in the aftermath of Roman and Byzantine rule. Major cultural changes occurred after the Muslim Arab diaspora in the 7th

century. Thereafter, most Syriac Christians converted to Islam. But the pattern of foreign domination of the Levant continued. An exception took place between 661 and 750 when Damascus was the capital of the Umayyad Caliphate and Syria was the center of the Arab world. Still, independent power proved to be ephemeral, and Syria was ruled from abroad for the next twelve centuries. The foreign rulers of the Levant were Arabs and Persians from Baghdad (750-870), Turks and Berbers from Cairo (870-1070), Seljuk Turks from Baghdad (1070-1174), Kurds from Cairo (1174-1250), Turkish and Circassian Mamluks from Cairo (1250-1516), Ottoman Turks from Istanbul (1516-1918), and British from London and French from Paris (1918-1940s).

Following the end of the Second World War, four independent countries emerged in the Levant region – Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. In the past seven decades, the region has continued to be a battleground as the locus of the Arab-Israeli conflict. A postscript summarizes the impact of the Roman takeover on amazing Petra, the Levant's entrepôt in the 1st century

CE. A time line, a bibliography, and a description of sites visited in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon are appended at the end of the essay.

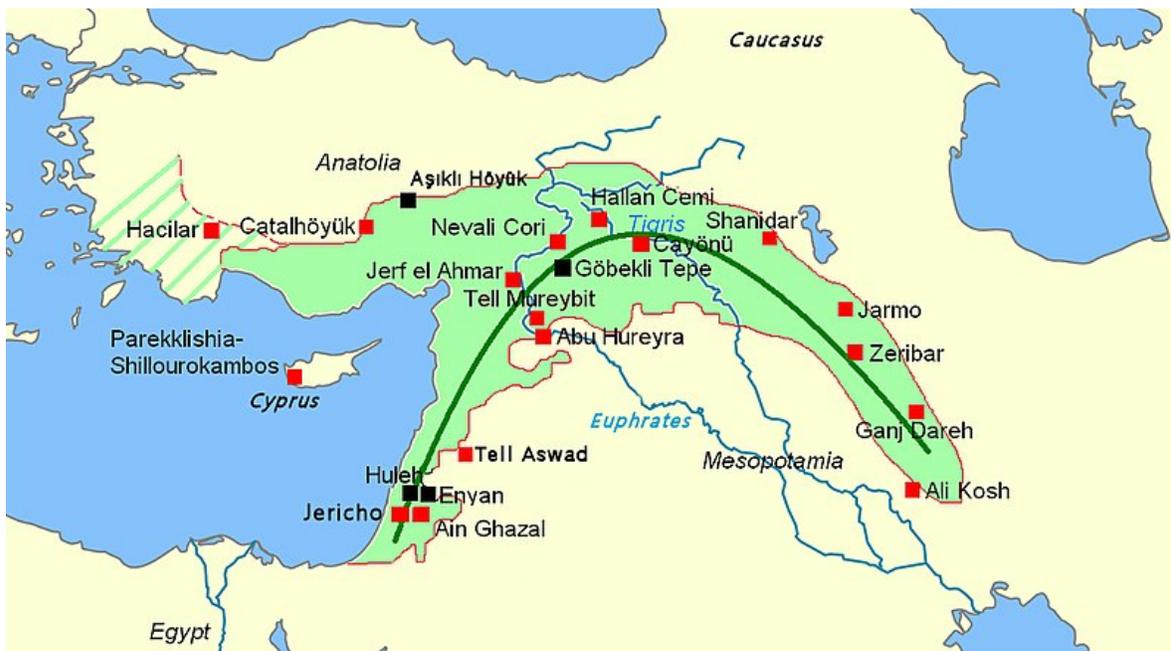
Syria before the Roman Empire (31st-1st centuries BCE)

Origins of Agriculture in the Fertile Crescent. The rise of modern civilizations depended on sedentary agriculture. Nomadic hunting and gathering societies could not generate sufficient food surpluses to allow leisure time for writing, science, and architecture, and they had no need to create complex social and political structures like cities, states, and empires. Agriculture began when humans saw advantages in decreasing their reliance on hunting or gathering foods.

Two evolutionary processes led to the domestication of wild plant and animal species. One was biological. Plants were selected for desirable characteristics – large seed size, high number of seeds per plant, uniform maturation time, and good disease resistance. The other was economic. By adopting sedentary lifestyles, humans were able to diversify their food sources and evolve technologies for growing, harvesting, processing, and storing food.

After the end of the last ice age about 12,000 years ago, the climate became warmer and wetter. Hunting and gathering societies developed hand sickles to harvest wild cereals, silos to store grain, and grinding slabs to process it into edible flour. Mankind was poised to invent agriculture.

Crop agriculture was first practiced about 8500 BCE in the Fertile Crescent of southwest Asia, a then fertile region including modern Israel, Lebanon, Syria, southeastern Turkey, and Iraq.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fertile_crescent_Neolithic_B_circa_7500_B_C.jpg>

*The Fertile Crescent in Southwestern Asia, c. 7500 BCE –
Origin of Agriculture*

Three cereals (emmer wheat, einkorn wheat, and barley), four pulses (lentils, peas, chickpeas, and bitter vetch), and one fiber crop (flax) formed the Fertile Crescent “founder package” of crops. Peoples in the Fertile Crescent enjoyed several natural advantages in domesticating plants and animals. The wild ancestors of crops were abundant, facilitating human settlement. Many of those plants were self-pollinating, which preserved useful genetic traits. The Mediterranean climate – mild, wet winters and long, dry summers – supported plants that grew rapidly in the rainy season. Because the Fertile Crescent had the world’s largest Mediterranean zone, it contained a wide ecological range and thus a high degree of biodiversity. But the Fertile Crescent environment was ecologically fragile, and agriculture there declined through the centuries as farmers misused the resource base.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wheat_close-up.JPG>

*Bread Wheat (Triticum aestivum) –
Food Staple in Syria Since Agriculture Began 10,500 Years Ago*

The domestication of animals predated that of plants. Both occurred first in the Fertile Crescent. Dogs were domesticated by 10,000 BCE, sheep and goats between 9,000 and 7,000 BCE, and pigs about 7,000 BCE. Eurasia had the largest number of wild candidate species of potential domesticates and did not suffer mass extinctions of mammals. Desirable characteristics for

domestication are docile disposition, flexible diet, rapid growth rate, and social hierarchy within herds. Animal contributions include meat, milk, manure, transport, leather, and wool.

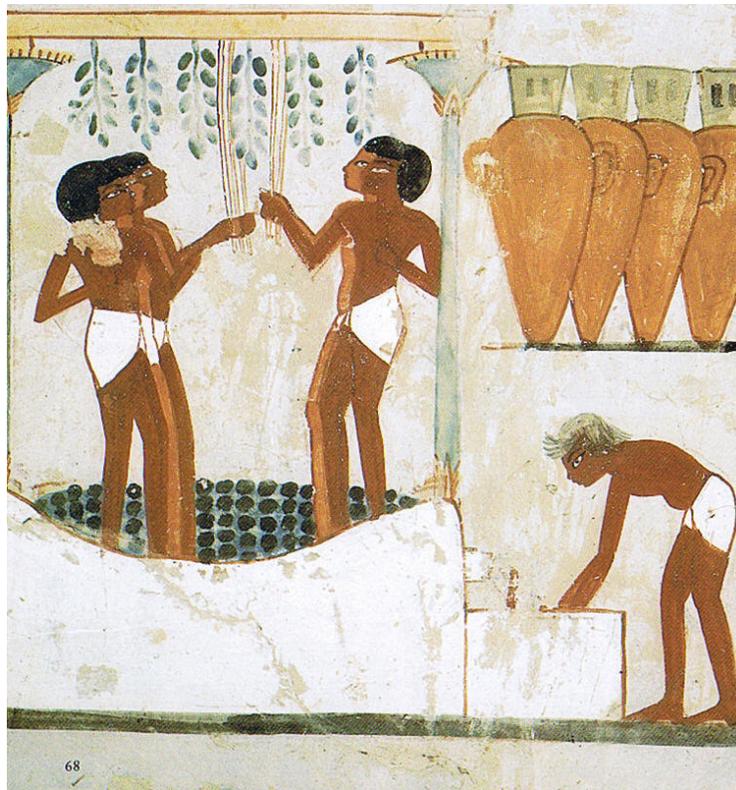


Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bezoarziege.jpg>>

*Bezoar Ibex (Capra aegagrus aegagrus) –
Wild Progenitor of Modern Domesticated Goats, Fertile Crescent*

Archaeological evidence places grape production in the Fertile Crescent by about 4,000 BCE and shows widespread cultivation there by 3,500 BCE. Grapes are one of the renowned

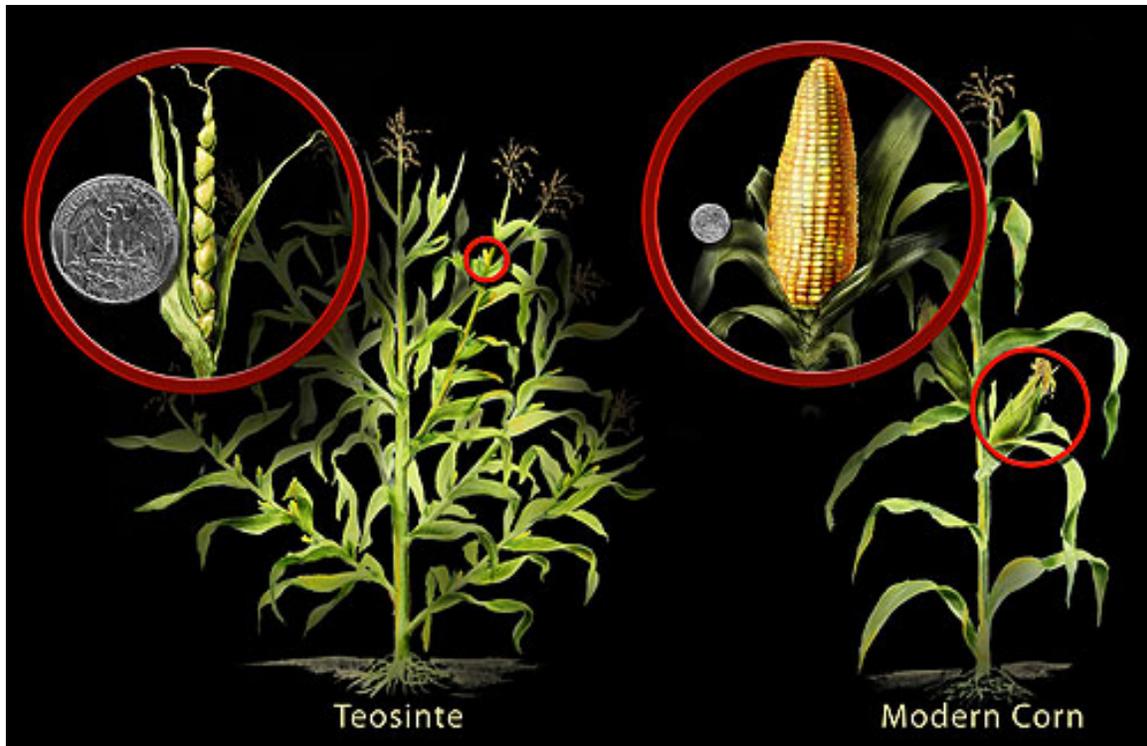
“first four fruits” of the Fertile Crescent, along with figs, olives, and dates. Grapes were first domesticated about 5,000 BCE in Georgia (in the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains, near the Fertile Crescent). Wine production originated in Georgia about 4,000 BCE. The practice of making wine had spread throughout the Fertile Crescent by 3,000 BCE, to Egypt by 2,900 BCE, to the Aegean region by 2,200 BCE, and to Italy by 1,200 BCE.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tomb_of_Nakht_\(13\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tomb_of_Nakht_(13).jpg)>

*Stomping Grapes and Making Wine –
Tomb of Nakht, Thebes, Egypt, 18th Dynasty, 14th century BCE*

After the development of crop agriculture in the Fertile Crescent, the domestication of plants occurred independently in China, Mesoamerica, the Andes, the eastern United States, western Africa, Ethiopia, and New Guinea. Farmers today concentrate on only a handful of the 200,000 species of plants that they might have domesticated. Three cereals – wheat, rice, and maize – currently provide more than half of all food calories consumed by the world’s population. More than eighty percent of the contemporary tonnage of food crops is accounted for by just twelve plant species – wheat, rice, maize, barley, sorghum, soybean, potato, cassava, sweet potato, sugar cane, sugar beet, and banana.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Teosinte_and_Modern_Corn_Comparison_\(3745571067\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Teosinte_and_Modern_Corn_Comparison_(3745571067).jpg)>

Wild Teosinte (Indigenous to Mesoamerica) and Domesticated Maize (Zea mays, Known as Corn in the United States)

Associated Innovations and the Rise of Cities. Agriculture was first practiced along the Levantine coast of the eastern Mediterranean region about 8,500 BCE. The domestication of plants and animals spread in a 1,200-mile arc to the Tigris-Euphrates Valley during the following millennium. The generation of food surpluses and the ability to store them led to the creation of cities. Associated innovations in that process included

the wheel, writing, metallurgy, and monumental architecture, and, within the agricultural sector, the plow, milking of animals, planting of fruit trees, and production of wine and beer.

The gradual development of productive agriculture – and of a requisite sedentary life-style – eventually permitted the production of food surpluses and storage along with increases in population densities. Human societies thus were able to feed specialist, non-agricultural groups and afford a division of labor. Craftsmen produced tools, weapons, and art and developed new technologies, while warriors engaged in protection and conquest. With literacy, complex structures of social organization arose. Populations concentrated, and centralized political rule began. Rulers and their armies created and protected cities, nation states, and empires. Mankind thus established four prerequisites for modern civilization – agriculture, writing, advanced social organization, and cities.

The successful diffusion of agriculture – and of modern civilization – from the Fertile Crescent was aided by the east-west geographical axis of Eurasia. Crops and animals could be adopted

easily in regions with similar latitudes and climates, especially those separated by few natural barriers.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tower_of_Jericho.jpg>

*Tower of Jericho, Agricultural Village –
Tell es-Sultan Archeological Site, Israel, c. 7000 BCE*

The Fertile Crescent's founder package was supplemented by local domesticates in Egypt (sycamore figs and chufa), Ethiopia (coffee and teff), the Indus Valley (humped cattle and sesame), and Europe (oats and poppies). Diffusion was cultural (ideas spread) or demic (people migrated). Migrants took agriculture to Egypt and Greece by 5,000 BCE.

Food patterns in all subsequent Mediterranean empires evolved from Fertile Crescent origins. For over three millennia, the Mediterranean diet was based on four staples – wheat bread, lentil soup, olive oil, and wine. To the diet of the Fertile Crescent, the Ancient Egyptians added onions, sycamore figs, and beer, the Classical Greeks offered honey, goat cheese, and yogurt, the Romans supplemented with lettuce, shellfish, and quality wines, whereas the Byzantines contributed sugar, eggplant, and caviar.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eleven_long_purple_eggplants.jpg>

Eggplant (Solanum melongena) – Indigenous to India, Introduced to the Mediterranean Diet by the Byzantines

Agriculture and Trade in the Ancient Levant (before 3000 BCE). By 5000 BCE, the hills of northern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) were filled with agricultural villages. Gradually, innovative people invented gravity-fed irrigation and settled the rich alluvial soils of the Tigris-Euphrates basin in southern Mesopotamia, a much more fertile agricultural region. At about the same time, Egyptian farmers began practicing irrigation in the Nile Valley and Delta, using natural water and soil nutrients. Irrigated agriculture in huge river basins then served as the basis of rich and innovative kingdoms in both Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Between 5000 and 3000 BCE, the Sumerians in southern Mesopotamia developed irrigated agriculture, introduced the plow and the wheel, and produced large agricultural surpluses (barley and sheep's wool). They became trade-dependent and exported grain and textiles to obtain raw materials (wood, metals, and stone), gold, silver, and precious gems. About 3000 BCE, the Sumerians invented pictographic writing with cuneiform symbols to assist mercantile accounting. Sumerian writing later was given

its name, cuneiform, from the Latin term for “nail-shaped” because the writing marks resembled nails inscribed in clay.

	SUMERIAN (Vertical)	SUMERIAN (Rotated)	EARLY BABYLONIAN	LATE BABYLONIAN	ASSYRIAN
star					
sun					
month					
man					
king					
son					
head					
lord					
his					

Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cuneiform_evolution_from_archaic_script.jpg
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*Cuneiform Writing –
 Originated in Sumeria, Evolved in Babylonia and Assyria*

The Levant thus lost its early agricultural lead to Mesopotamia and Egypt and became for several millennia a region squeezed in the middle of two imperial powers. Little irrigation was possible in the Levant because the region’s three rivers – the Orontes, Litani, and Jordan – held inadequate water and did not

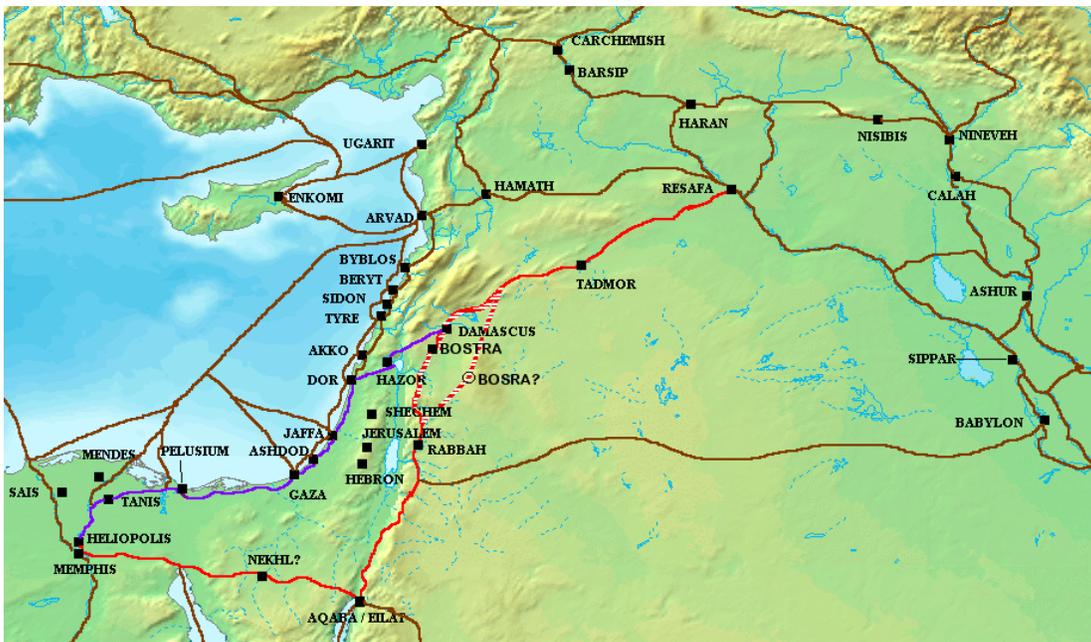
form large basins. But the Levantine coast and parts of the interior had adequate rainfall for agriculture. In the Levant, a number of small city-states arose in which each city was supported by – and in turn provided protection for – an agricultural hinterland (corona) of villages. Moreover, the northern highlands in the Levant contained a valuable natural resource – thick forests of cedar, cypress, and pines – absent in the agricultural river basins of Mesopotamia and Egypt.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lebanon_cedar_forest.jpg>

*The Cedars of Lebanon –
Source of Quality Timber Exports from Time Immemorial*

The Levant thus became a trade crossroads and future battleground. Levantine port cities were entrepôts, linking Mesopotamia with the eastern Mediterranean and Anatolia (modern Turkey) with Egypt, and they exported Levantine wood and locally-made metal crafts and pottery.

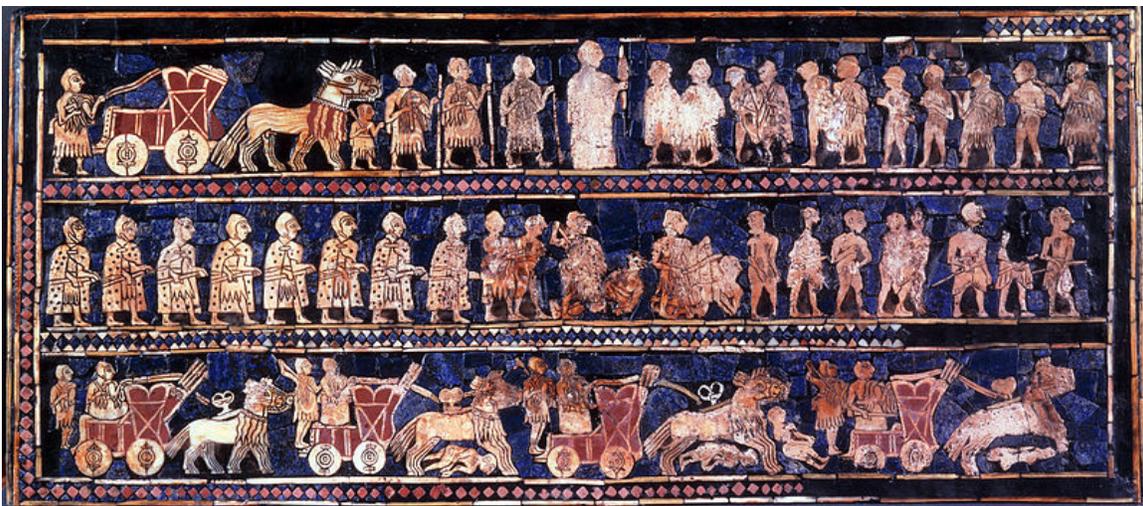


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ancient_Levant_routes.png>

The Levant – Trade Crossroads, Linking Egypt with Mesopotamia

Trade-based City-states in the Levant (Third Millennium BCE). During the third millennium BCE, three successive dynasties – ruling families that passed political power from one generation to the next – ruled Mesopotamia. All were dependent

on Levantine city-states for essential imports, and all intervened in the Levant. During that period, however, the Levantine polities managed to retain their independence. Sumer (2900-2350 BCE) was a decentralized collection of independent city-states within Mesopotamia in which the land was owned and farmed by temples and the crown. The language of the Sumerians, who invented cuneiform writing, was unrelated to any other.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Standard_of_Ur_-_War.jpg>

*Sumerian Soldiers, Standard of Ur, c. 2600 BCE, British Museum
– Mosaic of Shell and Lapis Lazuli*

Akkad (2350-2112 BCE) was a centralized state within a unified Mesopotamia in which private land ownership and wealth

generation were stressed. The Akkadians, who initially ruled the north and then conquered the Sumerian-speaking south, were the first Semitic-speaking dynasts in the Near East. (The Semitic language family includes ancient Akkadian, Eblaite, Amorite, Assyrian, and Aramaic and modern Hebrew, Arabic, and Amharic.) Ur III (2112-2004 BCE) was a centralized and unified state in which most land ownership was held directly by the crown. The Ur III kings re-introduced Sumerian ideas and fused the Sumerian and Akkadian cultures into a single Mesopotamian one.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ancient_ziggurat_at_Ali_Air_Base_Iraq_2jpg>

Ur III Ziggurat (Temple), 21st century BCE, Near Ai Air Base, Iraq

The leading Levantine city-state was Ebla in northern Syria. Ebla was a large mercantile and agricultural center. Cuneiform texts in the Eblaite Semitic language from about 2400 BCE indicate that the Ebla city-state had 260,000 inhabitants and that the king owned a herd of 80,000 sheep. Ebla controlled the timber and metal production and trade of northern Syria and southeastern Anatolia. A significant additional source of wealth came from its artisans who manufactured true bronze (about 90 percent copper and 10 percent tin) products, woolen textiles, and finished cloth goods. Ebla declined when Akkad expanded and was destroyed about 2000 BCE by Semitic-speaking, Amorite invaders.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HPIM3078_1.JPG>

*Excavations at Ebla, Northern Syria, c. 2000 BCE –
Ruins of the Outer Wall and the Damascus Gate*

Foreign Influence in the Levant (Second Millennium BCE). Between 2000 and 1500 BCE, the Amorites ruled Babylonia (southern Mesopotamia) and much of the Levant. They vied for control of the Levantine city-states with Assyria (northern Mesopotamia). Hammurabi of Babylonia (ruled 1792-1750 BCE) conquered southern Mesopotamia and introduced the renowned Hammurabi Code of Justice, which has been preserved on a seven-

foot stone stele. Shamshi-Adad of Assyria, an Amorite king who ruled contemporaneously with Hammurabi, was equally effective in uniting northern Mesopotamia and fending off incursions from mountain tribes in Anatolia (modern Turkey).



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:P1050763_Louvre_code_Hammurabi_face_rwk.JPG

Code of Hammurabi Stele, Louvre Museum, Paris

The three centuries, 1500-1200 BCE, were turbulent but prosperous for the Levant. Trade boomed, and regional powers

contested for control. Levantine ports were a prized possession because they were sited at the world's most important commercial crossroads – at the nexus of trade routes linking Egypt, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the eastern Mediterranean. Two Indo-European-speaking migrant groups from Central Asia, the Hurrians (in Mittani, northern Syria) and the Hittites (in Anatolia, modern Turkey) fought Egypt for hegemony in the Levant. Thutmose III, the pharaoh of Egypt, defeated the Hurrians at the battle of Megiddo in 1457 BCE, and Egypt exacted tribute from the Levantine city-states for a century. Following an internal religious-political crisis in the 14th century, Egypt left the Levant.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Near_East_1400_BCE.png>

*Thutmose III's Conquest of Syria-Palestine –
Egypt Defeated Mittani at Megiddo, c. 1418 BCE*

The Hittites, who introduced the horse from central Asia into Levantine conflicts, expanded southward to control Syria (in the northern Levant). Meanwhile, the Palestinian city-states (in the southern Levant) gained a tenuous independence. Under Ramesses II, Egypt attempted to reassert its control over the Levant. But at the battle of Kadesh in 1275 BCE, Egypt was fortunate to earn a

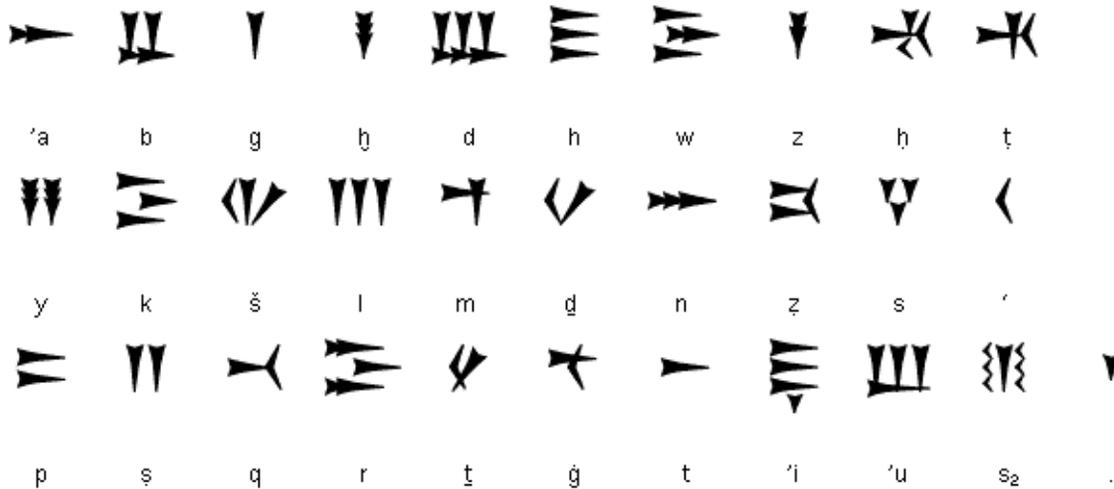
standoff with the Hittites. Egypt and the Hittites signed a peace treaty that gave Syria to the Hittites and Palestine to Egypt. That treaty, the first mutual defense and trade pact in world history, was honored for 200 years. Egypt focused on tribute and trade in Palestine (the southern Levant), whereas the Hittites stressed patron/client obligations in Syria (the northern Levant).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hitt_Egypt_Perseus.png>

Ramesses II's Incursions in Syria-Palestine – Egypt (Green) Was Stalemated by the Hittites (Red) at Kadesh, c. 1275 BCE

Ugarit was the leading Levantine port and city-state. It served as an entrepôt, linking the Aegean with the Euphrates via Aleppo in northern Syria. Artisans produced high quality bronze weapons and vessels, linen and woolen cloth, wine, and wooden objects. About 1400 BCE, Ugaritic scribes designed the world's first alphabet, using thirty Semitic cuneiform signs. The Ugaritic alphabet was the direct ancestor of the Phoenician alphabet and of subsequent alphabets used in writing the Greek and Latin languages. Marauding nomads destroyed Ugarit – and the Hittites as well – in about 1200 BCE.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugaritic_alphabet

Ugaritic Alphabet, The World's First – c. 1400 BCE

Foreign Imperialism in the Levant (First Millennium BCE). During the millennium before the Romans took control in 64-62 BCE, the Levant was continuously under foreign imperial rule. Four different empires, two Semitic and two Indo-European, superimposed governments to tax Levantine agriculture and trade in that period.

Sargonid Assyria (911-626 BCE) expanded from its capital, Nineveh, in northern Mesopotamia to control Babylonia (southern Mesopotamia), Syria, Israel, and Phoenicia (the eastern Mediterranean coast of the Levant). The Assyrians had a holy war ideology based on a belief that their god, Assur, demanded that their kings assert universal rule. They assembled the most powerful army that the world had ever seen, featuring new and better iron weapons (helmets and long lances) and effective siege capability (towers and earth works) to capture fortified towns. Despite their need to contain recurring rebellions in Babylonia and Iran, the Assyrians overextended their empire by invading Egypt

twice – in 674 BCE and 667 BCE. They fell to the Babylonians and Medes (from western Iran) in 612 BCE.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Neo-Assyrian_map_824-671_BC.png

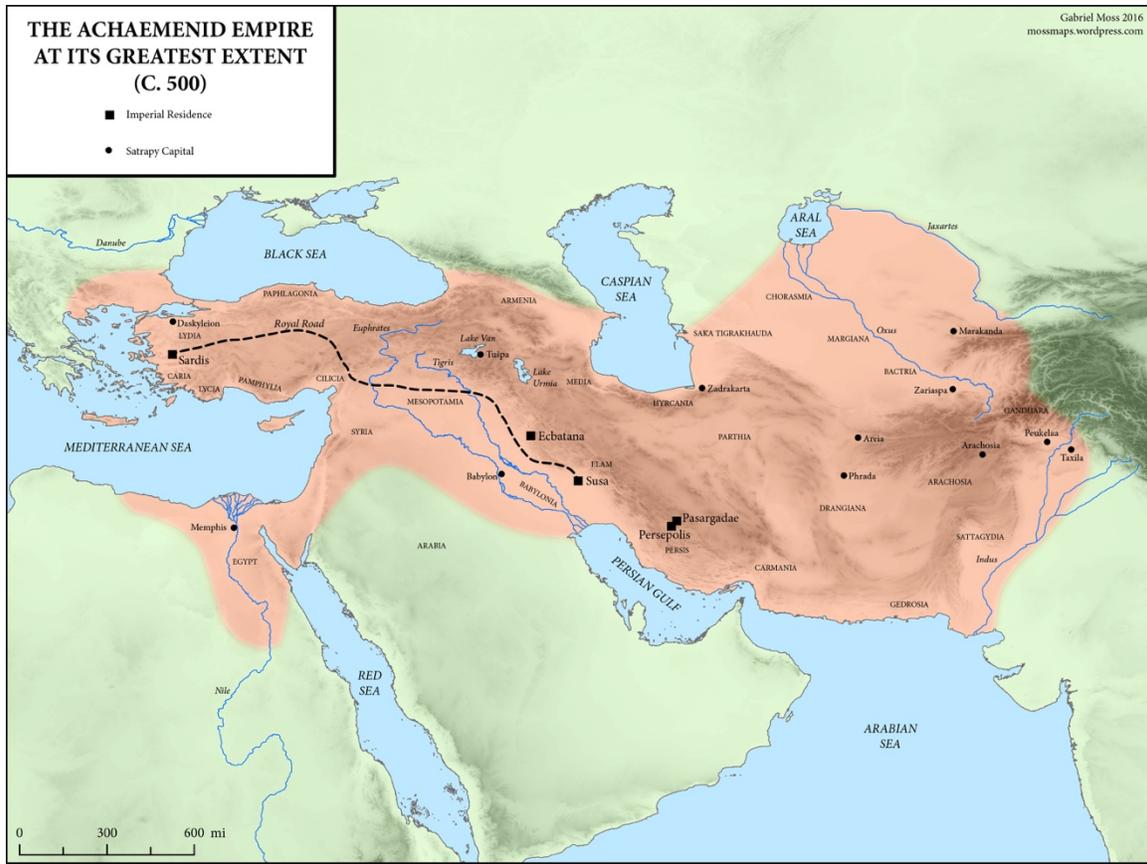
Sargonid Assyria (911-612 BCE) – Holy War Ideology Based On Extreme Religious Tenets Led To Destruction At Home

Chaldean Babylonia (626-539 BCE) next ruled the Levant.

Nebuchadrezzar (ruled 604-562 BCE) waged vicious campaigns in Syria and Israel, destroying Jerusalem in 587 BCE. He also rebuilt

his capital of Babylon with magnificent architecture, featuring the massive Tower of Babel.

Achaemenid Persia (539-330 BCE) took Chaldean Babylon unopposed in 539 BCE and gained control of the Levant for two centuries. From their capital at Persepolis, the Persians created a vast empire based on benevolent rule, stretching from India in the east to Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt in the west. They governed indirectly, using local officials as tax collectors, and encouraged private agriculture and trade. The Persians captured and ruled Egypt twice (525-404 BCE and 343-332 BCE), but were defeated by a Greek alliance at Marathon (490 BCE).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Achaemenid_Empire_at_its_Greatest_Extent.jpg>

The Achaemenid Persian Empire At Its Greatest Territorial Extent, c. 500 BCE

Alexander the Great of Macedonia, one of antiquity's leading military leaders, conquered the entire Achaemenid Persian Empire between 334 and 323 BCE. After his death, the Levant was governed by Hellenistic kingdoms ruled by descendants of Alexander's generals – first Ptolemaic Egypt, centered in

Alexandria, and later the Seleucid kingdom (Mesopotamia, Syria, Israel, and Palestine), with its capital in Antioch (on the Mediterranean Sea, now in southern Turkey). Then Rome took over.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Diadochi.png>>

*The Hellenistic (Seleucid, Antigonid, and Ptolemaic) Kingdoms,
2nd century BCE*

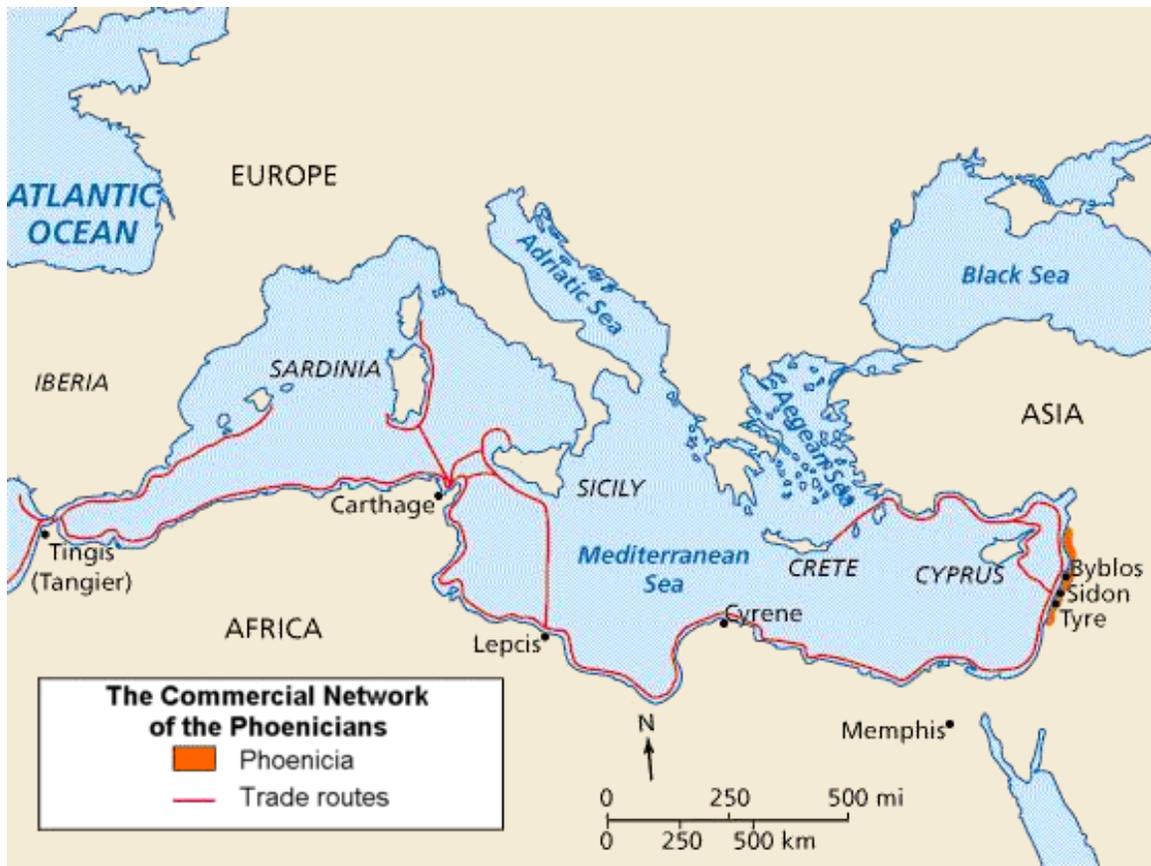
Phoenicia and Israel. For two millennia, the Levant was hotly contested by foreign empires – Amorites, Hittites, Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Macedonians. Nevertheless, Bernard Knapp, the eminent anthropologist, historian, and

specialist on ancient western Asia, has concluded that the contributions of two small, extraordinary groups of Semitic-speaking people – the Phoenicians and the Israelites – provided the most significant legacies from the pre-Roman era in the Levant:

Yet this region's greatest impact on history was to be its religious and cultural legacies, notably Hebrew monotheism and the Phoenician alphabet. Empires rise and fall, but beliefs and ideas defy the passage of time.

The Phoenicians lived in the eastern Mediterranean.

Their history is linked with their coastal towns – Arwad, Byblos, Berytus (Beirut), Sarepta, Sidon, and Tyre. The Phoenicians were traders and craftsmen, and their homeland had a good agricultural base and rich cedar and pine resources. The skilled Phoenicians added value to their trade goods by creating fine dyed linens (using purple dye from local sea snails), detailed glasswork, and metal and ivory products. The Phoenicians expanded into North Africa (Carthage), Sicily, Sardinia, and Spain to establish trade routes across the Mediterranean.



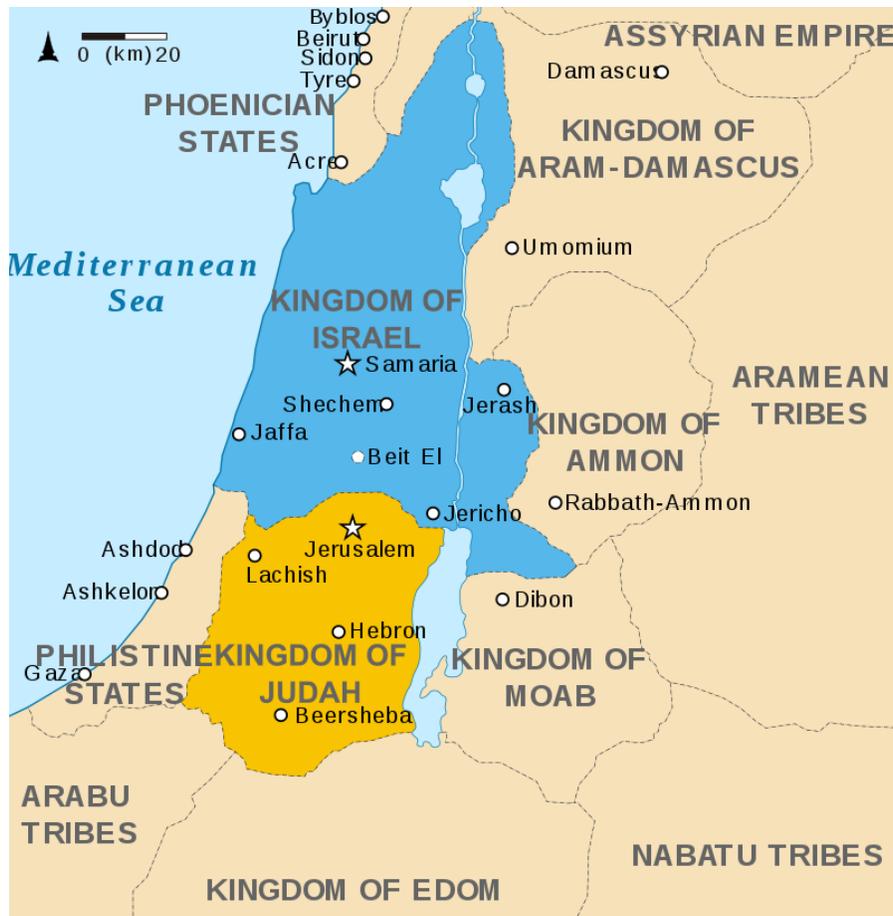
Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PhoenicianTrade.png>>

*The Phoenician Expansion, 11th-2nd centuries BCE –
Established Trading Colonies in North Africa, Sicily, and Iberia*

In contrast, the twelve tribes of Israel were agriculturalists. In 1300 BCE, Canaan (modern Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, and Jordan) consisted of small city-states and their hinterlands, populated by Semitic-speaking Amorites. Marauding nomads (the Sea Peoples) destroyed the Canaanite city-states in the late 13th century. Thereafter in the 12th century, disrupted Canaan was

settled by semi-nomadic migrant groups – Israelites (from Mesopotamia) in the eastern hill country, Philistines (from Crete) on the southern Mediterranean coast, and Aramaeans (from Arabia) in the north. The settlement was gradual and peaceful.

The Israelites introduced three key agricultural innovations – terracing (to utilize hillsides), iron tools (and weapons), and cisterns (to collect rainwater). David (ruled *c.* 1000-965) unified the twelve Israelite tribes under one kingdom, running from Syria to the Gulf of Aqaba. Solomon (ruled 965-926) built the Israelites' principal Temple in Jerusalem. After Solomon's death, the monarchy split into two kingdoms – Judah in the south and Israel in the north. Israel's independence ended in 722, when Sargon II deported 27,000 Israelites to Assyria and converted Israel into the Assyrian province of Samaria. The Assyrians overextended by invading Egypt and fell to the Babylonians and the Medes in 612 BCE.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kingdoms_of_Israel_and_Judah_map_830.svg>

Two Israelite Kingdoms (Israel and Judah), 926-722 BCE

Chaldean Babylonia (626-539 BCE) ruled Israel and Judah for less than a century. Nebuchadrezzar waged vicious campaigns, destroying Jerusalem in 587 BCE and exiling one-fourth of Judah's people (mostly the skilled elite) to Babylonia. When Cyrus of Achaemenid Persia conquered Babylonia in 539 BCE, he

permitted the Israelites to return home. Under the leadership of Zerubabel, 10,000 Jewish people returned to Israel and rebuilt Jerusalem.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cyrus_Cylinder.jpg>

*The Cyrus Cylinder, 538 BCE, Cyrus the Great, Achaemenid
Persia – History’s First Human Rights Charter*

Israel later broke away from the Seleucid Kingdom and became independent under the Maccabees in 167 BCE, but Rome conquered it in 63 BCE. Following the Bar Kochba Revolt (132-135 CE), the number of Jews residing in Roman Judaea fell from

1.3 million to 800,000 because of war losses, executions, and deportations a series of revolts.

The Roman Empire in Syria (1st century BCE-5th century CE)

The Strategy of Roman Imperialism. The Roman Empire was top-heavy. By the end of the first century BCE, the capital city of Rome had a population of 1 million permanent residents and other Italian cities were home to another million. The total population of the Roman Empire was comparable to that of the Han Empire in China, about 60 million. Perhaps one-tenth lived in cities, mostly in peninsular Italy. The Romans' imperial strategy was to use strong military power and effective public administration to create and transfer wealth from conquered provinces to Rome and the Italian peninsula. Heavy taxation of agriculture in the provinces provided food and entertainment – bread and circuses – for Rome, public amenities and religious monuments in all Roman cities, food and pay for a standing army of 300,000 troops, and public investment in infrastructure (roads and irrigation works).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_provinces_trajan.svg>

*The Roman Empire At Its Peak, c. 110 CE –
 Population About 60 Million*

Provincial agriculture was the key source of wealth. The principal farm commodities were the familiar Mediterranean triad – cereals (wheat and barley), grapes, and olives – supplemented by leather, milk, and meat from cattle, sheep, and goats. The provincial expansion of agriculture resulted from political stability, improved water control, and effective taxation. There were few new crops, improved seed varieties, or better farming or processing technologies.

The pattern of Roman rule and taxation differed markedly between the newly colonized areas of the Western Mediterranean – plus Egypt – and the Greek-speaking eastern Mediterranean. From its perspective, Rome introduced civilization in the barbarian west and imposed order in the unruly east. In the west – Africa Proconsularis (former Carthage in modern Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya), Gaul (modern France), and Iberia (modern Spain and Portugal) – and in Egypt, the Romans annexed the provinces, ruled directly, and stationed permanent military legions. Those provinces provided most of the empire’s agricultural wealth. In the east – Greece, Asia Minor (modern Turkey), the Levant (modern Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan), and Roman (northwestern) Arabia, Rome ruled indirectly through quasi-independent local governments and hoped that taxes would cover local military and administrative expenses. The west and Egypt thus paid for most Roman extravagances. In the Levant and the rest of the east, the Romans hoped to maintain control and break even.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Western_Roman_Empire_395_Tribes.png>

*Agricultural Wealth –
 Concentrated in the Western Roman Empire*

The Basis of the Roman Empire. The backbone of Roman imperialism was a militaristic ethos. Rome initially constructed a strong military machine by striking alliances with defeated Italian states. The expanding Roman state established military strength and discipline by placing career citizen soldiers in its legions and paying and feeding them well. Military discipline led to political

stability. Rome's territorial expansion outside of peninsular Italy created immediate wealth (booty and tribute) and eventual tax and food transfers. The military was a critical part of provincial development. Legion camps became Roman towns, and ex-soldiers settled on provincial lands and became tax-paying farmers. A military career was prestigious and lucrative in imperial Rome.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galea_\(helmet\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galea_(helmet))>

*Militaristic Ethos in Roman Administration –
Decorated Roman Officer's Helmet (Galea)*

Rome's strict socio-political hierarchy allowed the rich to control the poor, but permitted social mobility. The three

aristocratic ranks – senators (elected officials at the top of the pyramid), equestrians (military officers and officials of the central government), and decurions (members of local governments) – usurped political power, while free citizens, non-citizens, and slaves produced most of the agricultural wealth. During the Republic (509-27 BCE), the Senate elected the rulers. But under the Principate (27 BCE-476 CE), imperial succession prevailed, often decided by military prowess.

Effective public administration was a central pillar of the pragmatic Roman Empire. The government maintained law and order, collected taxes, and ran on a cash basis (without borrowing). The central bureaucracy was small, about one-twentieth that of contemporary Han China. Much administration was done in cities. The state did not directly control production or trade and built no state factories. The effective enforcement of Roman law encouraged the development of private trade and enterprise. The government carried out regular provincial censuses to facilitate the

collection of agricultural (property and head) taxes. Peninsular Italy was exempted from those taxes.

The Roman Empire thus was based on a disciplined army, a hierarchical society, and a small but effective bureaucracy to collect agricultural taxes. That solid basis encouraged a wide variety of technological innovations – aqueducts, concrete, vertical water-wheels, Roman arches, and hydraulic mining.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:0_Sarcophage_d%27Acilia_-_Pal._Massimo_alle_Terne.JPG>

*Roman Senators, 3rd century CE –
Effective Bureaucracy For Tax Collection*

Origins of Rome and the Roman Republic. The legendary founding of Rome occurred in the mid-8th century BCE, when Romulus killed his twin brother, Remus, and established the city of Rome. For several centuries, the Latin-speaking city struggled to survive but gradually expanded by defeating its Etruscan neighbors in central and northern Italy. By the mid-3rd century BCE, Rome had gained control of the entire Italian peninsula south of the Po River by forming alliances with small Italian kingdoms and by taking over the Greek city-states in southern Italy. The Romans defeated Hannibal of Carthage in the late 3rd century BCE and gained Sicily, Sardinia, and coastal Iberia.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_conquest_of_Italy.PNG

The Expansion of the Roman Empire In Italy – 500-218 BCE

Rome conquered Gaul (modern France) in two parts –
 Provence in 121 BCE, and central and northern Gaul in 50 BCE

(following Julius Caesar's eight-year campaign). The Roman Empire expanded into Greece in the first century BCE, and Gnaeus Pompey conquered Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and Syria, including Jerusalem, by defeating the Seleucid Hellenes (Macedonians) in 64-62 BCE. Between 62 and 50 BCE, Pompey, Caesar, and Marcus Crassus ruled jointly as the First Triumvirate. Caesar then marched his conquering army back from Gaul, took Rome, and became dictator (49-44 BCE) until he was murdered.

Octavian (Caesar's adopted son), Mark Antony, and Aemilius Lepidus ruled jointly and divided the empire under the Second Triumvirate (44-31 BCE). While Octavian took firm control in the west, Antony dallied with Cleopatra (the pharaoh of Egypt) in the east. The formation of the Mediterranean heart of the Roman Empire was completed in 31-30 BCE, when Octavian defeated Cleopatra and Antony at the Battle of Actium and captured Egypt from the Ptolemaic Hellenes. In 27 BCE, Octavian formed the Roman Principate, changed his name to Augustus, and declared himself the first Roman emperor.

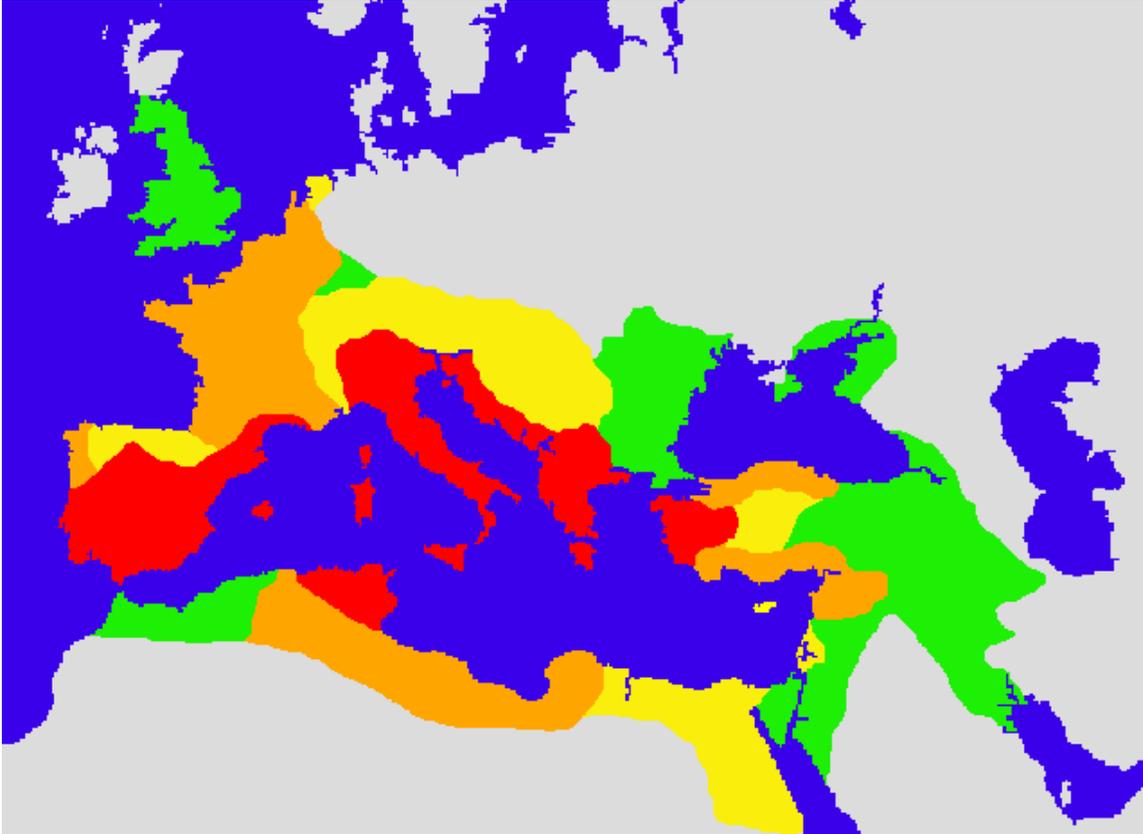


Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cleopatra_Tetradrachm_Antiochia.jpg>

*Cleopatra and Mark Antony, Two Sides of the Same Coin –
Silver Tetradrachm Struck At the Antioch Mint, 36 BCE*

Expansion and Consolidation under Imperial Rome. The expansion of the Roman Empire continued apace under Emperor Augustus (ruled 27 BCE-14 CE). His strategy was to expand the empire to its natural frontiers – rivers in the north and east, the Atlantic Ocean to the west, and the Sahara Desert in the south. To reach the Danube River in the northeast, Augustus ordered his army to conquer the northern Balkan tribes. To fill in a salient running from the Rhine River to the Alps, the Romans suppressed the Alpine tribes. In the east, the empire already extended to the

Euphrates River, and Augustus chose not to fight the Parthian (Persian) Empire across that boundary.

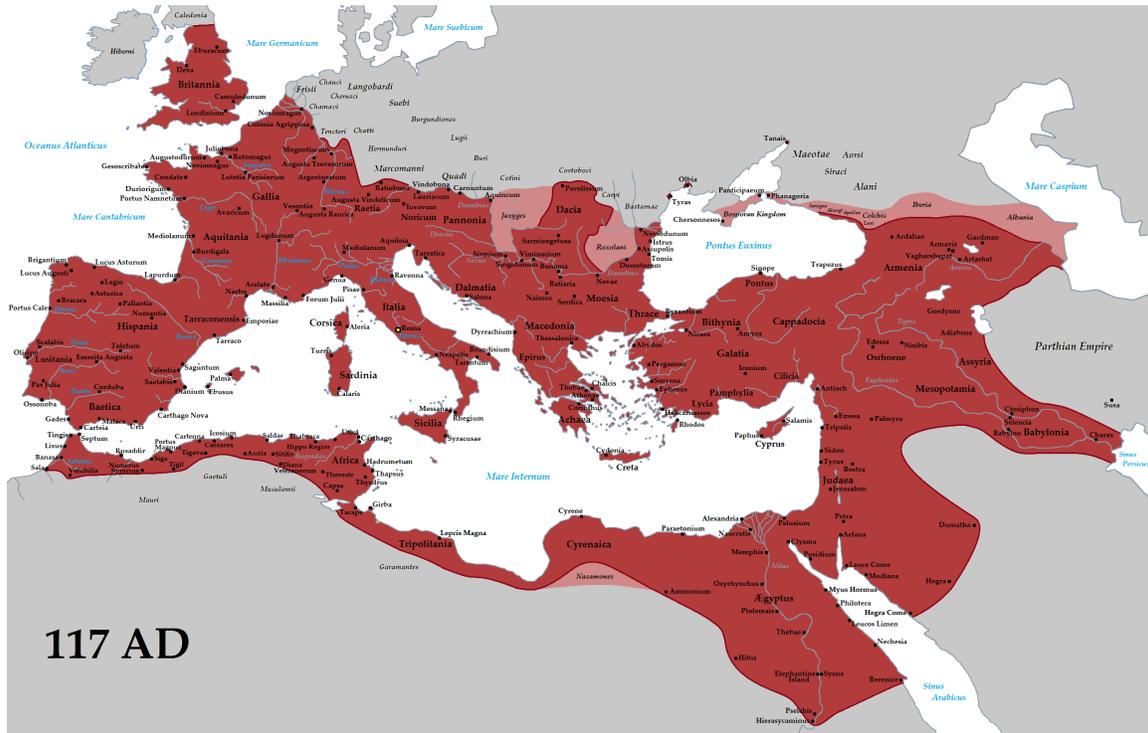


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_Empire.png

The Roman Empire under Augustus, 14 CE (Red, Tan, and Yellow)

Augustus then advised his successors to defend the Roman Empire at its natural frontiers and not to extend the empire further. But Claudius (ruled 41-54), seeking prestige, conquered Britain in 43, although Rome reaped no net economic benefit. Trajan (ruled 98-117) annexed Dacia (modern Romania), across the Danube, in

106 and Armenia and northern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) in 114. But his war with Parthia was fruitless, and the Euphrates River continued to be Rome's eastern border in the Levant.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_Empire_Trajan_117AD.png

The Roman Empire At Its Peak, 117 CE

Hadrian (ruled 117-138) consolidated the Roman Empire with defensive fortifications to fill gaps in the natural frontiers. Across northern Britain, he built Hadrian's Wall, a 75-mile-long, stone barrier. To provide a defensive barrier between the Rhine

and Danube Rivers, Hadrian constructed a 350-mile-long, timber palisade across the German frontier.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hadrian%27s_wall_at_Greenhead_Lough.jpg>

Hadrian's Wall At Greenhead Lough, Northern England

During the *pax Romana* in the 1st-mid-3rd centuries, political stability – and the effective suppression of land-based thievery and maritime piracy – encouraged the development of agriculture and trade. Migrations of Italian ex-soldier-settlers to northern Africa, Iberia, and Gaul eased population pressures in Italy and spurred

agricultural expansion in the western provinces. Agricultural taxation funded monument building in Rome – fora and palaces to glorify emperors and colosseum and baths to mollify plebians. The most significant and long-lasting of these monuments was the Roman Colosseum, opened by Emperor Titus in 80.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roma06\(js\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roma06(js).jpg)>

*Bread and Circuses in the Roman Empire –
The Colosseum (Flavian Amphitheater), 80 CE*

Sources of Wealth – Agriculture. Agriculture – producing cereals, olives, grapes, and animal products – was the main source

of wealth in the Roman Empire. Most farms were small, and even the larger farms consisted of many fragmented plots. Much of the agricultural land in the Roman Empire was farmed by private owner-operators – mostly smallholders but including some larger farmers. Tenant farmers provided labor on the aristocratic large estates and on the vast imperial land-holdings, confiscated when Rome annexed new provinces.

The market for rural labor functioned well, as evidenced by the common use of employment contracts for free workers. Some slave estates existed, but they were largely confined to central and southern Italy, Sicily, and Tripolitania (modern northwestern Libya) and never provided a dominant share of agricultural production in most of the Roman Empire. Agricultural profitability arose from intensification (greater labor use and shorter fallow periods) and specialization (the introduction of cash crops and better crop combinations). The Romans did not expand agriculture much by introducing improved agricultural technologies or new crops.

Most agricultural expansion occurred in the newly developed west (and in Egypt), not in the previously settled east. Wheat was grown in northern Africa, Egypt, northern Gaul, and southern Britain, olives were produced in Iberia and northern Africa, and vineyards were planted in southern Gaul and Iberia. The colonization of the western provinces with former Roman soldiers transferred manpower, skills, and capital to newly opened lands.



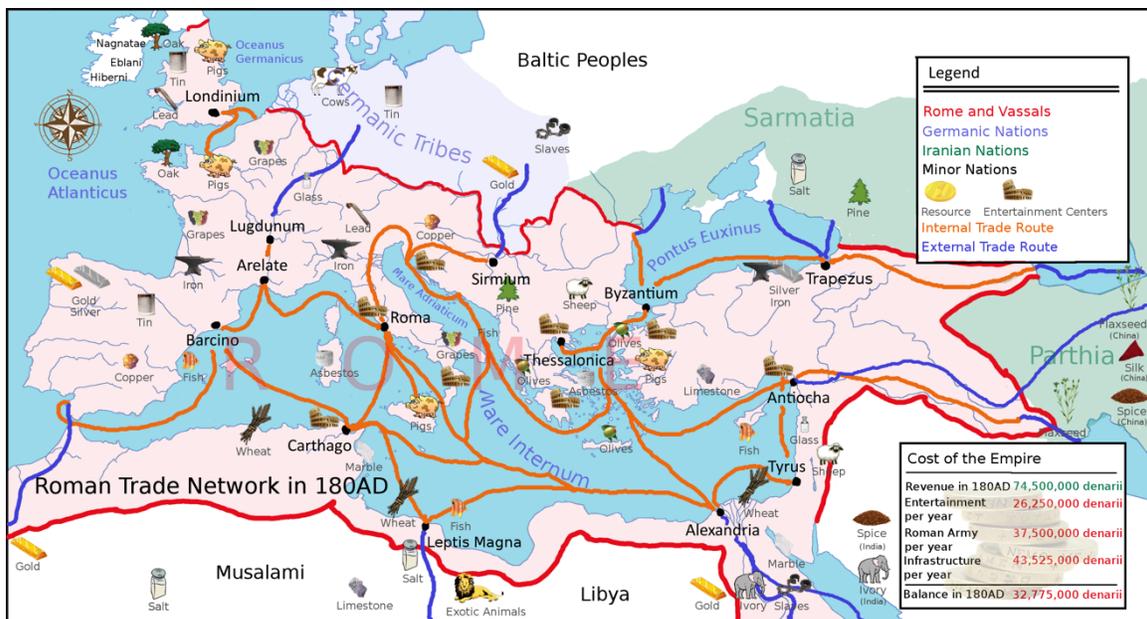
Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:M%C3%A4hmaschine.jpg>>

*Harvesting in Roman Agriculture –
Bas Relief On Wall in Buzanoi, Belgium*

Public investments in irrigation and transportation encouraged greater agricultural production. Agricultural taxation consisted of land taxes (*tributum soli*) and head taxes (*tributum capitis*) that were paid in kind or in cash and amounted to one-tenth to one-fifth of the value of farm production. Those taxes transferred most agricultural surpluses from smallholders and tenants and left many of them in dire poverty. Agriculture thus produced vast wealth for Rome's aristocracy but not for many of the empire's farmers.

Sources of Wealth – Foreign Trade. The gains from foreign trade were only a minor source of wealth in the Roman Empire. The high costs of land trade reduced traded volumes, especially in bulk commodities like grain and timber, and led to trade by sea where possible. The Roman Empire is renowned for its roads, but it was less costly to ship wheat to Rome by sea from Egypt than by land from southern Italy. Rome levied a 25 percent tariff (*tetarte*) on imports into the empire. The collection of trade taxes was strongly enforced, and tariff revenues went into imperial

coffers. Rome encouraged private participation in trading, financing, processing, and provisioning and protecting trade caravans. Roman governments rarely intervened militarily to promote or control foreign trade. Decisions to expand and defend the empire did not depend on foreign trade. Imperial policy promoted the key port cities, including Ostia (the port for Rome), Alexandria (Egypt), Antioch (Syria), and Carthage (North Africa).

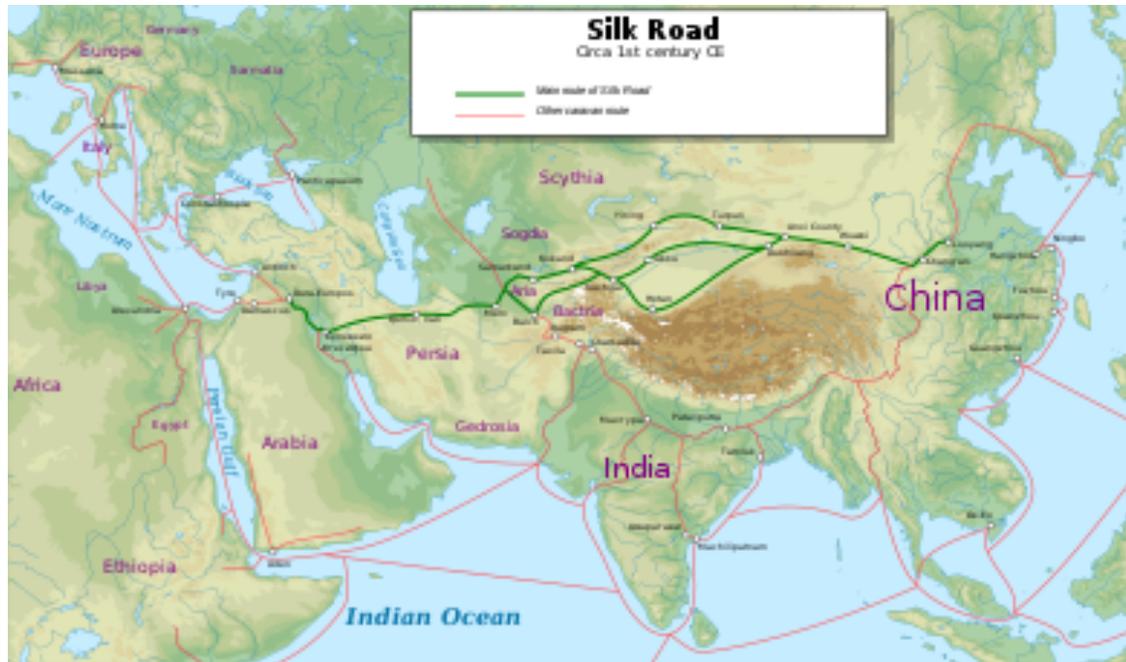


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Europe_180ad_roman_trade_map.png

Roman Trade Routes and Ports, 180 CE

Rome imported five “essential luxuries,” mostly consumed by the aristocracy. Pepper (along with ginger, cloves, and

cinnamon) came to Rome by sea and land on the Spice Route from India and the East Indies. Silk (plus ginger, porcelain, and cinnamon) moved along the Silk Road from China, mostly by land to Antioch. Ivory (plus gold and slaves) was transported on the Trans-Saharan Route on dromedary camels introduced from Arabia by the Romans. Frankincense and myrrh moved on the Incense Road from South Arabia via Petra (in modern Jordan) and Alexandria to Rome to provide religious and funerary incense and ingredients for perfumes and medicines. Amber (along with timber and fish) went on the Amber Route from the German Baltic across the Alps to Rome. To pay for those luxuries, Rome exported gold, silver, wine, glassware, pottery and textiles. Foreign trade thus sated the rich but provided limited wealth for Rome.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Silk_Road_in_the_I_century_AD_-_en.svg

*The Silk Road –
Linking the Roman and Han Chinese Empires, 1st c. BCE-3rd c. CE*

Sources of Wealth – Foreign Conquest. The Roman Empire grew between the 3rd century BCE and the 2nd century CE until the Mediterranean Sea became a Roman lake. Initially, Rome expanded to defeat its foreign enemies and control its natural frontiers. Rome later settled former soldiers in provincial colonies to develop an agricultural tax base. Julius Caesar founded 30 settler colonies in new Roman provinces and Augustus added 75 more. Political stability brought by the *Pax Romana* led to

economic prosperity in the provinces but only modest population growth, because most of the new wealth was transferred to Rome. Throughout the empire, provincial cities collected taxes, maintained law and order, and recruited soldiers for Rome. The city governments also paid, fed, clothed, and housed Roman legionnaires and provided them with transportation and equipment. The cities further maintained public buildings, baths, and aqueducts and put on religious festivals.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hadrian%27s_villa_near_Tivoli_366.JPG>

*Emperor Hadrian's Villa On 200 Acres Near Tivoli –
The Rich Benefited Most from Roman Conquest*

Imperial Rome followed three different models in governing, developing, and taxing its new territories. Each of the three models was tailored to the special political and economic conditions of the conquered regions. In the eastern Mediterranean, Rome sought to pacify the areas formerly ruled by Seleucid Hellenes, including the Levant. Consequently, they preserved the advanced Greek culture, ruled indirectly through existing local governments, and taxed enough to pay provincial expenses (including Roman troops) and to provide modest transfers to Rome. Roman occupation had little cultural impact in the Levant. Greek remained the language of government, the elite, and the cities, and Syriac (a Semitic language related to Aramaic) and other local languages were spoken in the countryside.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_Theatre_in_Bosra.jpg>

Rome Pacified the Greek East – Roman Theater In Bosra, Syria

In the western Mediterranean and northern Africa (except Egypt), Rome's strategy was to settle Roman ex-soldiers, introduce Roman culture and direct Roman rule, invest in irrigation to expand agriculture, and tax agriculture heavily to provide food and revenues for Rome and peninsular Italy. Roman governors in the western provinces developed an urban elite and introduced Roman culture, notably imperial ideology based on the capitoline triad of Roman gods – Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pont_du_Gard_BLS.jpg>

*Rome Developed and Taxed the West –
Pont du Gard, Roman Aqueduct Near Nîmes, Provence, France*

In Egypt, Rome preserved the Egyptian culture, ruled the province as an imperial reserve, introduced improved water wheels and threshers to enhance agricultural productivity, and taxed Nile agriculture highly to transfer food to Rome. The Roman officials in Egypt were primarily interested in transferring resources and wheat to Rome, and they made little attempt to influence Egyptian culture other than to persecute Coptic Christianity.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trajan_on_the_Roman_Mammisi_at_Dendera,_Egypt.jpg>

Rome Invested In and Heavily Taxed Egypt – Emperor Trajan Making Offerings To Egyptian Gods, Dendera Temple, Egypt

Within the Roman Empire, the locus of economic productivity and power shifted twice – from the Greek-speaking east to Italy (in the 1st century BCE) and from Italy to the expanding western provinces (during the 2nd century CE). Near the end of the Roman era, the Iberian peninsula was one of the empire’s most prosperous regions, producing wine, olive oil, and minerals (gold, silver, and copper).

Political power also shifted away from Rome and peninsular Italy as the empire matured. The Roman Senate became dominated by senators from the provinces. In the early 3rd century, several emperors were natives of Roman provinces – Septimius Severus (ruled 193-211) and Caracalla (ruled 211-217) were from Leptis Magna in Tripolitania (modern Libya), and Marcus Aurelius (Elagabalus) (ruled 218-222) and Alexander Severus (ruled 222-225) were from Syria.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons, available at*
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Septimius_Severus_Glyptothek_Munich_357.jpg>

Septimius Severus (ruled 193-211), Native of Leptis Magna in Tripolitania (Libya) – Rome Encouraged Ethnic Minorities

Supply of Food for Rome. When Augustus established the Roman Empire in 27 BCE, Rome's population had reached 1 million, and it remained at that very high level for the following three centuries. No other European city reached that size until London did so in the early 19th century. A large majority of Rome's people were very poor and lived in hovels. Life expectancy in the Roman Empire was only about 25 years, comparable to that in China and India at the turn of the 20th century. A major challenge for Roman governments to avoid political unrest thus was to provision Roman residents with ample food supplies.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ancient_Rome_\(cropped\).JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ancient_Rome_(cropped).JPG)>

*Upper Class Roman Citizens –
Portrayed By Albert Kretschmer, Royal Court Theatre, Berlin*

The government chose not to establish state monopolies to distribute food. It instead encouraged private traders to supply food for Rome by improving the grain-handling ports and by choosing not to establish state-owned shipping companies. Private trading companies handled almost all of Rome's grain, wine, olive oil, and luxury foods. The use of loans to finance trade was common, and the interest rate was typically 12 percent per year,

except for riskier ventures in maritime commerce. To mollify poor residents, imperial Rome provided a grain dole. The government gave about 80,000 tons annually of free wheat to 200,000 residents of Rome (the *plebs frumentaria*). But most grain and all other foodstuffs were not subsidized, and Roman emperors refused to offer free food supplies outside of Italian cities.

The annual total wheat consumption in Rome was about 400,000 tons. Almost all wheat for Rome, including the wheat doles, came from in-kind agricultural taxes (*annona*). Africa Proconsularis (former Carthage and modern Tunisia, Algeria, and western Libya) provided well over half of Rome's wheat, Egypt supplied about one-third, and the remainder came mostly from Sicily and Sardinia. All grain was transferred to Rome on private ships. The Roman government chose not to provide food for emergency food relief. The emperor and the senators preferred, instead, to practice euergetism (public generosity of the wealthy) and give grain or cash to the poor to gain political credit. Food was power.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Isis_Geminiana_fresco.jpg>

*The Roman River Ship, Isis Geminiana –
Fresco, Ostia Necropolis, 2nd-3rd century CE*

Extravagance and Resentment – Contrasts in Food

Consumption. Wide income disparities existed in the Roman

Empire. The annual income of a typical rich Roman senator was probably 100 times that of an average fully-employed worker.

Many poor farmers and all plebeians were aware of the extravagant consumption of the rich aristocracy. As the income inequalities widened in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, the rural poor increasingly resented the heavy agricultural tax burden that funded aristocratic extravagance.

Most rural and urban residents were very poor and subsisted on a meager diet. Poor consumers obtained their food energy mostly from starch in cereals and protein in pulses, and they drank vinegary, cheap wine. They consumed emmer wheat and barley as porridge, durum wheat as flat-cakes, and, rarely, soft wheat as bread. The poor made soups of pulses – lentils, chickpeas, broad beans, and peas. Sometimes they were able to diversify their diets with cheese, figs, or grapes and, at festivals, with fish or meat. But heavy taxation kept the poor at near subsistence consumption levels.

In sharp contrast, the small Roman elite – government officials, landowners, and merchants – had a diversified and high caloric diet. Their cereal consumption was mostly wheat bread and cakes sweetened with honey. The rich ate large amounts of meat (beef, lamb, and pork), fish, and shellfish, but few pulses. They used dill, mint, thyme, and imported pepper in meat sauces and enjoyed a variety of fruits (figs, grapes, apples, pears, and olives) and vegetables (lettuce, onions, celery, and cabbage). The

rich drank quality wines, but avoided beer. The best wine was Falernian from Campania. This contrast in food consumption patterns sharply illustrates the growing societal pressures in the Roman Empire. The rich became complaisant while the poor were resentful. Neither group saw defense of the empire as a high priority.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pompejanischer_Maler_um_70_001.jpg>

Elite Food, Still-life Painting – Pompeii, c. 70 CE

Rome's Vulnerable Eastern Frontier. Rome was vulnerable in the east because the Euphrates River was not an effective natural frontier. Rome needed to protect the province of Syria and its key city and port, Antioch. But in northeastern Syria, the Euphrates flowed through desert, which was impossible to garrison. In southeastern Syria and all along the eastern border of the province of Roman Arabia, there were no rivers and the boundaries were ill-defined in harsh desert. The Romans built forts, stationed permanent legions, and tried to construct a defensive barrier on the empire's eastern frontier. Yet mobility was the key to desert warfare. Accordingly, Rome's enemies in the east – first the Parthians and later the Sasanian Persians – chose not to construct forts along the Euphrates.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A08_Dura_Europos_615.jpg>

*Dura Europus, Eastern Syrian Frontier on the Euphrates River –
Captured by Rome, 165*

The Parthian Kingdom, with its capital at Ctesiphon (on the Tigris River in modern Iraq), prevented Roman expansion across the Euphrates River from the 1st century BCE until the early 3rd century CE. Occasionally, the Parthians and Romans sparred in warfare. But typically there was an uneasy truce, buffered by a stretch of no-man's-land along the Euphrates River and through the desert. Both sides gained from encouraging and taxing private

trade on the Silk and Spice Roads, so they avoided prolonged warfare.

In 224, the Sasanid Persian Empire defeated and absorbed Parthia and quickly became a more obstreperous and powerful opponent for Rome. The Sasanid ruler, Shapur I, conquered Syria, took over Antioch, and captured the Roman Emperor, Valerian, for ransom in 260 during the Battle of Edessa.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bas_relief_nagsh-e-rostam_al.jpg>

Shapur I Captures Roman Emperor Valerian, Battle of Edessa, 260 – Bas Relief Sculpture, Naqsh-e Rostam, Fars Province, Iran

The Roman Empire thus was in crisis in the mid-3rd century. The traumas in the east were matched by difficulties along the northern frontier. Two Germanic confederations, the Alemanni and the Goths, invaded across the Rhine and Danube frontiers. The western provinces subsequently seceded and formed a separate Gallic empire. The Roman Empire thereby suffered massive destruction and economic dislocation. Between 268 and 283, three Illyrian soldier-emperors (from the Balkans) – Claudius II (ruled 268-270), Aurelian (ruled 270-275), and Carus (ruled 282-283) – recaptured Gaul, Syria, and the lower Danube region and averted the collapse of the empire.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Ancient_Rome_271_AD.svg>

Rome's Mid-3rd-century Crisis – Secession of the Gallic Empire (Green Area) and the Palmyrene Empire (Yellow Area), 271 CE

Palmyra's Revolt. Rome's mid-3rd century crisis in the east was especially serious. The leaders of Palmyra revolted and captured much of the Roman Empire's eastern provinces. Palmyra ("the city of palms," called Tadmor locally) was a rich oasis and caravan city of perhaps 200,000 people located in the middle of the eastern Syrian desert. The enormous Efqqa spring provided ample water for nearby agriculture and herding.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palmyra_03.jpg>

Archeological Ruins of Palmyra – Pictured in 2010

The Palmyrenes were of mixed Aramaic and Arabic stock. They spoke both Palmyrene (a dialect of Aramaic, the ancient Semitic language of Christ) and Greek. Palmyrene was the language of the common people and Greek of the elite and of government. The origins of Palmyra are unclear. Assyrian merchants referred to the oasis city (then called Tadmor) in the 19th century BCE, and a much smaller trading city existed at Palmyra during the period of Seleucid rule of Syria preceding the Roman takeover. The Roman general, Germanicus, captured Palmyra in

18 CE and incorporated it into the Roman Empire. But Palmyra and its strong-willed merchants remained semi-autonomous.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons, available at*
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palmyra_Senato_-_DecArch_-_1-123.jpg>

Site of the Palmyrene Senate – The Caravan City of Palmyra

Starting in the 1st century CE, Palmyra became a desert entrepôt. Palmyrene entrepreneurs developed a trade route through Palmyra that linked the port of Antioch on the Mediterranean Sea with the Persian Gulf – a key portion of the Silk Road that ran from Rome to Chang’an, China and connected the Roman and Han Chinese Empires. Palmyra benefited from its location on the maritime Silk Road. The sea-based Silk Road ran from the Indian

Ocean through the Persian Gulf up the Tigris-Euphrates Rivers across a land portage via Palmyra to the Mediterranean port of Antioch. The trading city of Palmyra provided caravanserai services, merchants, and trade financiers to the camel-based, Silk Road merchants. Chinese silk was the most profitable commodity traded through Palmyra, supplemented by Indian spices, especially pepper.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palmyra_trade.png

Palmyra – Key Oasis Trading City on the Overland and Maritime Silk Roads, Connecting the Roman Empire With Han China

Most of the well-off Palmyrene trader-banker families made their fortunes as large-scale herders in the rich pastures surrounding Palmyra, which were watered by the Efqa oasis. Some wealthy Palmyrene merchants also were ship-owners who engaged in the trade between India and Spasinou Charax, the port located where the Tigris-Euphrates River system enters the Persian Gulf. The Palmyrenes set up an effective military organization to protect the caravan trade from bandits in the desert region between Palmyra and the Euphrates River. Experienced Palmyrene soldiers later were recruited into the Roman legions in disproportionate numbers, and many became equestrian military officers for Rome.

In the 260s, Septimius Odenathus, the ruler of Palmyra and a Roman senator, saved the Roman Empire in the east. He defeated two pretenders to the throne, Macrianus and Quietus – who were hoping to conquer large portions of the Roman east and later to return to rule Rome. Odenathus then drove the Sasanid Persians out of Antioch and the rest of Syria and recovered the Roman province of Mesopotamia. But in 267, at the peak of his power

and prestige, Odenathus was murdered (along with a son from his first marriage) probably in a dynastic family quarrel. His wife, Zenobia, then ruled on behalf of her minor son, Vaballathus.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Queen_Zenobia_Addressing_Her_Soldiers_sc1080.jpg

Queen Zenobia, Leading Her Troops – Painting by Giambattista Tiepolo, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

Zenobia, an extraordinary leader, was charismatic, beautiful, and ambitious. She revolted against Roman rule, and in 270-271 she conquered the Roman provinces of Syria, Roman Arabia,

Palestine, and Egypt, and half of Asia Minor (to Ankara), including the Roman provinces of Cappadocia, Cilicia, and Galatia.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palmyrene_Empire.png>

The Palmyrene Empire, Under Queen Zenobia's Rule, in 271

But Zenobia's incredible military feat was short-lived.

Emperor Aurelian (ruled 270-275) soon re-conquered the Roman

east. In 272, he besieged Palmyra, captured Zenobia as she tried to flee on a camel to Persia, and exiled her to Rome (where she died a natural death at her palatial home in Tivoli). When other Palmyrenes revolted a second time in 273, Aurelian recaptured Palmyra and destroyed the city. Rome took direct control of Palmyra and quartered a Roman legion there, but the city lost its importance as a commercial center.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aureus_of_Aurelian.jpg>

*Roman Emperor Aurelian (ruled 270-275) –
Re-conquered Palmyra, Captured Zenobia, and Earned the Title
Restitutor Orbis (Restorer of the World)*

Revival, Division, and Dismemberment of the Roman Empire. After nearly collapsing under the weight of succession struggles, foreign invasions, and secessionist crises, the Roman Empire revived for a half century with stable leadership.

Diocletian (ruled 284-305) established the Tetrarchy – shared rule under four simultaneous emperors – that lasted for four decades.

The Tetrarchs strengthened the military by introducing mobile field units and increasing the size of their armies. They also checked inflation, which had been high in the 3rd century, by setting a fixed amount of gold in each coin to stop debasement of the currency.

Effective imperial renewal continued under Constantine (ruled 307-337), who imposed a flat tax on all commerce, introduced the stable *solidus* gold coinage, and improved army mobility. Constantine put an end to the Tetrarchy in 324. He is remembered best in history for building a new eastern capital city at Constantinople (former Byzantium and contemporary Istanbul)

and converting to Christianity, thereby ending Roman persecution of Christians.

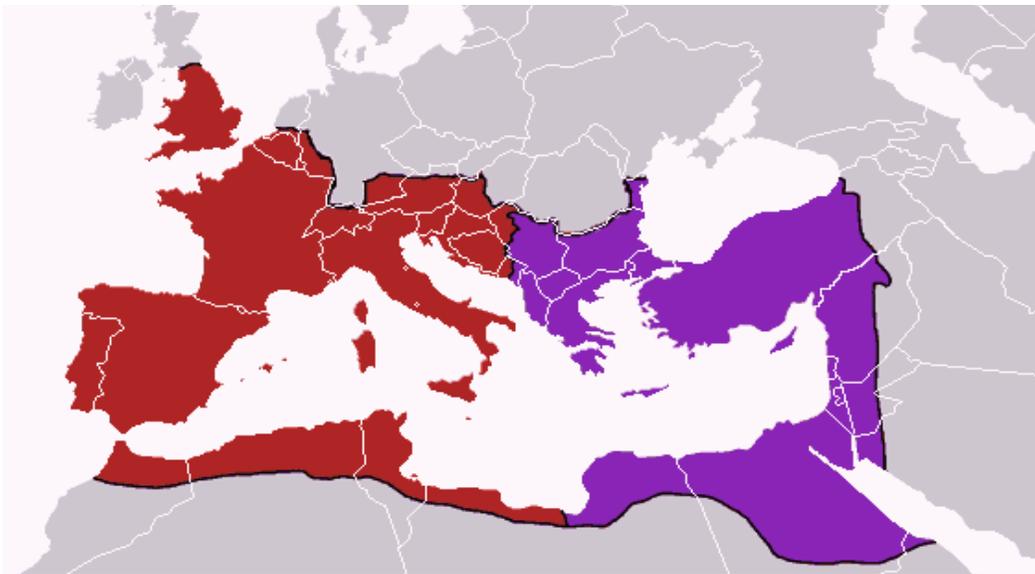


Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rome-Capitole-StatueConstantin.jpg>>

*Roman Emperor Constantine the Great (Ruled 307-337),
Founder of Constantinople – Capitoline Museum, Rome*

Nevertheless, the oppression of poor farmers increased in the 4th century and income disparities widened. Poor people throughout the empire increasingly resented the conspicuous consumption of the rich, especially their palatial residences, and their ability to avoid taxation.

Theodosius (ruled 379-395) tried to improve imperial governance in 395 by dividing the empire permanently between Rome (the west) and Constantinople (the east). The Levant (including Syria) then became a part of the Byzantine Empire, the eastern Roman Empire. But that division created competitive strains and occasional hostilities between the two halves of the Roman Empire, signaled military weakness, especially in the west, and did little to resolve the deepening problems facing the tottering empire.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Theodosius_I%27s_empire.png>

*The Roman Empire After Division by Theodosius I in 395 CE –
Western Roman Empire (Red) and Byzantine) Empire (Purple)*

Dismemberment of the western half of the Roman Empire by militaristic peoples from the north followed in the 5th century. Between 418 and 439, the Vandals successively conquered Gaul, Spain, and Roman Africa and took over the areas that provided much of Rome's food. The Huns moved into the Hungarian plains in 420 and invaded Gaul and northern Italy in 451. But the Huns did not settle permanently in Roman territory, and the Hunnish threat subsided after the death of the Huns' leader, Attila, in 453.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eurasian_steppe_belt.jpg>

*The Huns Migrated Along the Eurasian Steppe (Aqua Area) –
Disrupted Empires in China, Persia, Rome, and India*

The Anglo-Saxons invaded Britain and imposed their Germanic language on the conquered Celtic residents. The Franks

displaced the Vandals and Visigoths and captured France. The Ostrogoths took over Italy and Rome and forced the last western Roman emperor, Romulus Augustus, to abdicate in 476 and retire in Campania. After five centuries of rule, the once all-powerful western Roman Empire had fallen.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Europe_and_the_Near_East_at_476_AD.png>

*Western Europe and the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire –
After the Fall of the Western Roman Empire, 476*

Why the Roman Empire Declined and Fell. The Roman Empire began to decline in the mid-3rd century, divided in half in the late 4th century, and the western part, centered in Rome, splintered and fell in the 5th century (476). The eastern half, centered in Constantinople, became the Byzantine Empire and succumbed to Turkish invaders in the mid-15th century (1453). Why did the Roman Empire divide and fall? Edward Gibbon, the 18th century British historian, argued that the loss of individual liberty eroded the Romans' will to resist invasion and that the *pax Romana* led to military indiscipline. These morale influences can be reinterpreted as parts of a larger process of internal decay and foreign invasion.

Internal decay resulted from extravagant aristocratic spending and the over-taxing of provincial agriculture. Poor farmers and urban plebeians resented the rising income inequality. Provincial residents opposed Roman taxation. Economic disparities created social unrest. Beginning in the mid-3rd century, chronic instability of government and repeated foreign invasions

undercut the political stability and security that had been the main benefits of Roman rule for the oppressed poor.

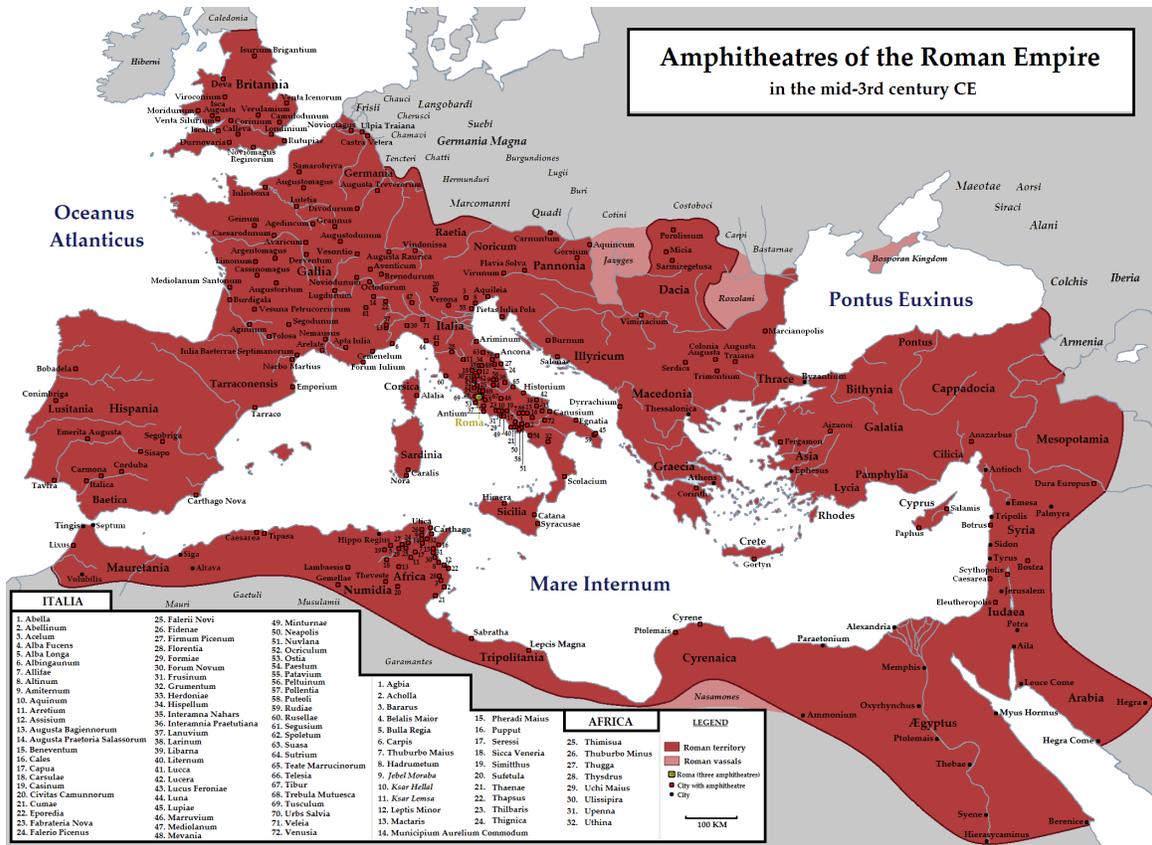


Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:British_Museum_Thetford_Hoard_Rings.jpg

>

*Gold Jewelry from the Thetford Hoard –
The Privilege of Ruling in the Roman Empire*

At the same time, religious dissension spread and Roman officials increased the persecution of Christians, exacerbating social tensions. Tight central political control might have staved off those growing pressures. But Rome instead experienced political instability. Provincial military commanders vied for central leadership and caused imperial succession crises.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Amphi-Rome.PNG>

230 Amphitheatres of the Roman Empire, mid-3rd century CE – Constructed Mostly With Agricultural Taxes, Creating Instability

Political instability was coupled with a loss of military strength, especially in the Roman west. The Roman Empire lost two-thirds of its eastern field army in the disastrous Battle of Hadrianople (modern Edirne, in the European portion of Turkey) in 378, when the invading Goths annihilated the outnumbered and ill-disciplined Roman troops. Rome never recovered from the

consequent shortage of military manpower. Its myopic leaders refused to reign in Roman extravagances – food doles, monuments, public games, and rich diets – and transfer funds to the military. To keep their landed estates operating, western aristocrats substituted cash for troops, exacerbating military manpower shortages.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pompeii_family_feast_painting_Naples.jpg>

*An Elite Roman Family's Meal, Pompeii, 1st century CE –
Tax Breaks for the Rich Led to Political Instability*

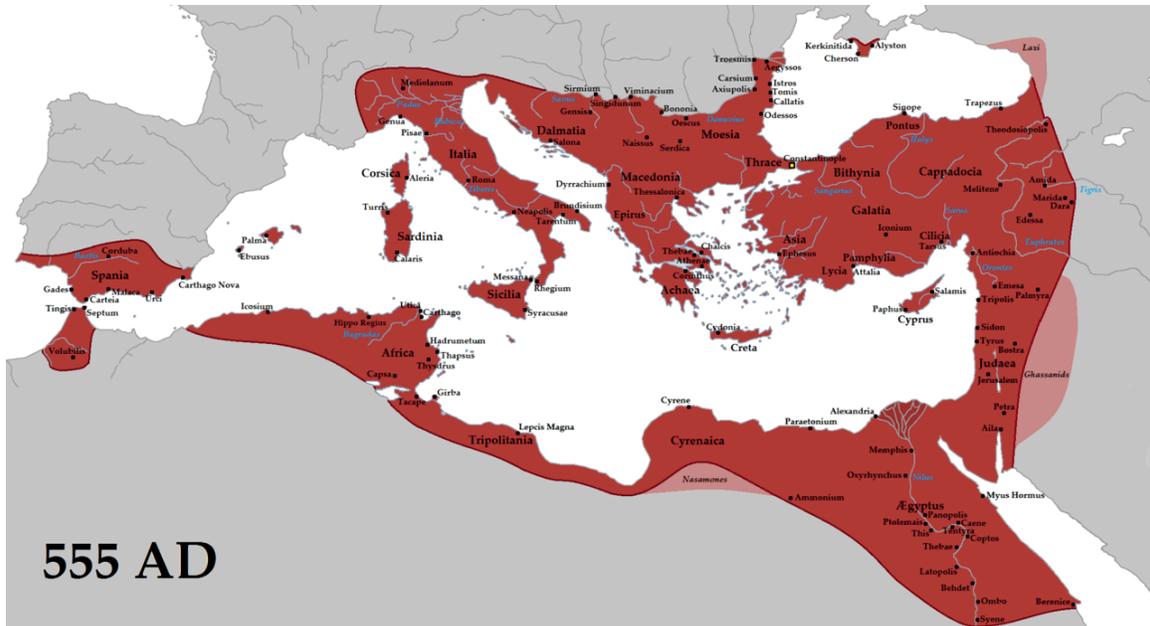
Rome thus became ripe for foreign invasion. Fierce Barbarian invaders from central and northern Europe – Vandals, Huns, Anglo-Saxons, Visigoths, Franks, and Ostrogoths – took advantage of Roman military weakness, inflicted large losses on Roman armies, and dismembered the Roman Empire. During the ensuing Dark Ages and Medieval Period, Europe largely abandoned Roman technology, education, law, and long-distance trade. It took over 1200 years before any parts of Europe achieved standards of living comparable to those enjoyed by the Romans when the empire was thriving.

Syria after the Roman Empire (late 4th century-present)

Syria under Byzantine Rule (395-641). During the fourth century, Syria (and the rest of the Levant) became part of the eastern half of the Roman Empire, known later as the Byzantine Empire because Constantinople was located in the area called Byzantium. The western half of the Roman Empire fell (in 476) to conquering Germanic tribes. But the eastern half, the Byzantine Empire, remained a powerful force for seven centuries, until the

Seljuk Turks defeated the Byzantines at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 and claimed the eastern highlands and central plateau of Anatolia (Asia Minor in modern Turkey). The Byzantines persevered as a lingering remnant, centered on impregnable Constantinople, for four more centuries until finally falling in 1453 to the Ottoman Turks.

Justinian (ruled 527-565) nearly realized the ultimate goal of all Byzantine emperors – to reunite the former Roman Empire under Byzantine rule. He first secured a peace treaty with the Sasanid Persians in 532, eliminating a military threat from the east. Then he defeated the Ostrogoths (Italy), Visigoths (Spain), and Vandals (Carthage in modern Tunisia) after 23 years of warfare. By 555, the Mediterranean had nearly become a Byzantine lake.



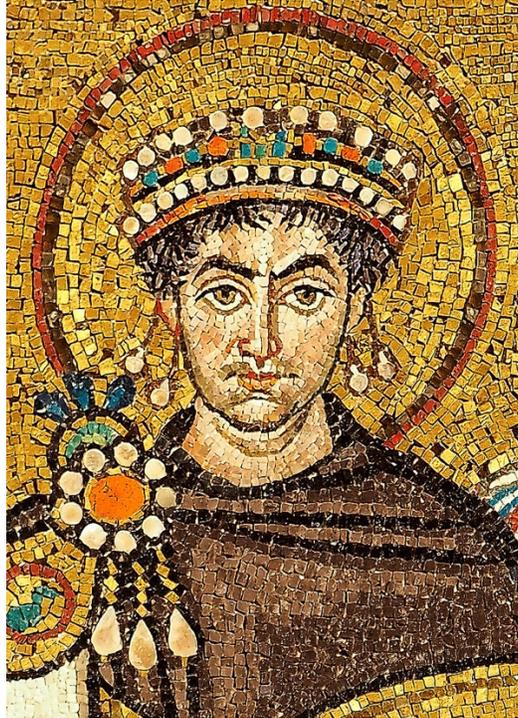
Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
 <<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Justinian555AD.png>>

*The Byzantine Empire At Its Greatest Extent –
 After Emperor Justinian’s Reconquest, 555*

Under Justinian, the laws of Byzantium were codified and the arts flourished. However, the costly wars to re-conquer the Mediterranean region ruined the Byzantine economy and led to the eventual loss of most conquered areas within a century.

Byzantium’s main trading relationships were with Persian and Turkic peoples to the east. But Byzantine emperors myopically looked westward, hoping to recreate the Roman Empire. After Justinian, that goal was thwarted militarily by Lombards in the

west, Slavs in the north, and Arabs and Persians in the south and east.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaic_of_Justinianus_I_-_Basilica_San_Vitale_\(Ravenna\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaic_of_Justinianus_I_-_Basilica_San_Vitale_(Ravenna).jpg)>

Byzantine Emperor Justinian I (Ruled 527-565) – Contemporary Portrait Mosaic in the Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy

Syria's experience under Byzantine rule paralleled that of Egypt. Both Syrians and Egyptians resented Byzantine rule even more than previous Hellene and Roman domination because loose Byzantine administration led to political instability and the Byzantines taxed farmers and traders heavily. To avoid heavy

taxation imposed by the Sasanid Persians, much of the land-based trade on the Silk Road shifted northward (becoming maritime at the Byzantine port of Trebizon on the Black Sea in modern Turkey) to the disadvantage of Syria's two key trading entrepôts, Aleppo and Damascus, and its major port, Antioch.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Byzantinischer_Mosaizist_des_5._Jahrhunderts_002.jpg>

*Byzantine Youth Feeding His Donkey –
Mosaic, Great Palace of Constantinople, 5th century*

Like the Coptic Christians of Egypt, the Syriac Christians split from the Orthodox Christians, centered in Constantinople. At

the Council of Chalcedon in 451, Orthodox Church officials adopted a diphysite interpretation of the Holy Trinity (Christ had two natures, divine and human) whereas Syriac and Egyptian Christians believed in a monophysite interpretation (Christ had one nature that was both divine and human). Syriac Christians thus were viewed as heretics by Byzantine patriarchs.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons, available at* https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Byzantine_-_Votive_or_Dedicatory_Cross_-_Walters_57630.jpg

Byzantine Votive Cross, c. 550 – The Orthodox Church in Constantinople Eclipsed the Coptic Church in Alexandria

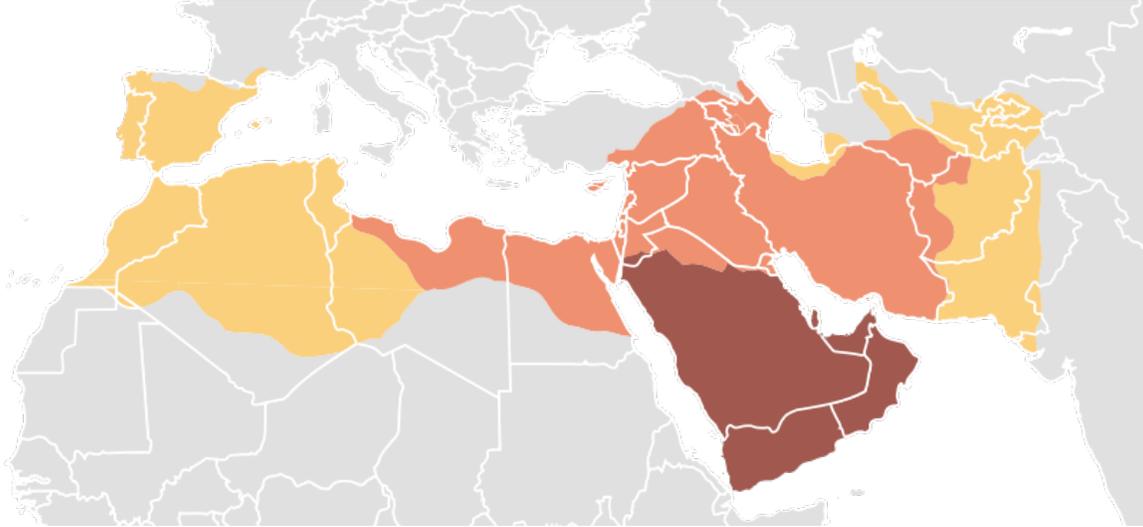
Syriac Christianity also was personal and stressed monasticism whereas official Orthodox Christianity was procedural and

hierarchical. By the 7th century, monophysite and tax-burdened Syria and Egypt were seeking ways to get out from under the oppressive, alien Byzantine domination.

Syria under the Islamic Caliphates (641-1169). Islam, a new monotheistic religion, arose in the Hijaz (northwestern Arabian) cities of Mecca and Medina in the early 7th century. Islam, then viewed by many Arab aristocrats as radical and reformist, appealed to the downtrodden masses because it offered a feasible way for them to achieve eternal salvation. Islam's five pillars – belief in one God with Muhammad as His Prophet (*shahada*), prayer five times daily (*salat*), annual alms-giving to the poor (*zakat*), pilgrimages to Mecca at least once per lifetime (*hajj*), and fasting during the month of Ramadan (*sawm*) – could be fulfilled readily by the poor as well as the rich.

In 634, two years after the death of Muhammad, Arab Muslims initiated a jihad – a holy war to spread the new religion. Syria (including modern Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan)

abutted the Hijaz to the north. The Arabs viewed it as critical in their diaspora, and they conquered it first, in 636.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_expansion_of_Caliphate.svg>

*The Muslim Arab Diaspora –
622-632 (Dark Red), 632-661 (Light Red), 661-750 (Yellow)*

Syria fell easily because the Byzantine forces – which had recovered Syria from Sassanid Persian incursions only in 629 – were weak, disorganized, and corrupt. The Syrian peoples deeply resented Byzantine rule and were willing to accept Arab domination to end a millennium of Greco-Roman rule under the Hellenes, Romans, and Byzantines (332 BCE-636 CE). Through

four caliphs (Islamic rulers) and for nearly three decades, Medina in the Hijaz was the capital of the expanding Arab Muslim world.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bedouin_and_camel_-_panoramio.jpg>

*Bedouin Riding A Camel in Arabia –
Bedouin Warriors Were Motivated, Mobile, and Disciplined*

In 661, Muawiyah, a skillful Arab leader, established the new Umayyad caliphate in Damascus, Syria and entrenched its power before his death in 679. The Umayyad caliphs were consolidating their hold on areas where both Arabs and Muslims were in the minority. They created a strict social hierarchy – from top to bottom – of Arab Muslims, non-Arab converts to Islam, tolerated

non-Muslims (*dhimmis*, mostly Christians and Jews), and slaves (mostly prisoners of war). The Umayyad caliphs antagonized the northern Arabs from the Hijaz because they relied heavily on southern Arabs from Yemen to take leadership positions in the bureaucracy and the military. Damascus and Syria reached their height of Islamic political and cultural significance during the Umayyad period. The spectacular Umayyad Mosque in Damascus was built in the late 7th century.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Syria_12_-_Damascus_-_Umayyad_Mosque_courtyard.jpg>

Courtyard of the Umayyad Mosque, Damascus

Power struggles within the Arab aristocracy led to the shift of the capital from Damascus to Baghdad (in Iraq) in 750. Both Damascus and the rest of Syria suffered from that transfer of the seat of Islamic power to the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. Syria was not as rich agriculturally as Egypt, Iraq, and Persia, long-distance trade on the Silk Road routes through Syria had abated after the main route moved north to the Black Sea, and then Syria lost the Islamic capital.

The rise of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad effectively meant the decline, not just of Syria, but of Arab power. In Baghdad, Persian administrators and Turkish soldiers undermined Arab control. Arabs nominally continued to control the government, but gradually Persian administration and culture ascended. Soon the only things Arabic about the Abbasid dynasty were the Arab caliph, Islamic religion, and the Arabic language.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abbasids850.png>>

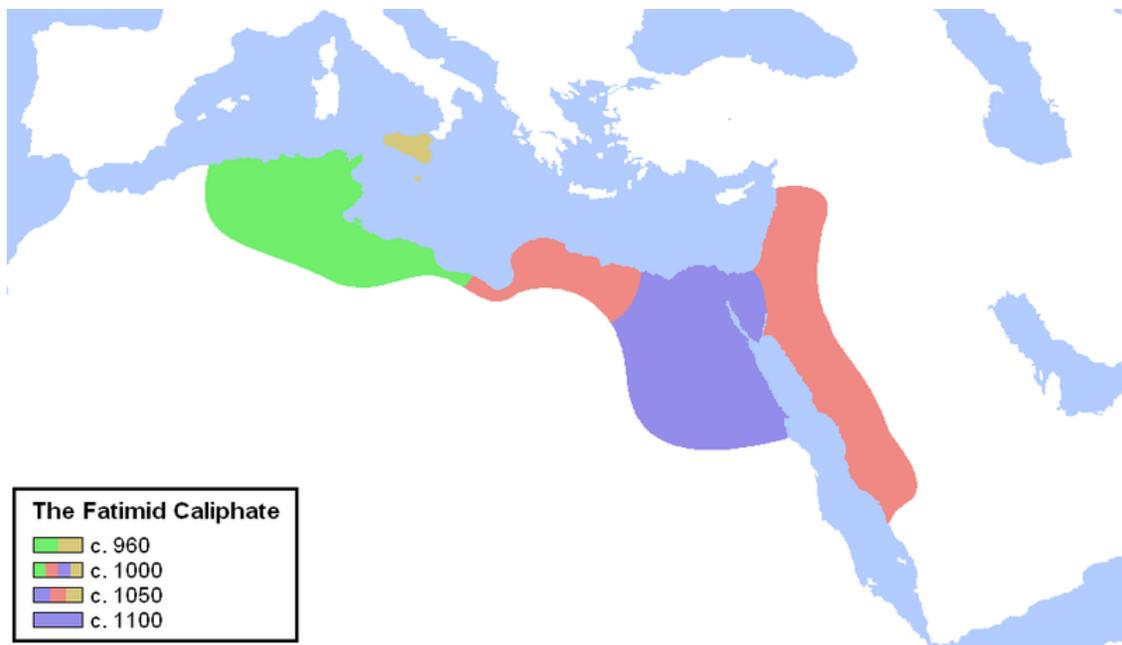
The Abbasid Caliphate, At Its Peak , c. 850

The Abbasids quickly consolidated control and accumulated wealth. At the turn of the 9th century, Harun al-Rashid, the Abbasid caliph (ruled 786-809), far surpassed his contemporary colleague, Charlemagne (leader of the Holy Roman Empire in Europe), in military and economic strength and political importance. But soon thereafter, Abbasid power began a long downward slide leading to final collapse of the caliphate in the mid-13th century.

Syria, meanwhile, was caught in the middle of struggles between Islamic powers centered in the agriculturally rich Tigris-

Euphrates and Nile River Valleys. In 868, Ahmad ibn Tulun, an outstanding leader of Turkish origin who ruled Egypt from 868 to 884, declared Egypt independent of Abbasid rule and set up his own sovereign dynasty. Two years later, ibn Tulun conquered Syria and began a pattern of Egyptian rule of Syria that continued for much of the following seven centuries.

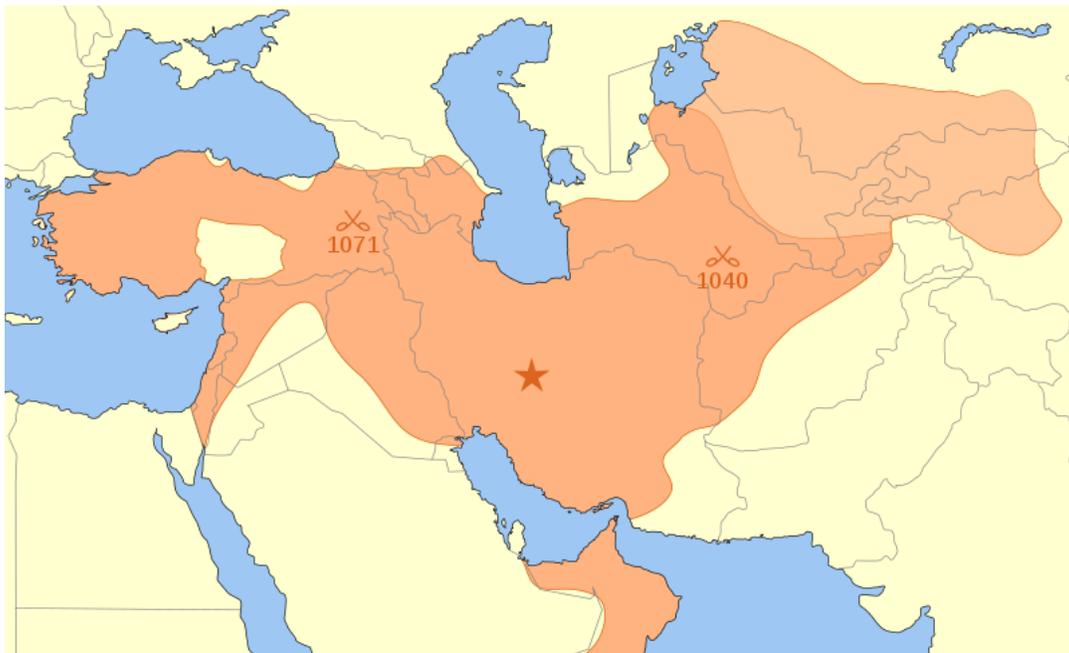
Moroccan Berbers conquered Egypt in 969, shifted their Fatimid dynasty to a new capital at Cairo, and quickly took control of Syria and the Hijaz.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fatimid_Caliphate.PNG>

The Fatimid Caliphate, At Its Peak, c. 1000

Syria gained an unwelcome respite from Egyptian rule a century later when the Seljuk Turks in 1070 burst in from the east and conquered Syria. The Seljuks had moved out of their homeland in central Asia and taken effective control of the Abbasid caliphate in 1055. They ruled much of Syria for more than a century until another alien ruler took over Egypt in 1171 and Syria in 1174.



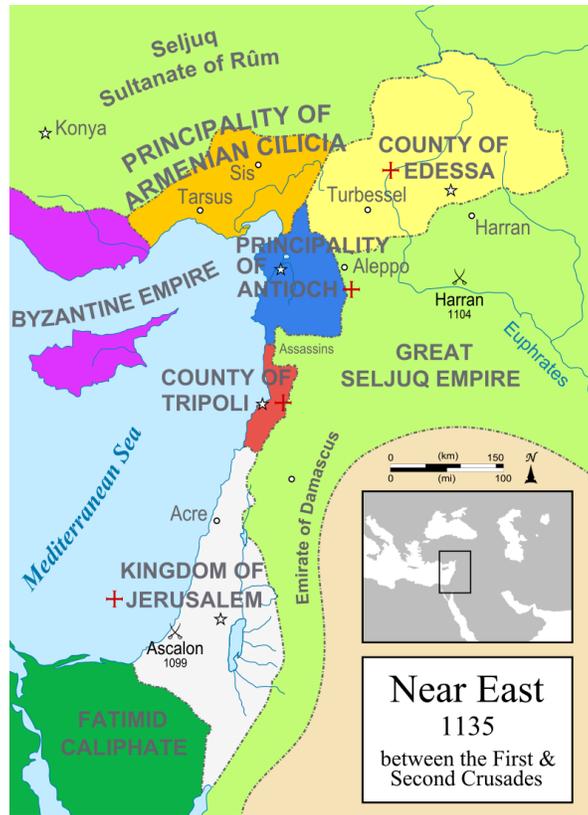
Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Seljuk_Empire_locator_map.svg>

Seljuk Turkish Empire At Its Peak, 1092

Salah al-Din and the Crusaders in Syria (1174-1250). In the 11th century, European kingdoms and principalities began to

push back against Muslim territorial advances in the Mediterranean region. Spanish Christian forces recaptured parts of Islamic Spain, and Norman Christians gained all of Muslim Sicily in the mid-11th century. After Byzantium lost the crucial Battle of Manzikert in 1071 and with it much of Anatolia, Byzantine Emperor Alexius requested European assistance to protect the Byzantine Empire from further incursions by the Seljuk Turks.

The Seljuks had captured Syria in 1070, including Jerusalem and the rest of the Holy Land. Alexius suggested that Frankish and Norman knights from France, called Crusaders after the crosses they wore as insignia on their uniforms, should come to Constantinople and liberate the Holy Land from the Turkish Muslims. The First Crusade began in 1097 and was successful in its mission. The Frankish Kingdom of Jerusalem, which stretched from the Gulf of Aqaba in the Red Sea to Beirut on the Mediterranean Sea, was established in 1100 and led effectively by a Frankish knight named Baldwin.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_Crusader_states_1135-en.svg

Crusader States in the Levant, 1135

The Crusaders established a series of feudal kingdoms in western Syria along the Mediterranean coast, built around fortified castles located at strategic points. The Crusaders lived in or around the castles and forced peasants farming adjacent lands to become their serfs in a feudal arrangement that echoed the European system of that time. They also levied taxes on regional trade. Some of the Crusader kingdoms were self-sufficient, and

others depended on supply from Europe and thus were garrison outposts of Europe. In all, eight separate Crusades were launched from Europe during the two centuries of the Crusader era.

Although the Crusades were glorified in Europe (and in later history books) because they liberated the Holy Land, the Crusader kingdoms and principalities were based on feudal exploitation of powerless peasants. The intermittent struggle between the Crusaders and the Muslims, who were attempting to evict them, was often bloody and brutal, and both sides committed horrible atrocities.

Salah al-Din (1137-1193, known in the West as Saladin) was a Kurdish officer in the service of the Abbasid dynasty. In 1171, he effected a coup d'état in Cairo, overthrew the crumbling Fatimid government, established the Ayyubid dynasty, and proclaimed himself the first ruler. Salah al-Din was a superb military leader and a capable public administrator. He used his strong base in wealthy Egypt and his military guile to conquer Syria and the Hijaz (northwestern Arabia) in 1174 and Iraq in

1179. He then forced other warring Muslim states to declare truces and concentrate their efforts on defeating the Crusaders, his principal goal. Salah al-Din won a significant victory over the Crusaders in 1179 at Marj Uyun and then drove the Crusaders out of much of Palestine and recaptured Jerusalem in 1187. At the time of his death in 1193, he had forced the Crusaders back into a narrow coastal strip on the Mediterranean Sea in Syria.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flickr - Gaspa -
_Cairo,_museo_militare_\(8\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flickr_-_Gaspa_-_Cairo,_museo_militare_(8).jpg)>

*Salah al-Din (ruled 1171-1193) –
Sculpture in the Egyptian Military Museum, Cairo*

Salah al-Din also constructed canals and dikes to improve agriculture, Islamic schools (*madrasas*), mosques, and hospitals, and the Citadel of Cairo.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Citadel_of_Salah_El.Din.jpg>

Citadel of Cairo, Built by Salah al-Din, late 12th century

Salah al-Din's Ayyubid successors were not of his quality, however, and his Syro-Egyptian empire splintered into small, weak states. The Crusaders thus were able to hang on for another century in parts of coastal Syria. They occupied the important

Syrian port of Antioch for much of 175 years. Mamluk sultans finally drove the last of the Crusaders out of Syria and the Holy Land at the end of the 13th century.



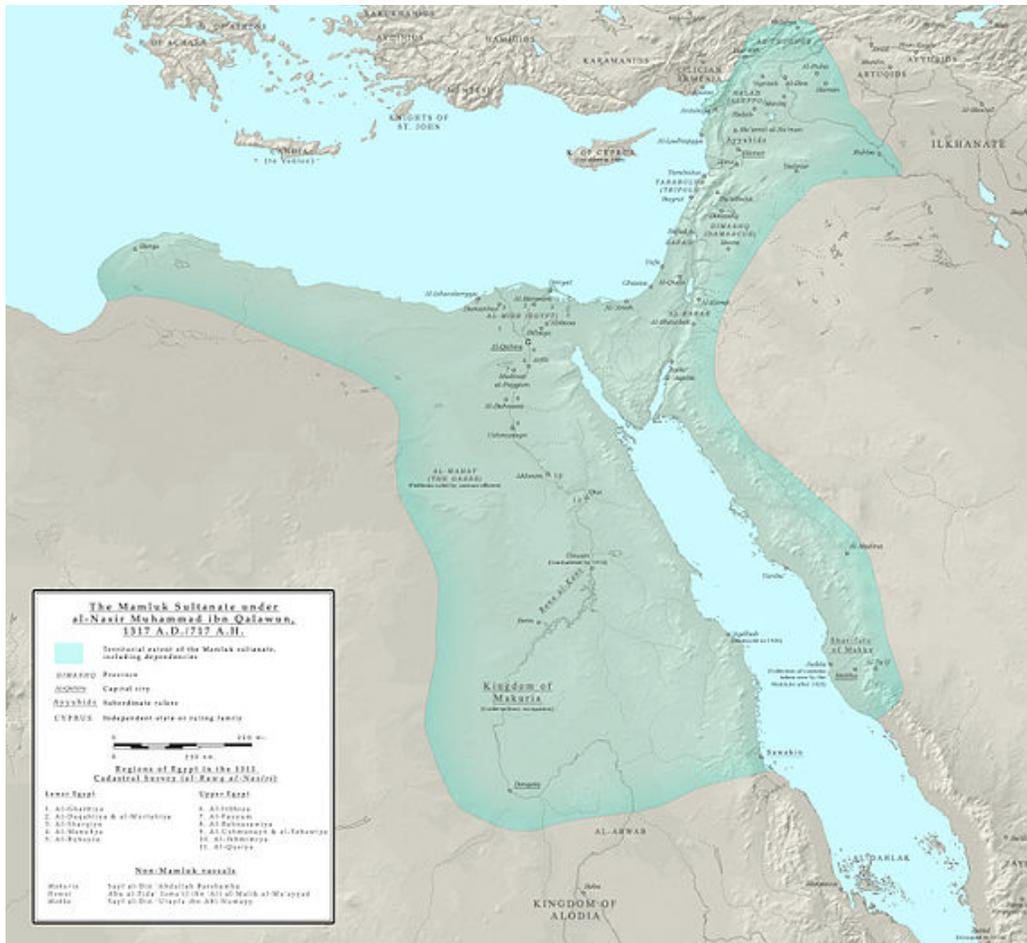
Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at <
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_Crusader_states_1240-eng.png>

Crusader States, c. 1229 (Red) and c. 1241 (Pink)

Mamluks, Mongols, and Turcomans in Syria (1250-1516).

The Mamluks were a self-perpetuating military aristocracy that took power in Egypt and Syria in 1250 and held it for more than two and one-half centuries. The Mamluks were recruits from the white slave markets of central Asia who were brought to Egypt, educated in Arabic, Sunni Islam, military tactics, literacy, and numeracy, and freed to become leading members of the military and bureaucracy.

Although the Mamluk system was intended to ensure loyalty to the Islamic rulers in Egypt (and elsewhere in the Islamic world), the Mamluk soldiers and bureaucrats were controlled by their superiors and owed primary allegiance to them. In 1250, the Mamluk generals overthrew the Ayyubid sultan and assumed power in Egypt, Syria, and the Hijaz (northwestern Arabia). The Mamluk Empire was headquartered in Cairo, and Mamluk generals served as provincial governors in Syria and the Hijaz.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mamluk_Sultanate_of_Cairo_1317_AD.jpg

Mamluk Egypt and Syria, 1250-1517

Mamluk Egypt and Syria were confronted with military threats from pantheistic Mongols, Christian Crusaders, and Islamic Turcomans. Hulegu Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan (Chinggis Qan), swept in from the west with his Mongol and Turkic horse-warriors and destroyed Baghdad and Iraq's irrigation

network in 1258, thereby ending the five-century-old Abbasid Caliphate and Iraq's leadership in the Islamic world.

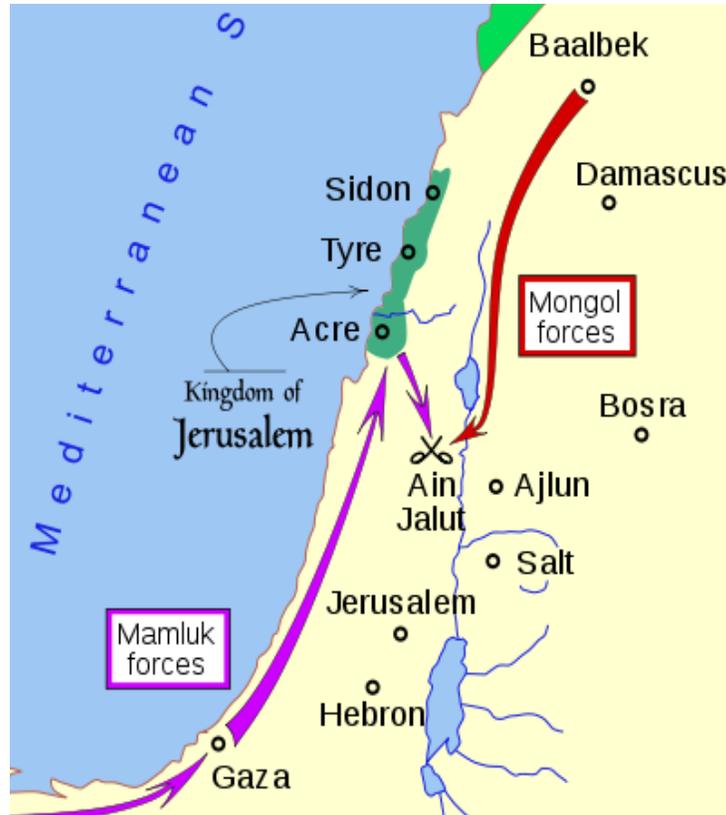


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Asia_in_1335.svg>

The Four Khanates of the Mongol Empire – Yuan Dynasty, Chagatai Khanate, Ilkhanate, and Golden Horde, 1335

Hulegu invaded Syria in 1260 and captured Aleppo and Damascus, killing more than 50,000 people in each key Syrian city. Later in that year, Mamluk Sultan Qutuz and his leading general, Baybars, defeated the Mongols at Ayn Jalut (Goliath's spring) near Nazareth and stopped their westward advance. The Mongols then withdrew from Syria, and the territory of their

Ilkhanate state, based on Iran and Iraq, stopped at the Euphrates River.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Campaign_of_the_Battle_of_Ain_Jalut_1260.svg>

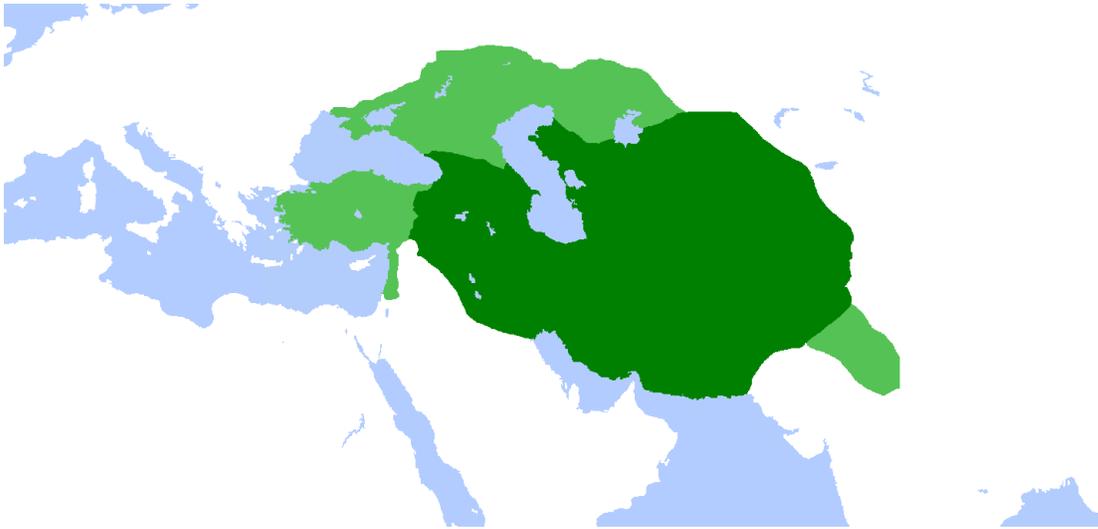
*The Battle of Ain Jalut, 1260 – Sultan Qutuz of Mamluk Egypt
Defeated Hulegu Khan of the Mongol Ilkhanate*

General Baybars was denied his request to become Mamluk governor of Syria. He thereupon killed Sultan Qutuz, became sultan of the entire Mamluk Empire, and ruled as the most

effective of all Mamluk sultans. In addition to his military successes, Baybars (ruled 1260-1277) built canals and harbors and instituted a postal service, based on horse relays, which connected Cairo and Damascus in four days. Baybars rolled back the Crusader states on the Mediterranean coast of Syria. In 1268, he stormed the key Syrian port of Antioch, long a Crusader stronghold, killed 16,000 Crusader supporters and captured 100,000 more. His successor drove the last of the Crusaders out of Syria in 1291.

A century later, Mamluk Syria suffered another devastating invasion from brutal Turcoman horse-warriors. Timur the Lame (ruled 1370-1405 and also known as Tamerlane) created a vast empire, centered on Samarkand (in modern Uzbekistan) that stretched from northern India to Persia. Timur led a massive army westward and captured Aleppo in 1400 and Damascus in 1401, after routing the defending Mamluk armies. He moved northward into Anatolia in 1402, easily defeated the army of the ruling Ottoman Turks at Ankara, and captured their ruler, Sultan Bayezid

I. Timur then withdrew his forces from Syria with considerable booty. After his death in 1405, the Timurid Empire shrunk due to succession struggles and incompetent leadership and no further incursions were made into the Mamluk region.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
< https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Timurid_Empire_Map.png >

Temur's Empire – At His Death, 1405

Between 1250 and 1382, the Mamluk rulers were chiefly Kipchak Turks (originally from southern Russia), known as the Bahri (river) Mamluks because the seat of rule was on the Nile River. Mamluk rule in the Bahri period was effective and Mamluk Egypt and Syria prospered. During the second period of Mamluk rule (1382-1517), the leaders were mainly Circassians (originally

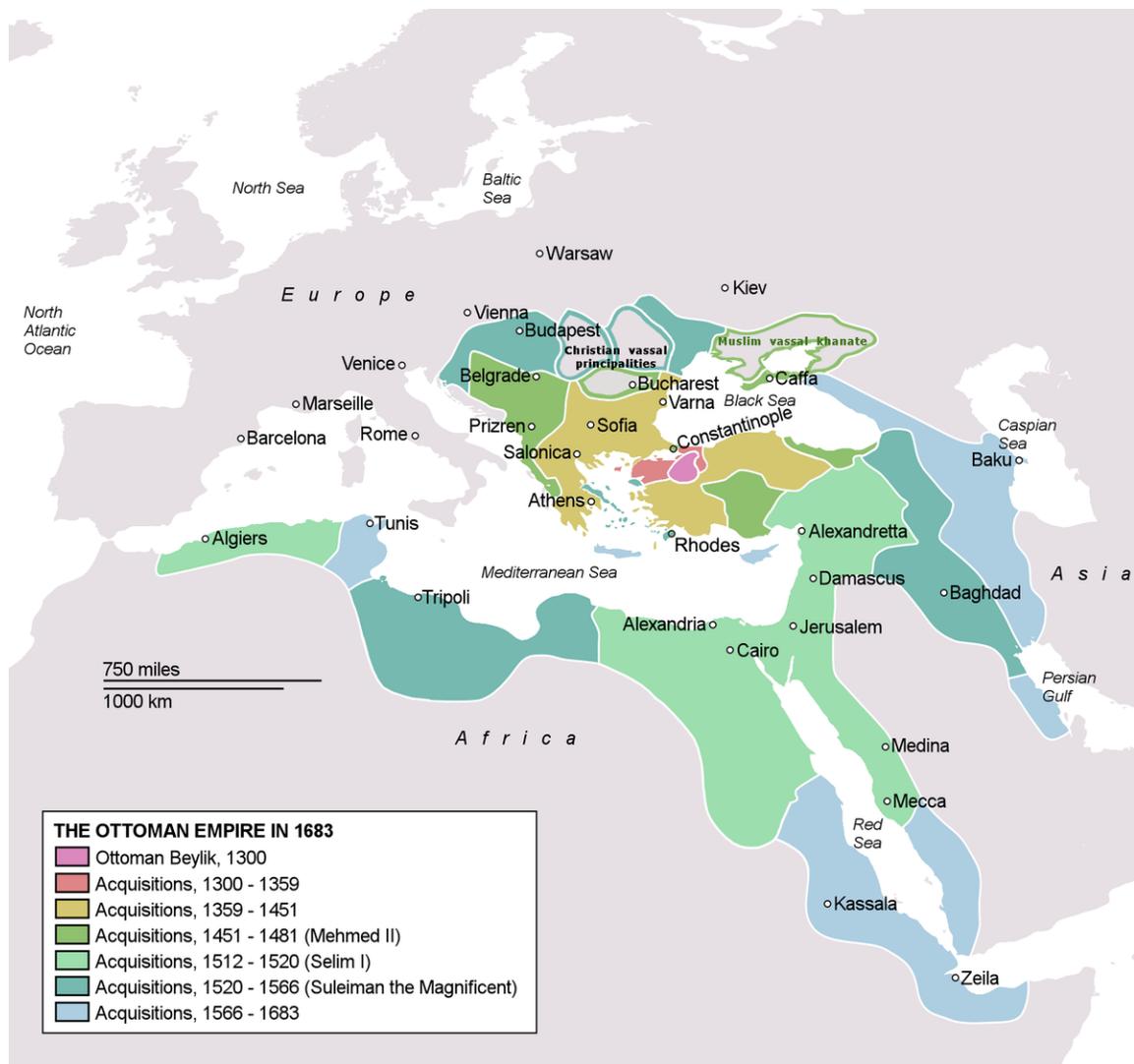
from the region of the Caucasus Mountains), known as Burgi (citadel) Mamluks because they governed from the Citadel in Cairo. In the Burgi period, the Mamluk Empire experienced succession struggles and political insecurity, and the Mamluk leaders allowed their military strength to decline, debased the coinage, ignored irrigation maintenance, suffered from periodic plagues and famines, and faced numerous peasant and urban revolts. The Mamluk Empire thus was ripe for foreign takeover.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_Mamluk_from_Aleppo.jpg>

*Circassian Mamluk Nobleman, Aleppo, Syria –
Painting by William Page, c. 1816-1824*

Syria in the Ottoman Empire (1516-1918). In the 11th century, the Seljuk Turks emigrated from their homeland in central Asia (the Altai Mountains in southern Siberia and western Mongolia), established a kingdom in Persia, took over effective control of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad, raided Syria, and conquered much of the Anatolian plateau from the Byzantine Empire. In the following two centuries, they expanded their control in Anatolia at the expense of the Byzantines. In 1300, a powerful leader, Osman (ruled 1300, from whose name from which the adjective, Ottoman, was derived) took control and set up the Ottoman dynasty with its capital at Bursa in Anatolia. Thirty-five descendants from Osman's direct male line succeeded him as Ottoman sultans between 1326 and 1922.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_the_Ottoman_Empire

The Ottoman Empire in Turkey, Eastern Europe, Egypt, Syria, Arabia, Mesopotamia, and North Africa – 1683

During the 14th and 15th centuries, the Ottomans expanded their control of Anatolia and of southeastern Europe. In 1366, they shifted their capital to Edirne (formerly Adrianople, in European Turkey) in reflection of the agricultural and strategic importance of

their European possessions. The Ottoman Empire continued to be ruled by Turks, but increasingly men from outlying conquered regions, especially the Balkans and the Caucasus, played key roles in the military, the government, and the economy. The Ottomans finally conquered Constantinople in 1453, ended the withered Byzantine Empire, and relocated their capital in the fortress city, which they renamed Istanbul.

After consolidating their positions in Asia Minor and southeastern Europe, the Ottomans moved into Syria and Egypt. In a single swift campaign in 1516-1517, Emperor Selim I (The Grim, 1511-1521) defeated the Mamluk armies, took control of Aleppo and Damascus, and conquered all of Syria and Egypt. The Ottomans encountered limited resistance and much local support because they promised a restoration of peace and justice to the beleaguered Syrians and Egyptians.

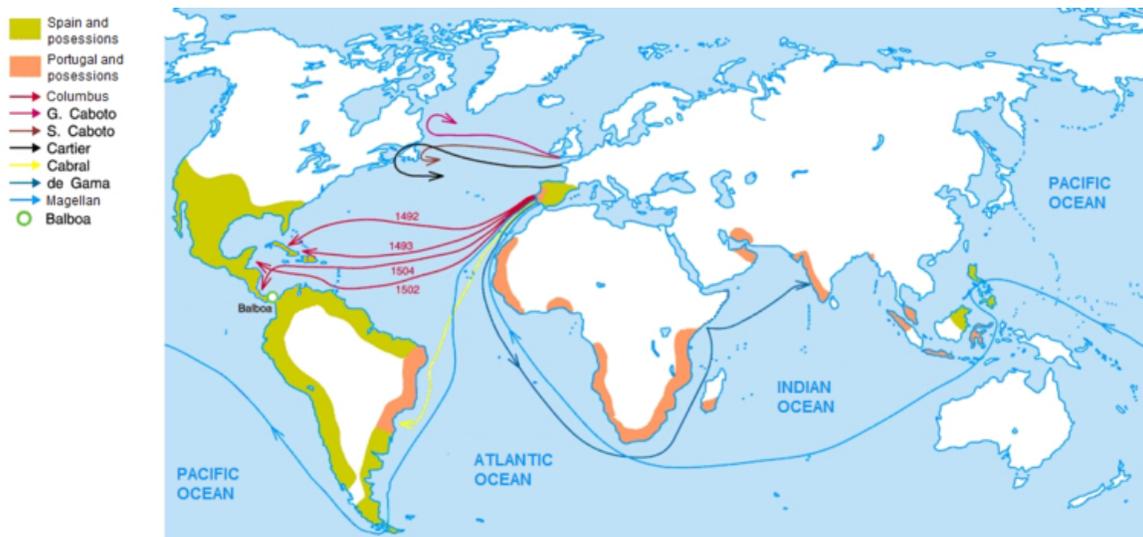


Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yavuz_Sultan_I_Selim_Han.jpg>

*Ottoman Sultan Selim I (Ruled 1512-1520) –
Conquered Syria (1516) and Egypt (1517)*

The new rulers then divided the former Mamluk Empire into three parts. Northern Syria, centered on Aleppo, held the greatest strategic importance for the Ottomans because it bordered the entrance to Anatolia through the Taurus Mountains. Southern Syria, centered on Damascus, was deemed critical because it served as the main entrepôt for the annual pilgrimages to Mecca, which were major trade fairs as well as religious events. Egypt

was kept intact as one Ottoman province because of its strategic location between the Mediterranean and Red Seas and thus its hoped-for role as a bulwark against the new and expanding maritime power of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean.

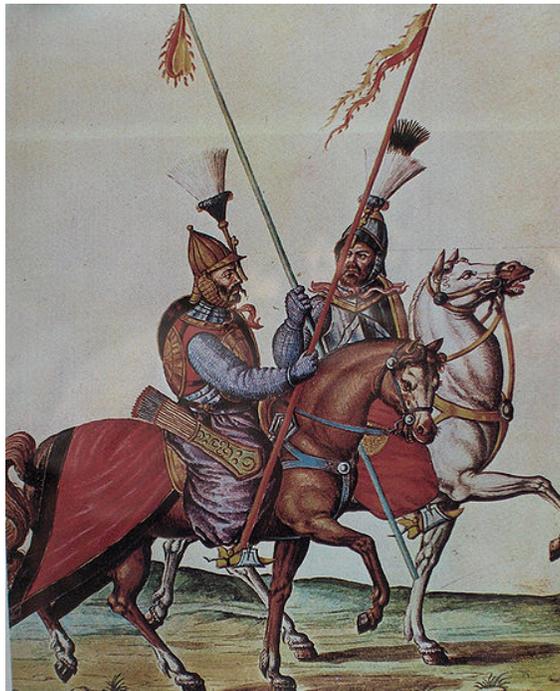


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Age_of_Discovery_explorations_in_English.png>

Spanish (Green) and Portuguese (Orange) Exploration and Imperialism, 15th-16th centuries

In addition to these strategic advantages based on location, Egypt and the two Syrian provinces were important for the Ottoman Empire because they provided critical tax revenues to the sultans in Istanbul. The Nile Valley and Delta of Egypt was the richest agricultural region of the empire and thus a source of grain,

cotton, flax, and tax revenues. Both Syrian provinces and Egypt also had leading centers of regional and international trade – Aleppo, Damascus, Cairo, and Alexandria – and Ottoman tax collectors typically took one-tenth of trade produce as tax.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Battle_of_Vienna.Sipahis.jpg

Ottoman Light Cavalrymen (Sipahis) Collected Taxes (Timars)

The Ottoman sultans imposed Turkish-speaking pashas (governors) in their Syrian and Egyptian provinces, but most of the administrative bureaucracy and the military were made up of Arabic-speaking Egyptians and Syrians. The Ottomans frequently

rotated the pashas so that none would become too powerful and revolt. In Egypt, for example, more than 100 pashas governed in the Ottoman period between 1517 and 1805. Since the Ottoman pashas were weak, Mamluks soon regained control of tax collection, the military apparatus, and commercial activities.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ottoman_Mamluk_horseman_circa_1550.jpg

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*Ottoman Mamluk Horseman, c. 1550 – Mamluk Officers
Controlled the Military and Bureaucracy in Ottoman Egypt*

In the absence of effective resistance, the Ottoman Empire quickly reached the peak of its power and territorial extent. During

the reign of Emperor Suleiman the Magnificent (ruled 1521-1566), the Ottoman Empire spread to control all of North Africa except Morocco, southeastern Europe including Hungary, Iraq, and the coastal regions of Arabia including the Hijaz and its holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The Ottoman Empire then stretched from Budapest on the Danube River to Baghdad on the Tigris River and from the Crimean Peninsula in Russia to the First Cataract of the Nile River in southern Egypt.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EmperorSuleiman.jpg>>

*Suleiman I (The Magnificent or The Legislator, Ruled 1521-1566)
– The Ottoman Empire’s Greatest Sultan*

Thereafter, the Ottoman Empire began a gradual decline. It was challenged in Europe by Spain in the western Mediterranean and the Maghrib (North Africa), the Holy Roman Empire and later Austria in the Balkans, and Venice in the islands of the eastern Mediterranean. The rising Safavid Persian Empire provided a major threat in the east and fought with the Ottomans over control of the rich agricultural areas of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley.

In the 18th century, Russia began its push southward to gain an opening on the Black Sea and to control the Crimea. However, the decline of the Ottoman Empire and its eventual earning of the epithet, “the sick man of Eurasia,” resulted principally from technological backwardness, especially in building ships and making weapons. The Ottomans and the other leading Islamic empires (the Safavids and the Mughals) missed the commercial, agricultural, and industrial revolutions that occurred in Europe in the 15th through 19th centuries. Muslim states no longer led the world in scientific and technological progress. Their political and economic decline was only a matter of time.

In the 19th century, the Ottomans lost effective control of Egypt. Muhammad Ali (ruled 1805-1847) and his heirs governed Egypt virtually as an independent country, although Egypt remained nominally an Ottoman province. After 1882, Great Britain assumed control of Egypt. The two Ottoman provinces in Syria remained within the empire until Muhammad Ali invaded in 1831 and took command.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons* available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ModernEgypt,_Muhammad_Ali_by_Auguste_Couder,_BAP_17996.jpg>

*Muhammad Ali Pasha (Ruled Egypt, 1805-1848) –
Painting by Auguste Couder, 1841, Palace of Versailles, France*

In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire probably would have collapsed if left alone. However, Britain, then the world's leading naval, commercial, and imperial power, decided to prop up the Ottoman edifice to buttress British control of India, the jewel of the crown. Britain was concerned that expanding Russia or imperial France would consume large chunks of Ottoman territory in western and central Asia and block British access to India by land or by sea via the Suez isthmus that connected the Mediterranean and Red Seas. Britain thus forced Muhammad Ali out of Syria (and the Hijaz) in 1840 and coerced the Ottomans to open Damascus and Beirut to European trade.

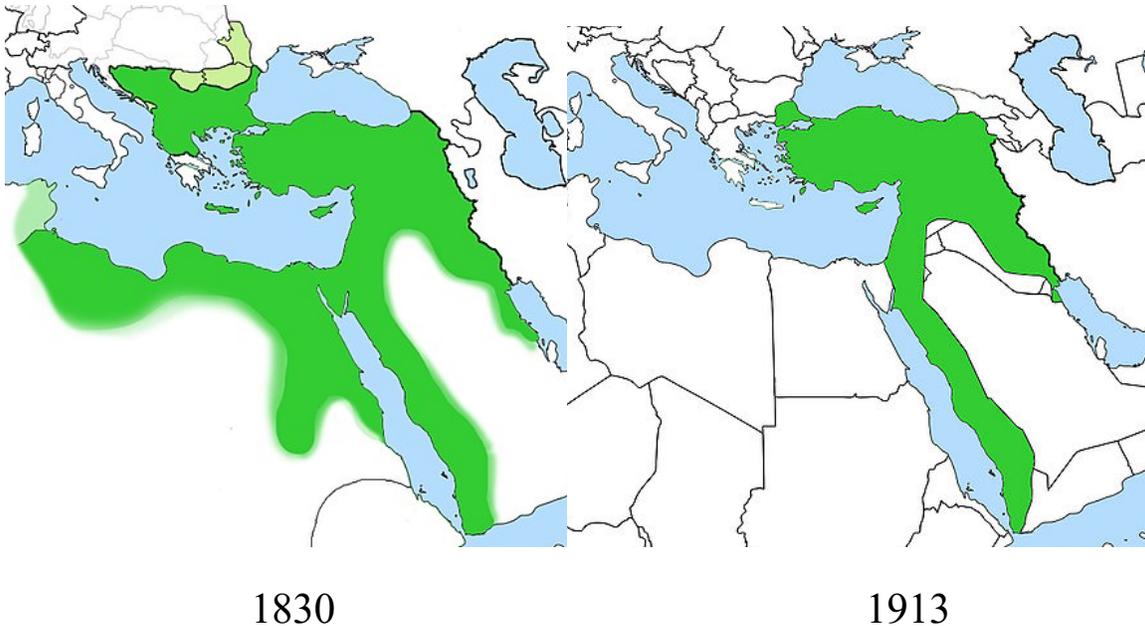


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Egypt_under_Muhammad_Ali_map_de.png>

Egyptian Expansion Under Muhammad Ali (1805-1848)

British and, especially, French commercial interests then became active in Syria, and Beirut grew to become the leading port and commercial and educational center in the eastern Mediterranean. In the 1860s, the European powers intervened to force the Ottoman leaders to grant semi-independent status to the Mount Lebanon region, after 10,000 Christian Maronites had been massacred by another minority group, the Druzes (followers of a

derivative religion based on Shi'ite Islam). Thereafter, French and British businessmen and diplomats began to take an increasingly active interest in the possibility of imperial expansion in Syria.

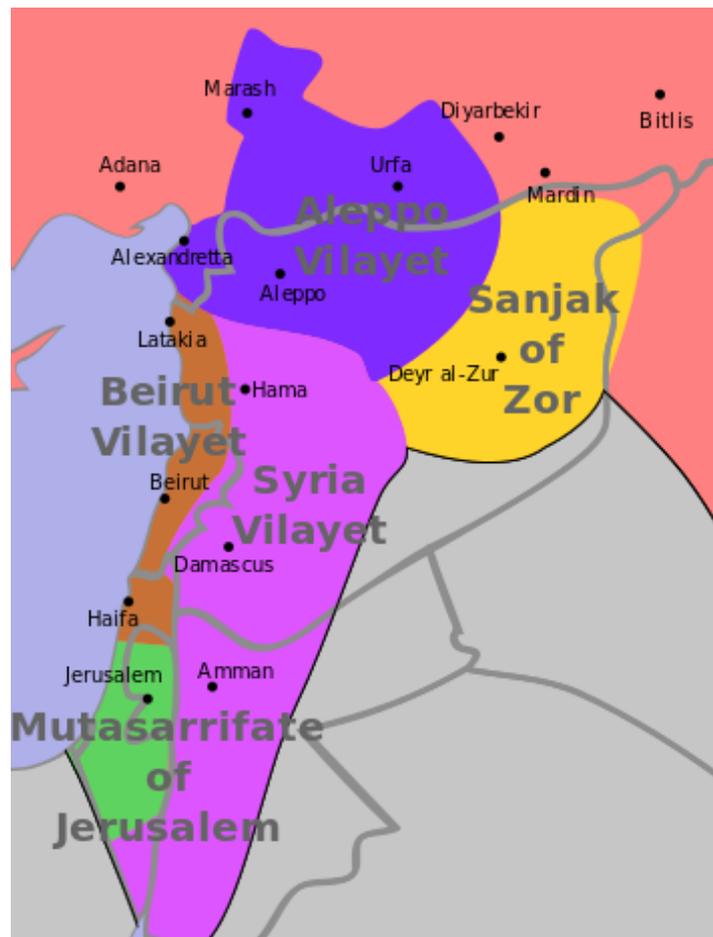


Sources: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Territorial_changes_of_the_Ottoman_Empire_1830.jpg> and
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Territorial_changes_of_the_Ottoman_Empire_1913b.jpg>

The Declining Ottoman Empire in 1830 and in 1913

The Peoples of the Levant in the early 20th century. In the early 20th century, the Levant – the Ottoman provinces of northern and southern Syria – included regions that were soon to become differentiated as modern Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel/Palestine,

the Gaza Strip, and Alexandretta (in modern Turkey). By 1918, the Levant had been ruled by Islamic Caliphates for nearly nine centuries (636-1516) and by the Ottoman Empire for four centuries (1516-1918). About half of the people of the Levant were Sunni Arabs, the dominant elite who had ruled the region for thirteen centuries under Islamic or Ottoman overlords.



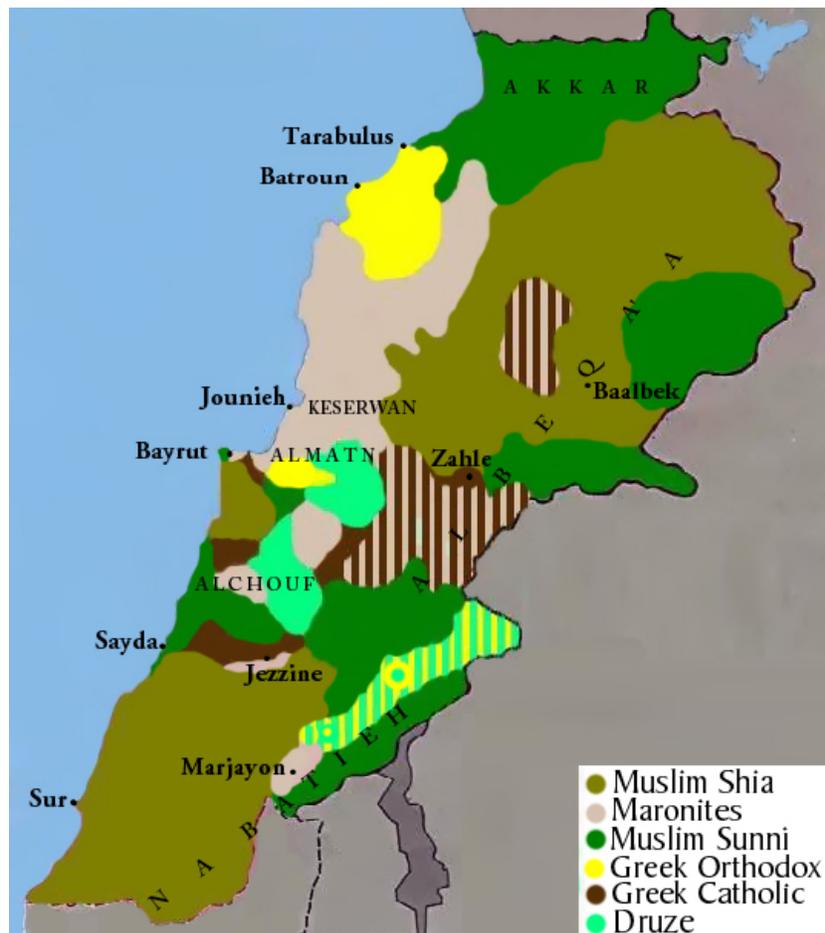
Sources: *Wikimedia Commons, available at*
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ottoman_Syria_1900.svg>

The Levant in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1900

But the Levant also contained restive minorities, distinguished by both religion and ethnicity. Most minority groups were made up of Arabs who practiced Christianity (Orthodoxy, Catholicism, or Maronitism) or followed the Druze or Alawi religions (variants of Shiite Islam viewed as heretical by Sunni and Shiite Muslims). Other minorities (10 percent of the total) were ethnically different from the Arabs – Jews practicing Judaism, Islamic Kurds or Circassians (Sunni Muslim emigrants from the Caucasus region), and Orthodox Christian Armenians.

In the area that became modern Syria, the ethnic breakdown of the population in the early 20th century was nine-tenths Arab and one-tenth non-Arab. Perhaps three-fifths of Syrians were Sunni Arabs, who formed the educated elite and the ruling class. But minority peoples – Arab Christians (15 percent), Alawis (12 percent) in the northwest, Kurds (8 percent) in the northeast, Druzes (3 percent) in the south, and Ismai'lis (2 percent) – dominated in certain regions. In the region that became modern Lebanon, 96 percent of the population were Arabs and only four

percent were non-Arabs (mostly Armenians). One-third of the Lebanese Arabs were Christian – Maronites (Monothelites allied with Rome), Greek Orthodox, and Greek Catholic. Two-thirds of the Lebanese Arabs were Muslim – Sunnites (practicing orthodox Islam), Shi’ites (followers of Imams descended from Ali, the Prophet’s cousin), and Druzes (a sect of Shi’ism).



Sources: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lebanon_religious_groups.jpg

Estimated Distribution of Lebanon’s Main Religious Groups, 2007

The 300,000 people who lived a century ago in the area that became modern Jordan (then called Transjordan) were 94 percent Arabic and 6 percent non-Arabic. Nearly half were nomadic Beduins. Most of the Jordanian Arabs followed the Sunni Islamic religion, and Sunnis formed the ruling class. About 10 percent of the Arab peoples in Jordan were Christians (mostly Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic). Sunni Islamic Circassians, whom the Ottomans had settled around Amman in the late 19th century, constituted about 5 percent of Jordan's population.



Sources: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Circassian_Guard.jpg>

Circassian Royal Guards in Jordan

Estimates of the numbers of people living in Israel/Palestine at the end of the First World War are sketchy and are hotly debated by historians of Israel and Palestine. A reasonable guess is that at the turn of the 19th century about 400,000 people inhabited the region that was to become Israel/Palestine and that only about 6,000 were Jewish. By 1918, the population of Israel/Palestine might have increased to about 700,000. Important waves of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe and Russia began in the 1880s, and by 1918 about 55,000 Jewish settlers had arrived – bringing the total Jewish population of Israel/Palestine to 85,000. Jewish residents thus constituted about 12 percent of the total population of the region at that time. Hence, when the Ottoman Empire split apart in 1918, the principally Arabic region of the Levant contained volatile ethnic and religious schisms.

The Creation of Colonial Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, and Palestine (1914-1924). Ottoman Turkish rule of the Levant ended after World War I. The Ottomans lost the war after they

sided with Germany and Austria-Hungary against Britain, France, Russia, and (in 1917-1918) the United States.

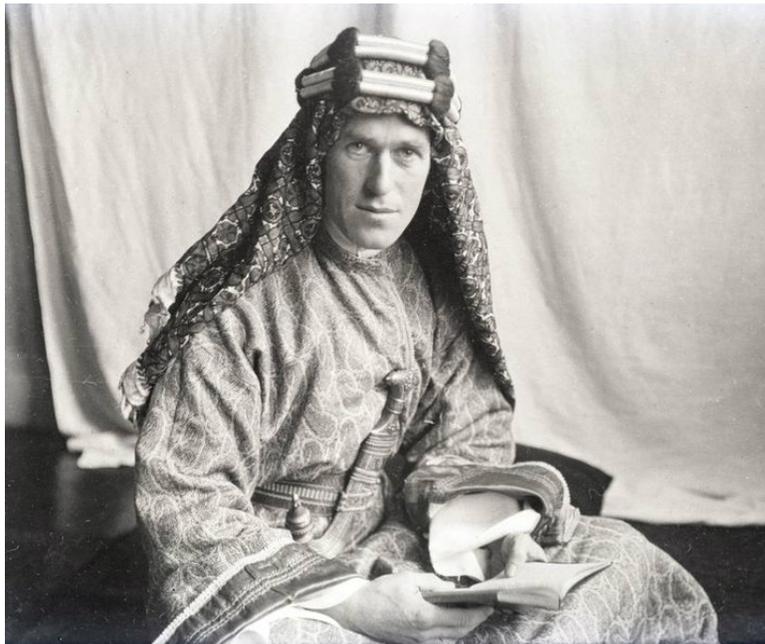


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_Europe_alliances_1914-en.svg

The Triple Entente (Green) and the Triple Alliance (Brown) in World War One – The Ottoman Empire Joined the Triple Alliance

British troops bore the brunt of most of the fighting in the Arabic provinces of the Ottoman Empire, and Britain led the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire (which was formally dissolved in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923). The question then was who would rule in the turbulent Levant and Iraq.

While the First World War was raging, Britain had engaged in duplicitous diplomacy. To obtain the military support of Sharif Hussein, the Hashemite Emir of Medina, Britain – in the ten Hussein-McMahon letters (1915-1916) – promised significant portions of post-war Greater Syria to Hussein and the Sunni Arabs. Immediately thereafter (1916), Britain secretly agreed in the Sykes-Picot Agreement with France to divide the Ottoman Arabic provinces (the Levant plus Iraq) between Britain and France.



Sources: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T.E._Lawrence_With_Lawrence_in_Arabia.j
pg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T.E._Lawrence_With_Lawrence_in_Arabia.jpg)>

*T. E. Lawrence of Arabia –
British Agent in the Arab Revolt, 1916-1918*

A year later (1917), the British government, in the publicly announced Balfour Declaration, “viewed with favor” the future establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Britain thus had promised conflicting portions of the former Ottoman Levant to Hashemite Arabs from the Hijaz (northwestern Arabia), Jewish residents in Palestine, French colonialists, and itself.

After the Triple Entente plus the United States won the First World War in 1918, those conflicting British promises initially were resolved in the San Remo Conference (1920) in which Britain honored its commitment to France. Britain claimed mandates to rule Palestine (including Transjordan, which was not specifically mentioned) and Iraq, while France asserted mandates to rule Syria and Lebanon. The League of Nations later verified those British and French mandates.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:French_Mandate_for_Syria_and_the_Lebanon_map_en.svg

*League of Nations Mandates, 1922 –
 French Mandates for Syria and Lebanon*

In 1921, Britain separated Palestine, which it called the “Mandate for Palestine,” into the area west of the Jordan River (designated for Jewish settlement) and that east of the Jordan (Transjordan). Winston Churchill declared that the Balfour

Declaration did not apply to Transjordan, and thereafter Britain prevented Jewish settlement in that half of Mandated Palestine.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PalestineAndTransjordan.png>>

*League of Nations Mandates, 1923 –
British Mandates For Palestine and Transjordan*

Britain then permitted two of Emir Hussein's sons to rule in their new colonies. Faisal (whom France had removed as King of Syria) became the King of Iraq, and Abdullah became the Emir of Transjordan.

France and Britain (and four other European powers) had intervened in 1861 to set up and protect the Mutesarrifate of Mount Lebanon as a Christian-ruled province of the Ottoman Empire. In 1920, France added coastal regions and the Bekaa valley to Mount Lebanon to form the State of Greater Lebanon, and in 1926, this area became the Lebanese Republic. In that year, France merged the mandated provinces of Damascus and Aleppo to form modern Syria.



Sources: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kelaniyat_Norias_of_Hama.jpg>

*Traditional Water Wheels (Norias), Hama, Syria –
France Spun the Wheels of Diplomacy To Colonize Syria*

In this British-dominated division of the Levant plus Iraq, Britain thus achieved its two primary objectives – control of the two key maritime links to British India – the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf – and control over Iraq’s oilfields and land-based access to them from the Mediterranean coast via Israel/Palestine.

Colonial Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine (1924-1946). Britain and France had similar imperial motivations in the Levant between the two great wars of the 20th century. Part of their desires to rule in the Levant plus Iraq was strategic. France saw its new colonies of Syria and Lebanon as important cogs in its expanding role as a Mediterranean power and in the air route to its principal colonies in French Indochina. Great Britain wanted new territory in the Middle East to buttress its role as a super-power, to permit an air route to its colony in India, and to allow delivery of its promise of providing a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

But both colonizing powers also had direct economic interests in the Levant plus Iraq. Both desired to expand markets for their manufactured exports. France depended on Iraqi oil for

half its consumption (and thus gained part ownership of the Iraq Petroleum Company), while Britain wanted to have primary control of that valuable resource. The French also had foreign investments in railways and ports in Lebanon and Syria. Britain saw its overlordship of Palestine as a buttress to its control of the Suez Canal in Egypt.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Jewish_settlements_in_Palestine_in_1947.png>

*British Mandate of Palestine (1920-1948) –
Areas of Jewish Settlement in 1947 (Orange)*

France strongly suppressed political dissent in Syria (such as the Druze revolt of 1925-1927), but eventually allowed political parties (the National Bloc after 1936). France also avoided land reform and permitted 3,000 rich landed-families to earn half of agricultural income. In Lebanon, French investors and merchants had assisted the late 19th century boom in sericulture (silk production), which led to the rise of Beirut as an entrepôt, but had declined by World War One with the loss of labor to emigration.



Sources: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kadisha_valley.png>

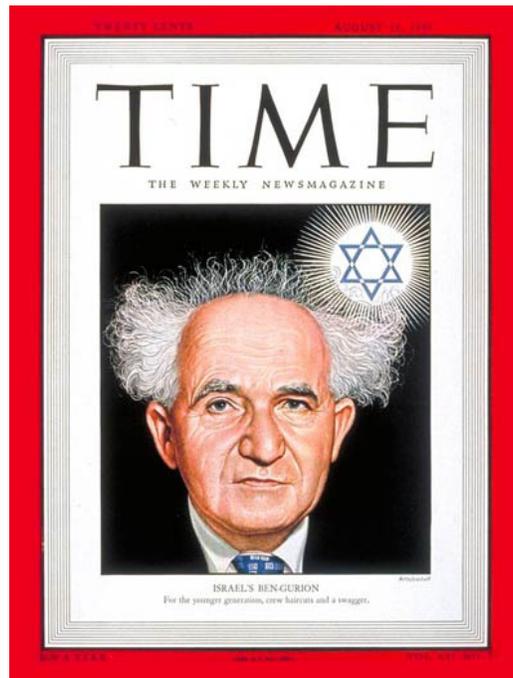
*Sericulture (Silk Production) –
Dominated in the Maronite Qadisha Valley, Lebanon*

In the colonial period, French investment in infrastructure, communications, and banking supported the Levantine Christian merchant elite (especially in Beirut) and the beginnings of modern industry.

In the 1920s, Syria and Lebanon were much ahead of Jordan in political sophistication and economic development. In colonial Transjordan, Britain had to build a new public administration in a peripheral, largely desert area. Nearly half of the population was nomadic, and most were illiterate. Britain heavily subsidized infrastructure, controlled the army and state finances, and imported civil servants (mostly British and Palestinian) to run the fledgling government. King Abdullah provided titular Arab leadership and dreamed of Hashemite expansion to recapture parts of the Levant that the British had promised to the Arabs in the Hussein-McMahon Letters of 1915-1916.

Britain struggled to create an orderly administration in Mandated Palestine in the face of Arab opposition to continuing Zionist immigration and colonization. Many new Jewish settlers

arrived from Russia and Poland in the 1920s. 100,000 Jewish immigrants entered Palestine and 23,000 Jews emigrated. The 77,000 net migrants increased the Jewish share of Palestine's total population to 16 percent in 1929. Following Adolf Hitler's takeover of Germany in 1933, Jewish immigration to Palestine accelerated. Between 1933 and 1936, 165,000 Jews, mostly from Germany, immigrated to Palestine. By 1936, Jews constituted 27 percent of the total population of British Palestine.



Sources: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:David-Ben-Gurion-TIME-1948.jpg>>

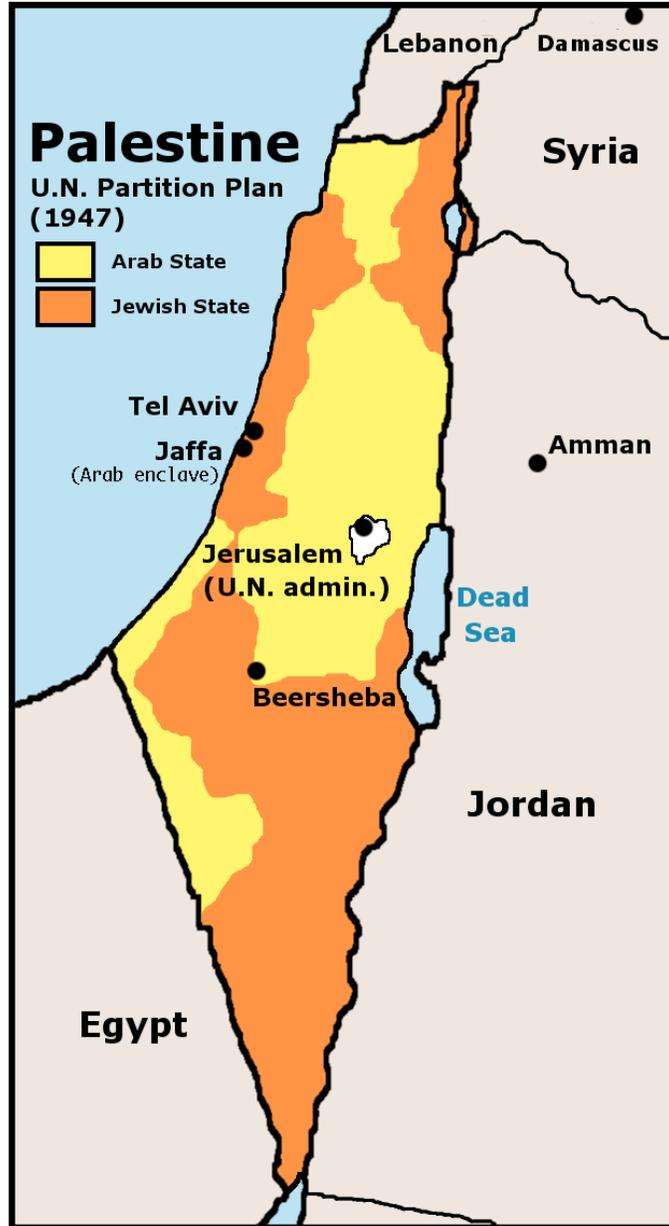
David Ben-Gurion, Jewish Immigrant and Prime Minister of Israel, 1949-1963 – Time Magazine, August 1948

Many of those new Jewish arrivals brought capital and technical and management skills and established a thriving capitalist economy in their adopted homeland. Most, though by no means all, of the Arab Palestinians were poor and illiterate.

Although British policies improved health, education, transport, and sanitation facilities to help both Jews and Arabs, their efforts to encourage cash crops aided Jewish export farmers more than Arab subsistence producers and widened the already substantial gap in incomes between the two groups. That economic imbalance exacerbated the underlying cultural and religious differences between the Jewish settlers and the Arab Palestinians.

The Arab-Israeli Conflict (1948-present). The horrific Holocaust, in which 6 million Jews were murdered, gave Jewish leaders even stronger resolve to create a safe haven in a state of Israel. In 1947, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) recommended the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state (with 56 percent of the land area), an Arab state (44

percent), and a neutral enclave in Jerusalem – all within an economic union.



Sources: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:UN_Partition_Plan_Palestine.png>

*United Nations Plan for Partition of Israel/Palestine, 1947 –
Jewish State (Orange Area), Arab State (Yellow Area)*

Jewish residents then constituted 31 percent of the population and owned 11 percent of cultivable land. In the face of ardent Arab opposition, the UN General Assembly supported partition (33 nations in favor, 13 opposed, and 10 abstentions). The American and Soviet governments both lobbied to gain votes for partition. An independent Jewish state of Israel was created in 1948.

During the next 25 years, four costly wars were fought between Israel and the Palestinians and their Arab supporters. Israel won them all. Independent Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan – as well as Israel and Palestine – have been influenced heavily by the Arab-Israeli conflict. Arab armies from Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq immediately attacked the new nation of Israel in May 1948. As a result of the first Arab-Israeli war (1948-1949), Israel gained control of 77 percent of the area of Mandated Palestine, although the partition plan of the United Nations had allocated only 56 percent to Israel. Jordan received the West Bank and Egypt the Gaza Strip. More than 700,000 Arab Palestinians left Israel and became refugees; 450,000 emigrated to Jordan.

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES



Sources: Wikimedia Commons, available at

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Israel_and_occupied_territories_map.png>

Israel and the Occupied Territories, 1949-present

In 1956, after the United States and the World Bank reneged on their offers to finance the High Aswan Dam, President Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal Company (largely British- and French-owned) and claimed ownership of the canal. Israel then invaded the Sinai, and French and British troops took control of the Suez Canal, ostensibly to stop Israeli progress. After the US and the USSR jointly forced all three invaders to withdraw, no territory changed hands.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nasser_and_Eisenhower,_1960.jpg>

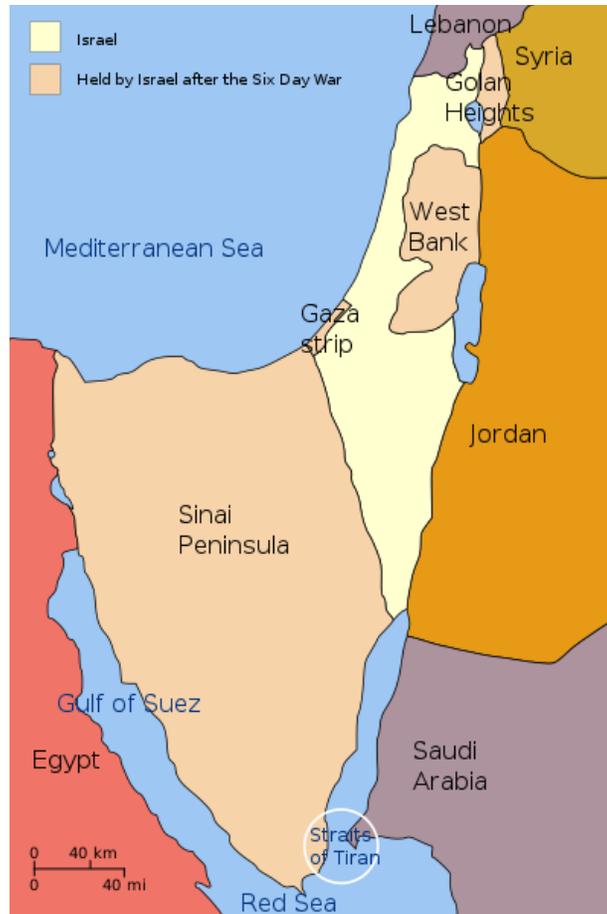
*Gamal Abdel Nasser, President of Egypt (1956-1970) (Right), with
Dwight D. Eisenhower, President of US (1953-1961), in 1960*

In May 1967, supported by substantial military and economic assistance from the Soviet Union, Nasser moved 100,000 troops into the Sinai and closed the Aqaba Strait to Israeli shipping.

Three Arab countries surrounding Israel – Egypt, Syria, and Jordan – formed a military coalition. After exhaustive diplomatic efforts to convince its Western allies that it was acting in self-defense, Israel launched a massive, blitzkrieg attack in June 1967, destroyed Egypt's air force, and crushed all three opponents in six days.

Israel's American weaponry and experienced leadership proved superior to the Soviet weapons and training in the Arab coalition.

The overwhelming military victory allowed Israel to occupy and claim territories that were three and one-half times the size of the pre-war state of Israel – the Sinai Peninsula (from Egypt), the West Bank (Jordan), the Gaza Strip (Egypt), East Jerusalem (Jordan), and the Golan Heights (Syria). But those transferred territories also housed two million Palestinians (and other Arabs).



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Six_Day_War_Territories.svg>

Territorial Shifts After the Six-Day War, 1967

Egypt and Syria retaliated in October 1973 by attacking Israel in the Yom Kippur war and threatening an oil embargo. Anwar Sadat, Egypt's President, designed a war-for-peace strategy to threaten the balance of power in the Middle East. The two Cold War super-powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, intervened to ensure that neither side would win an unbalanced

peace. Despite losing the bloody, three-week-long war, the Arab states won a moral victory because their significant early victories challenged the long-held Israeli military superiority.

Thereafter, three important peacemaking agreements were concluded. In the Camp David Agreement of 1978, Egypt and Israel recognized each other's sovereignty, Israel agreed to return the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, and both states began to receive large amounts of American foreign aid (economic and military).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Camp_David,_Menachem_Begin,_Anwar_Sadat,_1978.jpg>

Anwar Sadat of Egypt, Jimmy Carter of the US, and Menachem Begin of Israel – Meeting in Camp David, Maryland, 1978

Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) agreed to mutual recognition in the Oslo Accords of 1993 (officially the “Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between Israel and the PLO”), and Israel promised to evacuate part of Jericho and most of the Gaza Strip. Jordan and Israel subsequently signed a peace treaty, recognized mutual sovereignty, and pledged non-aggression. King Hussein considered that treaty the crowning diplomatic achievement of his lengthy career.

But full resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict has proven to be very elusive. Although the Oslo Accords promised future discussion of borders, Israeli settlements, water rights, return of Palestinian refugees, and the status of Jerusalem, progress has been elusive at best. In 1999-2000, US President Bill Clinton mediated talks between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and PLO Leader Yasser Arafat, but the attempted settlement broke down when Arafat refused to compromise on the return of Palestinian refugees and demanded full Palestinian sovereignty in East Jerusalem.

Independent Syria (1946-present). Syria earned its independence from France in 1946. Land-owning oligarchs, mostly Sunni Arab, controlled rural votes to wield political power. In 1958, Syrian political leaders sought union with Egypt. Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt's leader, agreed, and the two countries merged to become the United Arab Republic. A military coup in Syria in 1961 and Egyptian indifference resulted in the peaceful dissolution of the union. Another military coup in 1963 put the Ba'th ("National Renaissance") Party in power.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Iraq_\(1963%E2%80%931991\);_Flag_of_Syria_\(1963%E2%80%931972\).svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Iraq_(1963%E2%80%931991);_Flag_of_Syria_(1963%E2%80%931972).svg)

*Flag of the Republic of Syria (1963-1972) –
After the Ba'th Military Coup of 1963*

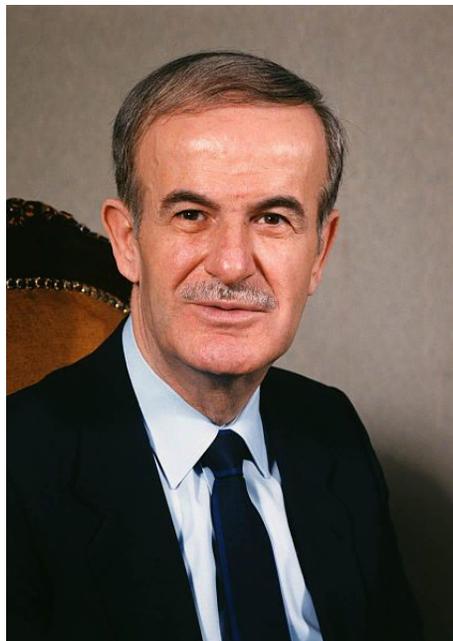
Ba'thist ideology was a mixture of Arab nationalism and radical populism that was intended to overthrow the established

social and economic order. The Ba’thist generals – mostly from minority religious groups (Alawis, Druzes, and Isma’ilis) – nationalized industry and other non-land assets. The 1967 Arab-Israeli war, in which Syria lost the Golan Heights (Quneitra Province), and the abortive Black September (1970) invasion of Jordan to assist rebelling Palestinians precipitated a leadership change.

Hafiz al-Asad, a Ba’thist general from an Alawi peasant family, seized power in a military coup in 1970. Asad ran a brutal dictatorship for three decades. Asad’s army firmly repressed numerous urban disturbances and eliminated centers of opposition to his dictatorial rule, especially in the northern cities of Aleppo and Hama. His power base included Alawi military colleagues, rural sharecroppers, and urban schoolteachers.

Asad successfully linked his Alawi military support with mercantile interests in Damascus. Ba’thist foreign relations focused on a Pan-Arab, anti-Israel policy with the hope of recovering the Golan Heights. Syria made adroit use of its

geopolitical location to attract foreign aid. Syria paid for more than half of its imports with aid from the USSR and Eastern Europe, oil-producing Arab states, and, to a lesser extent, Iran and the West. Ba'thist land reform was politically popular and created modest agricultural growth. But the state control of industry and services hampered economic progress. Per capita income grew at a respectable annual rate of 3.7 percent for 13 years following the Ba'thist coup (1970-1983). Yet per capita income declined during the later 1980s and grew at only 1.8 percent annually in the 1990s.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hafez_al-Assad_official_portrait.jpg>

Hafiz al-Asad, Ba'thist General and President of Syria, 1970-2000

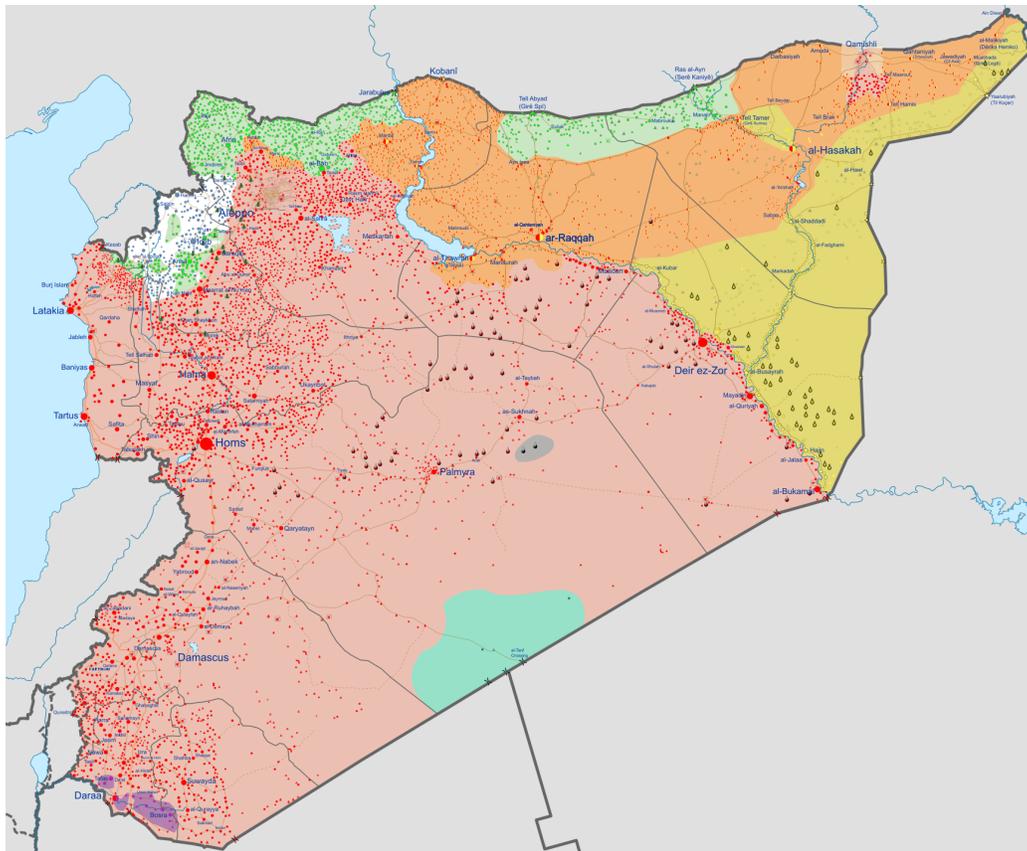
When Hafiz al-Asad died a natural death in 2000, following 30 years in office, his son, Bashar al-Asad, took over as President of the Arab Republic of Syria. He was elected by popular referendum in 2000 and won rigged elections in 2007 and 2014. Bashar is British educated, a self-styled modernizer with interests in information technology, and supported by his late father's powerful Alawi clique. From his father, Bashar inherited an anti-Israeli policy and a repressive, dictatorial approach to governance.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bashar_al-Assad_in_Russia_\(2015-10-21\)_08.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bashar_al-Assad_in_Russia_(2015-10-21)_08.jpg)>

*Bashar al-Asad, President of Syria (2000-present) –
Pictured in Russia, 2015*

During the Arab Spring in March 2011, protesters demanded his resignation and greater political freedom. Bashar al-Asad responded with inhumanely brutal force, and a widespread civil war began. Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah of Lebanon have provided support to Bashar, whereas the Arab League, United States, European Union, Turkey, and Israel have supported the opposition. Russian military intervention in 2015 rescued Bashar al-Asad and the Syrian government from impending military defeat. The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), an international terrorist group, entered Syria in 2013 and controlled parts of Syria until it was driven underground in late 2017. Russian military support allowed Syrian government forces and their allies to gain control of nearly all of Syria in mid-2019, except Idlib Province in the northwestern part of the country.



Syrian Arab Republic (SAA)
 Syrian Arab Republic & Rojava (SAA & SDF)
 Rojava (SDF)
 Syrian Interim Government (SNA) & Turkish occupation
 Syrian Salvation Government (HTS^[a])
 Revolutionary Commando Army & United States' occupation
 Opposition groups in reconciliation
 ISIL

Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
[<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Syrian_Civil_War_map.svg>](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Syrian_Civil_War_map.svg)

*Syria's Civil War, August 2020 –
 Areas Controlled By Syrian Government (Red), Kurdish Rojava
 (Tan), Syria and Rojava (Orange), Turkey (Green), Anti-
 government Forces (White and Blue)*

This tragic state of events created the world's worst humanitarian crisis. By late 2019, at least 400,000 Syrians had

perished in the conflict (the range of estimated deaths is 384,000 to 586,000). Of those casualties, about one-third each were pro-government forces, anti-government forces, and civilians. In addition, 6.2 million Syrians were internally displaced and 6 million more became international refugees (more than half of Syria's pre-war (2011) population of 20.8 million). Many of the internationally displaced Syrians are in refugee camps in Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon. Reports produced by the World Bank estimate that the war-related cumulative losses of Syrian GDP from economic disruption between 2011 and 2016 totaled \$226 billion, at least 20 times more than the costs of wartime physical destruction.

The civil war also created an economic disaster. Syria's land area, 71,498 square miles, is slightly larger than that of Missouri. The Syrian population of 17.1 million is primarily Arab (90 percent) and includes important Kurdish and Armenian minorities. Between 1990 and 2000, Syria's GDP per capita (adjusted for purchasing power) grew slowly at an annual rate of 1.8 percent and

reached \$3,100 in 2000. Per capita income grew at the rate of 5.1 percent between 2000 and 2011 and attained a peak level of \$5,100 in 2011 (38 percent of the world average). After eight years of disastrous war, Syria's per capita income fell to an estimated \$2,700 in 2019 (15 percent of the world average), and Syria was among the world's 25 poorest countries in that year.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Olive_groves_in_Syria.jpg>

*Olive Groves in Homs, Western Syria –
Pictured in 2009, Before the Onset of the Civil War*

Life expectancy in Syria was 72 years (2018), and the rate of adult literacy was 81 percent (2004). Accordingly, Syria's ranking

in the UNDP's Human Development Index (154th of 189 countries) – the gold standard of quality-of-life indicators because it incorporates income, health, and education data – was higher than its ranking in the World Bank's listing of per capita incomes (163rd of 187 countries). Only 34 percent of Syrians use the Internet (2017). Because of war uncertainties and bureaucratic controls, Syria ranked a woeful 176th of 190 countries in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index (2019). Corruption in Syria was rampant. The struggling country ranked 178th of 198 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index compiled by Transparency International (2019).

The beleaguered Syrian economy depends heavily on foreign assistance (\$10 billion in 2019). Syria also relies on personal remittances (\$1.6 billion in 2019) and export earnings (\$1.9 billion in 2017). Its leading export products are fats and oils, fruits and nuts, and spices. Prior to the war, Syria benefited from petroleum exports (\$4 billion from 150,000 barrels per day in 2011) and

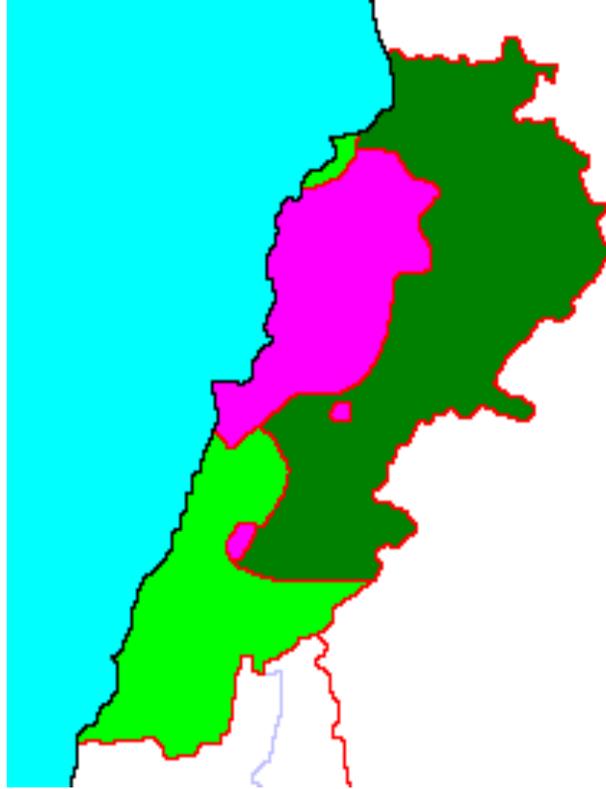
international tourism (\$1.8 billion from 5.1 million international-tourist arrivals in 2011). The latest available study of poverty in Syria, carried out by the World Bank in 2007, concluded that 35.2 percent of Syria's population lived in poverty.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sy-map.png>>

Contemporary Syria

Independent Lebanon (1943-present). At independence in 1943, Lebanese leaders concluded an unwritten National Pact, agreeing to share political power. The president was to be Maronite, the prime minister Sunni, and the speaker of parliament Shi'ite, and the parliament was to have a 6:5 ratio of Christians to Muslims. That compromise proved workable while the economy boomed. But the arrival of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1971 triggered fundamentalist extremism by both Muslims and Christians. Lebanon disintegrated in 1975 and struggled through horrible civil wars until 1990, causing 120,000 fatalities. Syria intervened militarily in 1976 to prevent a leftist alliance with the PLO from claiming a victory over the Maronite-dominated rightist group in the Lebanese civil war. But then Syria refused to leave.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Civil_war_Lebanon_map_1976a.gif>

Civil War in Lebanon, 1976 – Areas Controlled by Syria (Dark Green), Maronite Groups (Purple), and Palestinians (Light Green)

The US and Saudi Arabia brokered the Taif Agreement in 1989 in which representation in parliament was to be shared equally between Christians and Muslims. The return of greater stability in 1990 allowed Lebanon to begin reconstruction.

Syria and Israel have dominated Lebanese foreign relations. Syrian military forces entered Lebanon in 1976, ostensibly to maintain order among conflicting groups, and finally left in 2005.

Israel occupied south Lebanon between 1978 and 2000 to protect its border and national interests. Lebanon negotiated an association agreement with the European Union in 2003 and trades widely with Western and Middle Eastern countries. In 2006, Israel and the Lebanon-based militia, Hezbollah, engaged in a brief, 34-day war – in which 1,100 Lebanese and 160 Israelis were killed and 1,000,000 Lebanese were displaced – followed by a tenuous peace.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tyre_air_strike.jpg>

*Lebanon-Israel War, 2006 –
Israeli Air Force Bombed Tyre, Lebanon*

Lebanese leaders are attempting to resurrect the open economy strategy that was so successful between 1945 and 1975 by freeing Lebanon from Syrian domination and maintaining flexible diplomatic and trading relationships with both Middle Eastern countries and Western nations, notably France, Great Britain, and the United States. But Lebanon has suffered from profound political wrangling and corruption. Factions reflect both Lebanon's religious diversity (about one-fourth of Lebanese each are Sunni Muslim, Shi'ite Muslim, and Maronite Christian) and complicated economic and security relations with neighboring Syria and Israel. The current president, Michel Aoun, the leader of a Maronite Christian party and former commander-in-chief of the Lebanese army, was elected president by parliament in 2016, following 30 months during which the presidency was vacant because of political infighting. Hassan Diab, an academic and former education minister, served as prime minister from January to August 2020. He resigned following massive protests over the

government's mishandling of the Covid-19 lockdown and the massive ammonium nitrate explosion in the port of Beirut.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Secretary_Tillerson_Meets_With_Lebanese_President_Aoun_\(25411846517\)_cropped.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Secretary_Tillerson_Meets_With_Lebanese_President_Aoun_(25411846517)_cropped.jpg)>

Michel Aoun (1935 –) – President of Lebanon (2016 –)

Economic progress mirrored those political and diplomatic shifts. Lebanese income grew at nearly 4 percent per capita from 1945 to 1975, led by open market policies, entrepôt services in Beirut, transit trade, tourism, and manufactured exports to the Middle East. For three decades, Lebanon, and particularly Beirut,

served as the major intermediary for trade and financial services linking Western and Middle Eastern countries. But beginning in 1975, the civil war caused massive destruction and large-scale emigration. After peace was restored in 1990, Lebanon's per capita income grew at 4 percent per year (measured in purchasing power parity in constant prices) through 2006. However, reconstruction resulted in a heavy public debt, eventually rising to 150 percent of annual GDP, the third highest ratio of debt to GDP in the world.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ferris_wheel_and_the_corniche.jpg>

Rebuilding Beirut with Western Trade and Aid

Following the close of the short war with Israel, Lebanon enjoyed a spurt of rapid growth in per capita income, averaging 8.2 percent per year (2006-2010). The Lebanese economy continued to be service-oriented and depend on banking and tourism. But the crisis in Syria resulted in 1.5 million Syrian refugees entering Lebanon, a country smaller than Connecticut with only 6.9 million people (in 2019). The severe strain on the Lebanese economy caused per capita income growth (in constant prices) to decline at an annual rate of -3.1 percent between 2011 and 2019 – losing nearly all of the gains made since 2006. The downturn was caused by political instability, a widening fiscal deficit, and a liquidity squeeze. The Bank of Lebanon (the central bank) was forced to halt subsidized lending (via commercial banks) to the real estate sector, reversing a policy that had been in place since 2012.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Beirut_002.jpg>

Construction in Lebanon Slowed After Subsidies Removed in 2018 – Pedestrian-only Street in Beirut's Central District

In 2019, Lebanon had a price-adjusted per capita income of \$15,327, about one-fourth that of the US and 87 percent of the world average. Lebanon ranked in the middle of the World Bank's listing of per capita incomes (86th of 187 countries). Life expectancy in Lebanon was 79 years (2018), identical to the US figure, and the rate of adult literacy was 95 percent (2018).

Lebanon's ranking in the UNDP's Human Development Index – incorporating income, health, and education data – was 93rd of 189 countries. Seventy-eight percent of the Lebanese population use the Internet (2017). Because of administrative inefficiencies and bureaucratic controls, Lebanon ranked a disappointing 143rd of 190 countries in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index (2019). Corruption in Lebanon was widespread. The country ranked 137th of 198 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index compiled by Transparency International (2019). Accordingly, foreign direct investment in Lebanon was limited (\$2.6 billion in 2019).

The declining Lebanese economy depends heavily on export earnings (\$11.6 billion in 2019). Its leading export products are gems and precious metals (41 percent), arms (14 percent), and copper (3 percent). Lebanon also relies on personal remittances (\$7.5 billion in 2019), international tourism (\$8.7 billion from 2 million international-tourist arrivals in 2018), and foreign

assistance (\$1.4 billion in 2018). The latest available study of poverty in Lebanon, carried out by the World Bank in 2012, concluded that 27.4 percent of Lebanon's population had incomes beneath the poverty line.

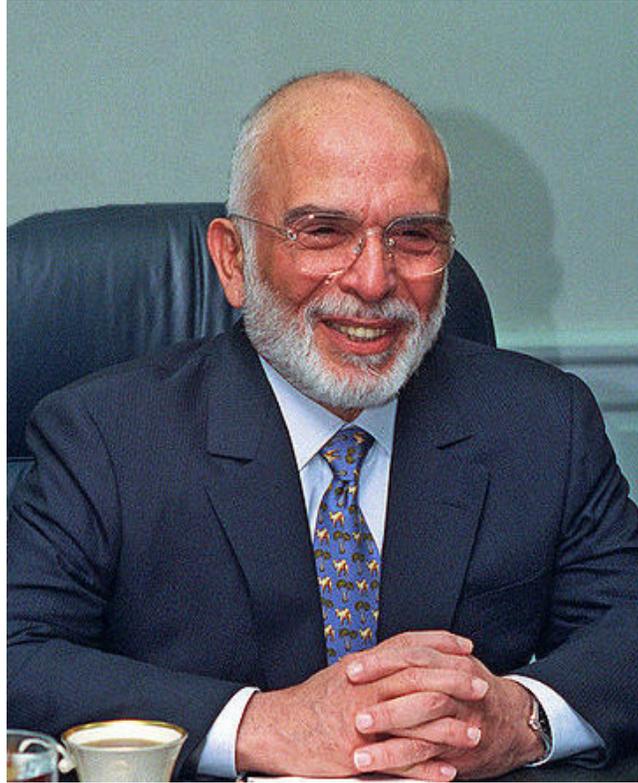


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Lebanon.png

Contemporary Lebanon

Independent Jordan (1946-present). Jordan received its independence from Britain in 1946. One extraordinary statesman, King Hussein, skillfully led Jordan for 47 years (1952-1999). The first king, Abdullah, had incorporated the West Bank into Jordan in 1950, following the first Arab-Israeli war, and tripled Jordan's population. King Hussein placed most public industrial projects in the East Bank (original Jordan). The loss of the West Bank to Israel, after the Six-Day war of 1967, caused Jordan to lose 40 percent of its national income.

During Jordan's next two decades (1967-1988), Hussein imposed military rule to control rebellious Palestinians, defeated the PLO in the Black September civil war of 1970-1971, and expelled the PLO from Jordan. In the last decade of Hussein's rule (1988-1999), Jordan introduced liberal reforms to mollify dissenters, negotiated a peace treaty with Israel to guarantee security and improve water supplies, and expanded trade with Iraq after that neighboring country lost the Gulf War.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hussein_of_Jordan_in_1997.jpg>

*King Hussein of Jordan (1935-1999, ruled 1952-1999) –
Near the End of His Reign in 1997*

King Hussein also oversaw rapid economic expansion. He permitted Palestinian entrepreneurs to dominate Jordan's private sector within a framework of state-controlled capitalism. Jordan's economy was closely linked to neighboring Arab oil-producing countries. Jordan benefited from emigrant remittances and Gulf aid and trade, but suffered when it had to absorb refugees or returnees after political crises. Jordan became the world's fourth-

largest exporter of phosphates (for fertilizer) and an important supplier of potash (from the Dead Sea). During King Hussein's last 25 years in power (1975-1999), Jordan's per capita income (measured in constant prices) grew at an average annual rate of 2.1 percent, peaking in the mid-1980s.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aqaba_Railway_Corporation_BW_1.JPG>

*Phosphate Train, Aqaba Railway Corporation –
Jordan Produces and Exports Phosphate and Phosphatic Fertilizer*

The Arab-Israeli conflict and Jordan's dependence on Arab oil states and the United States for economic aid dominated Jordanian foreign relations. In 1999, Jordan joined the World Trade Organization and signed an Association Agreement with the

European Union, and in 2000, Jordan obtained a Free Trade Agreement with the United States.

When King Hussein died of cancer in 1999, after 47 years in power, his son succeeded him as King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Abdullah is a former soldier, a self-styled modernizer, and has a Kuwaiti Palestinian wife. He inherited his father's extensive powers to appoint governments, approve legislation, and dissolve parliament. The new king retained ultimate authority over the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the Jordanian government.

King Abdullah carried out important economic reforms – opening trade, encouraging private foreign investment, and privatizing state-owned industry. During Abdullah's first decade in power (1999-2009), Jordan's per capita income (measured in purchasing power parity in constant prices) grew at the rapid average annual rate of 3.2 percent.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:King_Abdullah_II_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:King_Abdullah_II_(cropped).jpg)>

*King Abdullah II of Jordan (1962 –, ruled 1999 –) –
Pictured at the European Parliament, Strasbourg, 2020*

Beginning in 2009, however, global recession and regional turmoil negatively impacted Jordan's economy. Exports fell, tourism declined, and Jordan had to accommodate 670,000 registered Syrian refugees and 630,000 other Syrian immigrants (after the civil war in Syria began in 2011). Between 2009 and 2019, per capita income (in constant prices) declined at the average yearly rate of -1.4 percent. At the end of that decade, Jordan's per

capita income had fallen to the level attained in 2004. In 2019, Jordan's per capita income was \$10,317 (16 percent of the United States figure and 58 percent of the world average). After a decade of economic decline, in 2019 Jordan ranked only 111th of 187 countries in the World Bank's listing of per capita incomes.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jamal_Abdul_Nasser_Circle_Amman_Jordan.jpg>

*Amman, Jordan's Capital –
The Center of Political and Economic Activity In Jordan*

Life expectancy in Jordan was 74 years (2018), and the rate of adult literacy was 98 percent (2018). Accordingly, Jordan's ranking in the UNDP's 2019 Human Development Index (102nd of

189 countries in 2019), which incorporates income, health, and education data, was higher than its ranking in the World Bank's listing of per capita incomes. Sixty-seven percent of Jordanians use the Internet (2017). Jordan ranked 75th of 190 countries in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index (2019) and 60th of 198 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index compiled by Transparency International (2019). In spite of those quite impressive rankings, foreign direct investment in Jordan was modest (\$0.9 billion in 2019) because of political and security uncertainties in the region.

The Jordanian economy depends heavily on international tourism (\$6.2 billion from 4.2 million international-tourist arrivals in 2018), personal remittances (\$4.5 billion in 2019, mostly from emigrant workers in the Arabian Gulf region), foreign assistance (\$2.5 billion in 2019, over \$1 billion from the United States and much of the remainder from the Gulf states), and export earnings (\$16.3 billion in 2019). Its leading export products in 2019 were

Future economic improvement for Jordan's 10.1 million people faces strong challenges – regional instability, high unemployment (19.1 percent in 2019 and youth unemployment at twice that level), and heavy dependence on emigrant remittances and foreign aid.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jo-map.png>>

Contemporary Jordan

Independent Israel (1948-present). The Zionist Jews in independent Israel wished to build a Jewish homeland, create a democratic state, and incorporate the areas of Biblical Israel. But the rapid growth of the Palestinian population threatened to overcome the Jewish majority, opposition by Palestinians and Arab countries led to anti-democratic, Israeli security measures, and the post-1967 Israeli takeover of Biblical Israel brought violent uprisings in the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinian Arabs held parallel objectives – nationhood, democracy, and rights for Palestinian refugees. But the creation of an independent Palestinian state conflicted with Jewish claims to land, the desire to have a democratic Palestinian government was threatened by the lack of a viable politico-economic base, and compensation for Palestinian refugees required international assistance.

Israeli policies encouraged the development of a strong military force to maintain Israel's independence in the face of Arab opposition and the growth of a modern economy to raise standards of living and underpin the country's survival. With the support of

massive American military aid and the provision of highly advanced American weapons systems and military technology, especially in air power, Israel developed an overwhelming military capability. Between 1948 and 1996, Israel received military and economic assistance from the United States that totaled \$65 billion.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arafat%26Clinton%26Barak.jpg>>

*Ehud Barak, Bill Clinton, and Yasser Arafat –
Camp David Summit, Washington, 1999*

Since then, Israel has benefited from government and private resource transfers that have reached an estimated \$7 billion per

year, including \$3.8 billion in US military aid (2019) and about \$3 billion in private remittances from Jewish individuals and agencies. Those transfers have been used to build the Israeli economy, strengthen its military capacity, and service its large foreign debt (owed mostly to Americans for military and other equipment purchases). Effective leadership, huge inflows of funds, and privileged access to American military technology have allowed Israel to maintain its status as the dominant military power in the Middle Eastern region.

Since 2009, Benjamin Netanyahu has been Israel's prime minister, heading conservative coalitions and serving in the longest consecutive tenure in Israel's history. He was charged with criminal corruption (bribery, fraud, and breach of trust in three separate cases) in November 2019 and was scheduled to face trial in the Spring of 2020. Following three inconclusive elections in one year, in April 2020 Netanyahu and Benny Gantz, the leaders of the two parties that won the most parliamentary seats, agreed to form a coalition (national unity) government, headed by

Netanyahu until November 2021 and by Gantz thereafter, to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Benjamin_Netanyahu_2018.jpg>

Benjamin Netanyahu (1949 –), Prime Minister of Israel (1996-1999, (2009 –) – Charged With Criminal Corruption, 2019

The leadership of the Palestinian territories (the West Bank and Gaza) has been divided. Mahmoud Abbas, who succeeded Arafat as Chairman of the PLO in 2004, has served as President of the Palestinian National Authority since 2005 and in that capacity has headed the government of the West Bank (although about 60

percent of the West Bank remains under Israeli military control). Israel unilaterally removed Israeli settlers from Gaza (also known as the Gaza Strip) in 2005, and Gaza went under Palestinian leadership. The Hamas faction, which refuses to compromise with Israel or recognize the leadership of the Palestinian Authority, gained control of Gaza in 2007 and has governed there since then.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mahmoud_Abbas_May_2018.jpg>

*Mahmoud Abbas (1935 –) –
President of the Palestinian National Authority (2005 –),
Head of Government of the Palestinian West Bank*

Israel's record of economic progress has been impressive, especially in view of the substantial amounts that the country devotes to military spending. But wide disparities exist between the economies of Israel and of the areas under Palestinian control (West Bank and Gaza). Israel's price-adjusted per capita income grew at an annual rate of 1.7 percent between 1990 and 2019 (in constant prices), and Israeli per capita income in 2019 was \$42,194 (65 percent of the US level). Israel ranked in the top fifth of the World Bank's listing of per capita incomes (33rd of 187 countries).

Israel's population, 9.1 million in 2019, has been expanding at 1.9 percent per year. The life expectancy in Israel is 83 years, and 97 percent of its citizens are literate. Eighty-seven percent of Israel's people use the Internet. Israel's ranking in the UNDP's Human Development Index (based on income, health, and education data) was a very impressive 22nd of 189 countries. Israel ranked 35th of 190 countries in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index (2019) and 35th of 198 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index compiled by Transparency International (2019).

Consequently, Israel was an attractive venue for foreign direct investment (\$18.2 billion in 2019).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hashalom_interchange.jpg>

High-Tech Tel Aviv – Israel’s Silicon Valley

Israel’s economy relies on high-technology industries, software development, pharmaceuticals, and diamond cutting. The Israeli economy moved quickly into information technology research and production – computer software, fiber optics, digital technology, and robotic production systems – with the help of foreign venture capital and Israel’s liberal economic policies. The Israeli economy is export-oriented (export earnings were \$109.1

Substantial deposits of natural gas offshore Israel were discovered in 2009. The Tamar and Leviathan fields are two of the world's largest offshore gas fields discovered in the past 15 years. Production began in 2013. The two fields are expected to make Israel self-sufficient in natural gas for at least 40 years.

In contrast, the 4.7 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are very poor. Their per capita income was only \$5,795 in 2018 (one-seventh of the level in Israel). The Palestinians' per capita income level grew (in constant prices) at an annual rate of 1.5 percent (1994-2018), slower than Israel's annual growth rate (1.7 percent), and started at a very low base level (\$2,113 in 1994). The West Bank and Gaza ranked in the bottom third of the World Bank's listing of per capita incomes in 2019 (131st of 187 countries).

The Palestinian population is expanding very rapidly (2.5 percent per year). Their average life span is just 74 years, but their literacy rate is 97 percent (equivalent to Israel's). Seventy-one percent of the Palestinian people use the Internet. The West Bank

and Gaza's ranking in the UNDP's Human Development Index was 119th of 189 countries. The West Bank and Gaza ranked 117th of 190 countries in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index (2019) and was not included in the Corruption Perceptions Index compiled by Transparency International.

Export earnings in 2018 were \$2.9 billion. The Palestinians export stone, furniture, plastic articles, olives, and citrus, and their industry is limited to textiles, cement, and food processing. The West Bank and Gaza relies heavily on personal remittances (\$2.4 billion in 2019) and foreign assistance (\$2.2 billion in 2018). The latest available study of poverty in the West Bank and Gaza, carried out by the World Bank in 2017, concluded that 29.2 percent of the Palestinian population had incomes beneath the poverty line.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at <
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palestine- West Bank- Battered-agricultural lands-UAWC.jpg>>

Small-scale Agriculture in the Palestinian West Bank

Future stability and growth will depend on the willingness and ability of Israelis, Palestinians, and Arab countries in the region to overcome past differences and redouble their efforts to find a lasting peace in the Middle East.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Is-map.PNG>

Contemporary Israel, West Bank, and Gaza

Postscript on Petra – The Levant’s Leading Entrepôt in the First Century

Petra was a leading city in the ancient Levant for five centuries, beginning about 300 BCE. Its principal source of wealth and power was foreign trade. During the last century BCE and the first century CE, Petra was the leading entrepôt and caravanserai in the Levant, the eastern Mediterranean region.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:View_of_Petra.jpg>

Petra, Jordan – A UNESCO World Heritage Site Since 1985

Petra's Location and People. Petra (named “The Rock” by Greek merchants) was located at the crossroads of most of the principal long-distance trade routes in the ancient Levant – those between the Nile Valley and the Tigris-Euphrates Valleys, the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, and, most important for Petra, southern Arabia and the Mediterranean Sea or Syria. The city was sited at a key geographical location featuring an unusually ample water supply that required ingenious irrigation engineering, a good mountain pass between the eastern high desert and the Rift Valley, and a defensible urban and agricultural site. Petra drew much of its trading profits from frankincense and myrrh moving on the Incense Road between southern Arabia and Gaza (en route to Alexandria or Rome) or Damascus.



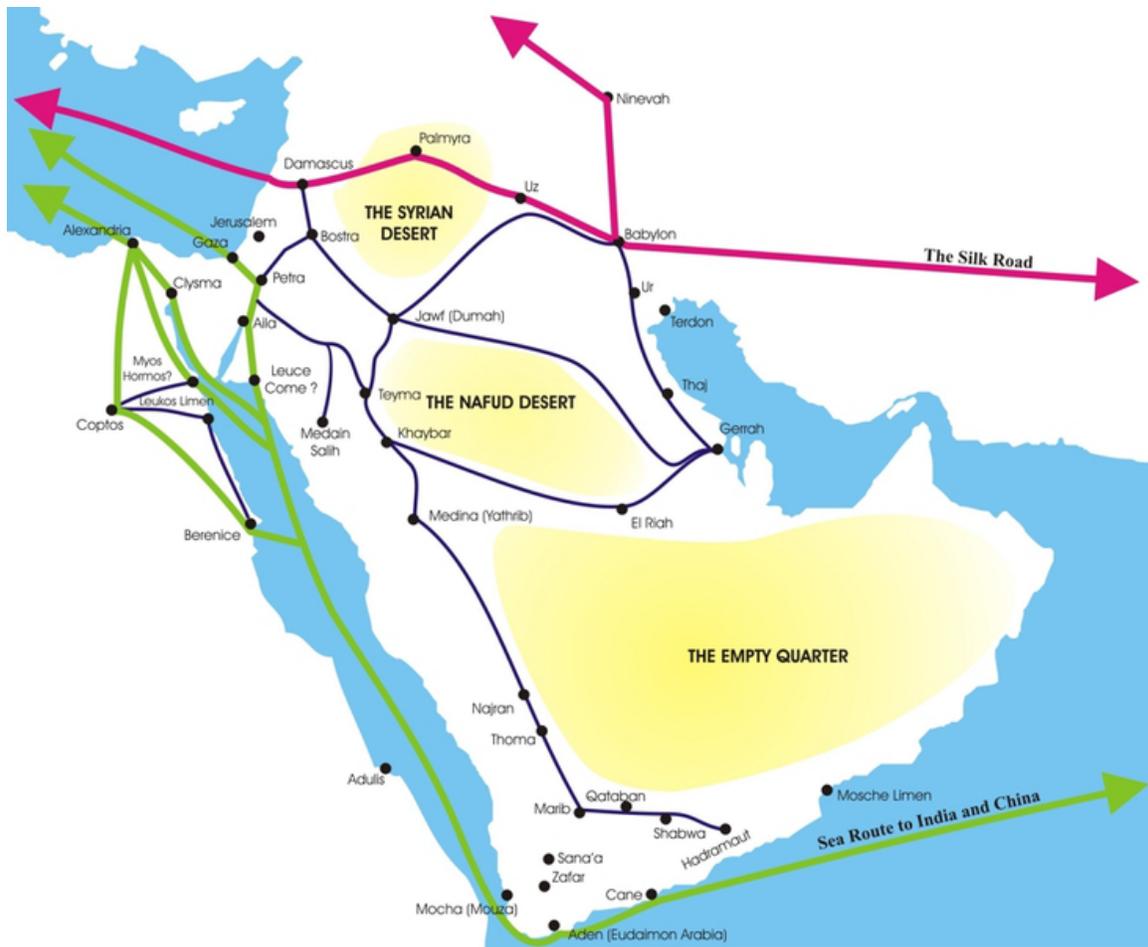
Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
 <<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NabateansRoutes.png>>

Nabataean Trade Routes – Crossed at Petra

At its height, Petra was inhabited by the Nabataeans – a Semitic people with likely origins in northwestern Arabia. The Nabataeans were traders not warriors. Petra’s leaders often bought off opponents rather than confront them militarily. Initially, the

Nabataeans raided the caravans. But soon they began to earn greater profits by arranging for safe passage of caravans through their territory. At the peak of their trading success, the Nabataeans provided both security and caravanserai services to Middle Eastern merchants passing through Petra. Nabataean merchants controlled much of the trade between the Hijra (northwestern Arabia) and Damascus and operated throughout the Middle East and the Mediterranean region.

The Nabataeans seized the opportunity to make Petra the leading entrepôt in the Middle East in the 1st century BCE, when the two Hellenistic powers, Ptolemaic Egypt and Seleucid Syria, were in continuing conflict with each other. Merchants from Alexandria and Damascus relocated to Petra and joined the entrepreneurial Nabataeans to monopolize both East-West trade between Egypt and Mesopotamia and South-North trade between southern Arabia and the Mediterranean region, including the transshipments of goods to and from India and China.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NABATAEAN_TRADE_ROUTES.png>

*Nabataean Trade Routes and Deserts –
 1st century BCE-1st century CE*

Trade Routes and Transportation. Petra thrived, especially during the two centuries bracketing the beginning of the Christian Era, because all goods transshipped through the Middle East had to move in part over land (in the absence of the Suez Canal). In addition, difficult winds and sailing conditions and

widespread piracy limited direct access by ships to Egypt via the Red Sea. Most incense from southern Arabia, bound for the Mediterranean region, thus was shipped by land on the Incense Road via Petra to the port of Gaza.

The key means of transportation on the Incense Road was the dromedary (one-humped) camel. The domestication of the camel, in south Arabia by the second millennium BCE, and the use of the camel in long-distance trade, from the first millennium BCE, significantly altered the economy of Arabia and the Middle East. Camel transportation permitted heavier and bulkier loads to be transported through desert areas with very limited water supplies. Camel caravans could average about 25 miles per day fully loaded. Without the camel, long-distance trade in the Middle East – and thus Petra's wealth – would have been severely limited.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Salt_transport_by_a_camel_train_on_Lake_Assale_\(Karum\)_in_Ethiopia.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Salt_transport_by_a_camel_train_on_Lake_Assale_(Karum)_in_Ethiopia.jpg)>

*Contemporary Camel Caravan In Danakil Desert, Ethiopia –
Transportation By Camel Has Not Changed in Three Millennia*

Frankincense and Myrrh. The most important commodities traded on the Incense Road were frankincense and myrrh, produced from resins in the barks of trees grown in southern Arabia and Somalia. Both aromatics were key ingredients of incenses and medicines popular in Rome, Egypt, Greece, and Syria. Frankincense was used, especially by the Romans, to propitiate the gods and to counter offensive urban

odors. Myrrh was mainly used in making perfumes and unguents. Because of the great demand for religious and medical uses and the limited growing area of producing trees, frankincense and myrrh were extremely high value commodities. Profits from their production and trade created thriving cities in southern Arabia and on the Incense Road, including Petra.

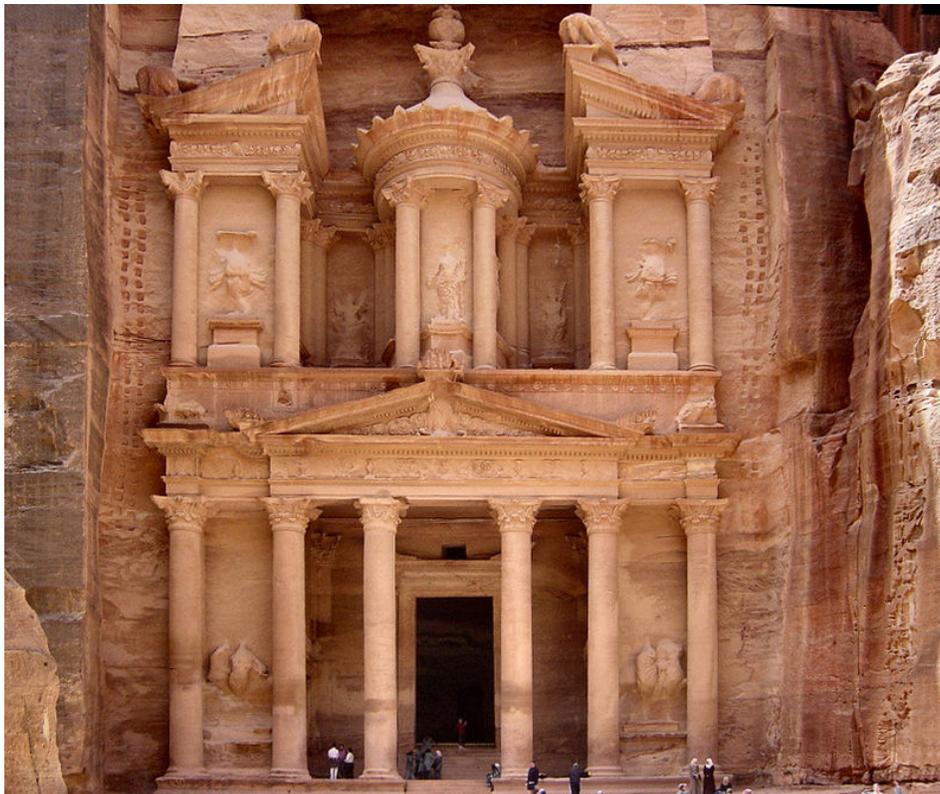


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boswellia_sacra_-_K%C3%B6hler%E2%80%93s_Medizinal-Pflanzen-022.jpg

Frankincense Tree (Boswellia sacra), Indigenous To South Arabia

Nabataean merchants monopolized the trade in frankincense and myrrh on the Incense Road between Hijra (in northwestern

Arabia) and Damascus (in Syria). At the height of Petran power in the first century CE, both of those cities were a part of the Nabataean kingdom. The incense trade thus provided profits directly to the Nabataean traders involved in it and indirectly to the Nabataean kingdom that taxed its movement through Petra. Incense was also the main basis of the entrepôt and caravanserai services that Petra provided to merchants and transporters.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Treasury_Petra.jpg>

*Al-Khazneh (The Treasury) –
Petra’s Iconic Monument At the End of the Siq Entrance*

The wealth of Petra for five centuries, therefore, was based principally on trading profits, especially from incense. The city used its geographical advantages and its entrepreneurial abilities to become the leading entrepôt of the Middle East. In addition, Petra's wealth arose from activities complementary to trade – agriculture, mining, artisanship – and from providing a wide range of services to resident and transitory merchants. Although the Nabataean kingdom did expand widely in the first century CE, the wealth of Petra continued to be based mainly on trade and not on tribute from conquered territories. Nabataean expansionism – south to Hijra, east to Jauf, and north to Damascus – was largely an outgrowth of widening commercial ties.

Petra's Decline and Legacy. The Nabataean kingdom's independence ended when Emperor Trajan arranged a bloodless takeover in 106 CE, and Petra became a part of Roman Arabia. The decline of Petra began with the shifting of tax revenues to Rome. The city experienced continuing, though gradually declining, prosperity for another century or so under Roman rule.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons, available at*
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Petra_-_286630893.jpg>

*Petra's Theatre –
Built by Nabataeans for 5,000 People, Modified by Roman Rulers*

Petra lost its economic base, because the Romans shifted the trade routes to Petra's disadvantage. Trajan built a south-north road that bypassed Petra and captured much of the incense trade. The Romans shifted the east-west trade to a route based on Palmyra in Syria. Ship technology improved, allowing shipping directly to Egypt via the Red Sea. As a result, most Nabataeans moved out of Petra to reside in the new trading centers and the city gradually lost its economic energy. Petra also suffered from serious earthquakes in the 4th and 5th centuries, and the declining

town limped along until about the 6th century. But few people lived in Petra at the time of the Islamic expansion in the 7th century.

The legacy of the Nabataean kingdom and its capital at Petra is impressive. Technically, the most substantial achievement was the ingenious engineering of water control for irrigated agriculture and to supply a bustling entrepôt of 30,000 residents and numerous transient merchants. Two millennia ago, irrigation engineering in Petra was at the highest level practiced anywhere outside of China.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Water_Channel_the_Siq_Petra_Jordan1343.jpg

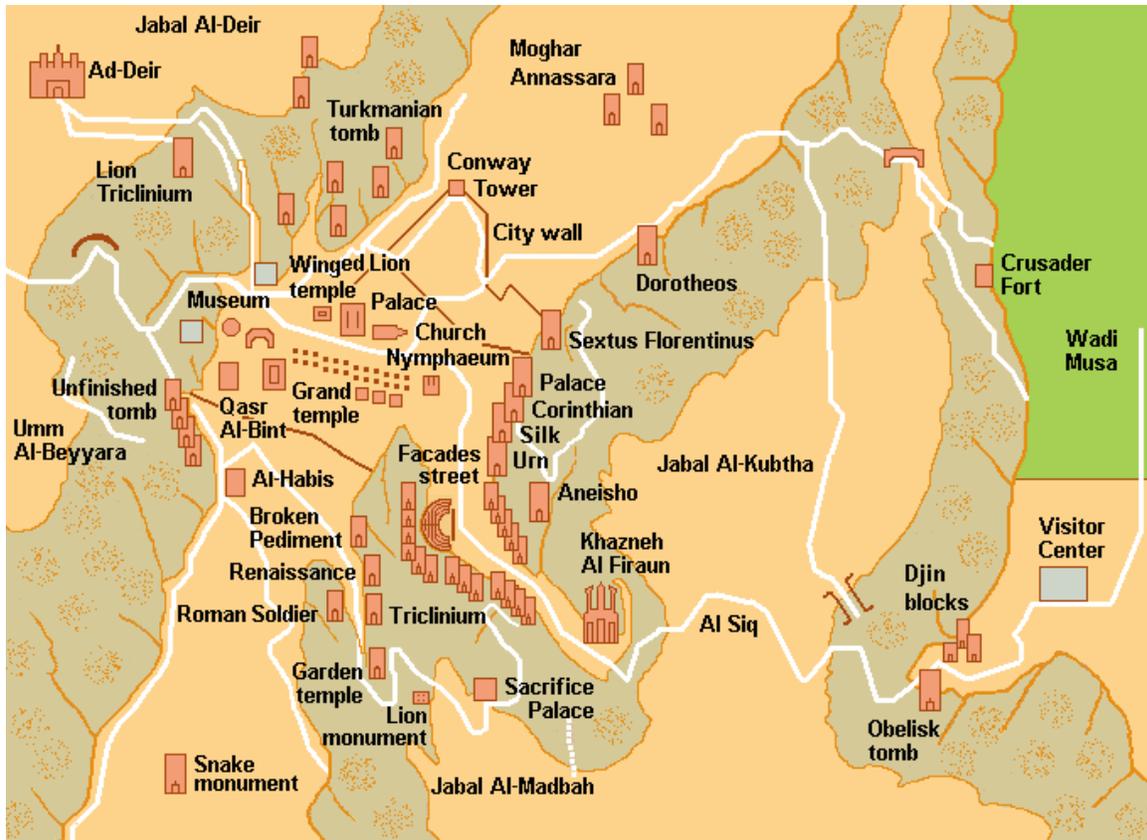
*Water Channel, The Siq, Petra –
The Nabataeans Used Sophisticated Irrigation Techniques*

Artistically, Petra is best known for its contributions in pottery and architecture. The Nabataean language and its characteristic script were precursors to modern Arabic. Curiously, however, in the field of their highest contemporary achievement – foreign trade – the people of Petra did not leave any enduring innovation.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Al-Siq_2.jpg>

The Siq Unfurls the Mysteries of Ancient Petra



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karta_Petra.PNG>

Map of the Archeological Sites In Ancient Petra

Lessons for Contemporary Powers

What lessons for contemporary powers can be drawn from the experiences of the Roman Empire in Syria and of predecessor and successor rulers of the Levant? Relevant lessons can be drawn from the experiences of one of the empires that preceded the Romans in the Levant. Sargonid Assyria (911-612 BCE) had a holy war ideology based on a belief that the Assyrian god, Assur,

demanded that their kings assert universal rule through conquest. Accordingly, they assembled the most powerful army that the world had ever seen and conquered the weaker city-states in the Levant. But the Assyrians overextended themselves in attempting to control Egypt and were overthrown by a temporary alliance of Babylonians and Persians who attacked from the Assyrians' vulnerable eastern rear. The Assyrian experience provides two lessons – militaristic ideology based on extreme religious tenets is dangerous for the health of empires, and attempts to conquer and control distant regions should not be made if there is potential trouble at home and next door.

Two critical lessons emerge from the history of the Roman Empire in Syria and elsewhere in the Mediterranean region. One comes from what the Romans did right, the other from their mistakes. Roman policy was quintessentially pragmatic. The empire was based on military conquest followed by effective public administration to promote agriculture and trade, run provincial cities, and transfer tax revenues to Rome. The Romans

had a small and efficient government administration – only one-twentieth the size of that in contemporary Han China, which had about the same population as the Roman Empire. They avoided state monopolies, encouraged private enterprise, and ran a balanced budget. For several centuries, the empire created wealth and ran well.

The Roman Empire disintegrated due to a number of interrelated pressures. But central in the decline was the widening of the gap in income between the rich and poor. Aristocratic Romans earned incomes that were at least 100 times those of average Roman laborers. Yet Roman taxation policy permitted many of the rich to avoid paying taxes. The mal-distribution of income – across income classes and between peninsular Italy and the outlying provinces – coupled with tax breaks for the rich bred increasing resentment and eventual political instability. Rich Romans felt they were invincible in their political control of the empire and in their ability to stave off foreign incursions. Poor people in the empire, especially those in the heavily-taxed

provinces, resented the extravagance of the rich. The Roman Empire had no middle class to pay most taxes and serve as a buffer between the rich and the poor. The *nouveaux riches* leaders in the provinces arose to vie for provincial and then imperial control. This mixture was not a recipe for success when foreigners invaded the Roman Empire.

Two additional lessons arise out of the six centuries of rule of the Levant by the Arab Islamic Caliphates – the Umayyads (661-750) and the Abbasids (750-1258). The first lesson is to be wary of newly-won allies, even when they have adopted your religion and profess to want to accept your leadership and culture. Arab leaders, practicing the new religion of Islam, had emerged from northwestern Arabia in 634 and quickly imposed their rule on richer and more sophisticated cultures in the Levant, Iraq, Persia, Egypt, and North Africa. During the Umayyad period, the Arabs retained control of the dynastic leadership, the bureaucracy, and key parts of the regional economy. But that heady control soon dissipated. In the Abbasid period, real leadership in the east was

effected by Persians and Turks and in the west by Berbers and Moors.

The second insight is to establish sustaining government institutions that will prevent the usurpation of control from within.

Muslim rulers, seeking loyalty in their armies and governing bureaucracies, created the Mamluk system of importing young male slaves and training them to become loyal soldiers and civil servants. That system worked well for the rulers until the Mamluks shifted their loyalties to their commanders who overthrew the rulers and set up their own governments.

Sustainable militaries and bureaucracies need to be based on loyalties, incentives, and check-and-balances within societies, not imported from outside.

Syria and Roman Empire Time Line

from 8500 BCE	origins of agriculture – Fertile Crescent, including Syria
7000 BCE-present	Aleppo and Damascus – continuous trade-based cities
5000-3000 BCE	rise of irrigated agriculture – Tigris-Euphrates and Nile Valleys/Deltas
3100-3000 BCE	cuneiform writing – Sumeria (Tigris-Euphrates)
3000 BCE	wine production spread into Ancient Levant – originated in Georgia about 4000 BCE
2900-2350 BCE	Sumer Kingdom (Tigris-Euphrates) – decentralized independent city-states
2400-2250 BCE	Eblaite Kingdom (Ebla) – city-state in northern Syria – destroyed by Akkadians
2350-2112 BCE	Akkad Kingdom (Tigris-Euphrates) – centralized state with private land ownership
2112-2004 BCE	Ur III Kingdom (Tigris-Euphrates) – centralized state with crown land ownership
2000-1600 BCE	Amorite Kingdom (Tigris-Euphrates and Ebla) – ruled Levant – destroyed by Hittites
1700-1200 BCE	Hittite Kingdom (Anatolia) – destroyed by Sea Peoples

1500-1200 BCE	Ugarit City-state (Syria) – introduced first alphabet – destroyed by Sea Peoples
15 th century BCE	Thutmose III of Egypt – led 17 campaigns in 21 years to control the Ancient Levant
c. 1457 BCE	Battle of Megiddo – Thutmose III of Egypt defeated the Hurrians
c. 1274 BCE	Battle of Kadesh – Ramesses II of Egypt fought a draw with the Hittites
13 th -11 th c. BCE	Egyptian/Hittite peace treaty – divided Levantine trade routes – allotted Syria to Hittites, Palestine to Egypt
10 th century BCE	Levantine city-states revolted – Egypt lost control of southern Levant
1 st millennium BCE	foreign imperialism in Ancient Levant – foreign conflicts
911-626 BCE	Sargonid Assyria ruled Ancient Levant – holy-war ideology
626-539 BCE	Chaldean Babylonia ruled Ancient Levant – Nebuchadrezzar waged vicious campaigns
587 BCE	Nebuchadrezzar of Babylonia destroyed Jerusalem – deported Israelites to Babylonia
539 BCE	Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylonia – permitted Israelites to return home

539-330 BCE	Achaemenid Persia ruled Ancient Levant – from Persepolis – benevolent indirect rule
509-27 BCE	Roman Republic – Roman Senate elected rulers
490 BCE	Battle of Marathon – Persians defeated by Greek alliance
332 BC	Alexander the Great – conquered Ancient Levant from Persians – Hellenistic rule
332 BCE-640 CE	Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Era – Greek was official language
330-64 BCE	Seleucid Hellenic Empire – ruled Ancient Levant – built Antioch, Apamea
c. 300 BCE-200 CE	Kingdom of Petra – Nabataean people – in Roman Empire from 106 AD
late 3 rd century BCE	Romans defeated Hannibal of Carthage – gained control of Sicily, Sardinia, and Iberia
164 BCE	Israel broke away from the Seleucid kingdom – independence under Maccabees
64-62 BCE	Gnaeus Pompey of Rome defeated Seleucid Hellenes – conquered Asia Minor and Syria
64 BCE-395 CE	Roman Empire – ruled Ancient Levant – built Palmyra, Hama, Bosra, Jerash, Amman
63 BCE	Roman Empire conquered Israel – ruled it as Roman Palestine

62-50 BCE	First Triumvirate, Roman Empire – Gnaeus Pompey, Julius Caesar, Marcus Crassus
50 BCE	Julius Caesar of Rome conquered Gaul – 8-year campaign
49-44 BCE	Julius Caesar – Dictator of Rome – founded 30 settler colonies in new Roman provinces
44-31 BCE	Second Triumvirate, Roman Empire – Octavian, Mark Antony, Aemilius Lepidus
31 BCE	naval Battle of Actium – Octavian of Rome defeated Antony (Rome), Cleopatra (Egypt)
30 BCE	Octavian invaded Egypt – Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide
27 BCE	Octavian formed Roman Principate – Augustus Caesar – first Roman emperor
27 BCE-476 CE	Roman Principate – military prowess decided succession
27 BCE-14 CE	Augustus expanded empire to natural frontiers – Rhine, Danube, Sahara, Atlantic
18 CE	Roman general, Germanicus, captured Palmyra – Palmyra was semi-autonomous
43	Emperor Claudius conquered Britain
80	Emperor Titus opened Roman Colosseum

- 1st century-3rd century Parthian Kingdom – Ctesiphon – prevented Roman expansion across Euphrates River
- 1st century-3rd century Palmyra became a desert entrepôt – oasis on Silk Road
- 98-117 Emperor Trajan ruled – annexed Dacia, Petra in 106, Armenia, Mesopotamia in 114
- 117-138 Emperor Hadrian ruled – Wall across Britain – Palisade between Rhine, Danube Rivers
- 135 Roman rulers exiled nearly all Israelites – after series of rebellions against Roman rule
- 193-217 Emperors Septimius Severus and Caracalla ruled – from Leptis Magna in Tripolitania
- 218-225 Emperors Aurelius (Elagabalus) and Alexander Severus ruled – from Syria
- 224 Sassanid Persian Empire defeated Parthian Kingdom – more powerful Roman opponent
- 260 Sassanid ruler, Shapur I, conquered Syria – captured Roman Emperor Valerian
- 260s Septimius Odenathus, ruler of Palmyra – drove Sassanid Persians out of Syria
- 267 Septimius Odenathus murdered in dynastic family quarrel – Zenobia ruled as regent
- 268-283 Illyrian Emperors Claudius II, Aurelian, and Carus ruled – recaptured Gaul, Syria

- 270-271 Queen Zenobia conquered Syria, Roman Arabia, Palestine, Egypt, half of Asia Minor
- 272 Emperor Aurelian re-conquered Roman east, including Palmyra – exiled Zenobia to Rome
- 284-324 Tetrarchy – shared rule under four simultaneous emperors – revived economy
- 307-337 Emperor Constantine ruled – new capital in Constantinople – converted to Christianity
- 378 Battle of Hadrianople – Goths annihilated Romans – Rome lost two-thirds of its army
- 395 Emperor Theodoseus I divided Roman Empire – capitals in Rome, Constantinople
- 395-641 Byzantine Empire – eastern Roman Empire – ruled Levant
- 418-439 Germanic Vandals conquered Gaul, Spain, and Roman Africa – sources of Rome’s food
- 451 Council of Chalcedon divided Christianity – Syriac Christians sided with Alexandria
- 451-453 Huns invaded Gaul and northern Italy – threat subsided after death of Attila, in 453
- 476 Ostrogoths took over Italy and Rome – Emperor Romulus Augustus abdicated

527-565	Byzantine Emperor Justinian ruled – reunited former Roman Empire
634	Muslim Arabs began Islamic diaspora and jihad
636-641	Muslim Arabs invaded Levant – defeated Byzantine rulers
641-1250	Levant ruled under Islamic Caliphates
641-661	four successors of Muhammad ruled Levant from Medina
661-750	Umayyad Caliphate – Arabs ruled Levant from Damascus
750-870	Abbasid Caliphate – Arabs and Persians ruled Levant from Baghdad
870-969	Tulunid Dynasty – Turks ruled Levant from Cairo
969-1070	Fatimid Caliphate – Berbers ruled Levant from Cairo
1070-1174	Abbasid Caliphate – Seljuk Turks ruled Levant from Baghdad
1071	Battle of Manzikert – Seljuk Turks defeated the Byzantines – claimed most of Anatolia
1097-1291	Crusaders – established feudal kingdoms in western Syria along Mediterranean coast

1144-1270	Crac des Chevaliers – fortified castle for Crusader Knights Templar
1174-1250	Ayyubid Caliphate – Salah al-Din founding leader – Kurds ruled Levant from Cairo
1187	Salah al-Din defeated Crusaders – recaptured Jerusalem
1255-1517	Mamluk Sultanate – Kipchak Turks and Circassians – ruled Levant from Cairo
1260	Battle of Ain Jalut – Mamluk General Baybars defeated army of Hulegu Khan
1300	Sultan Uthman established the Turkish Ottoman dynasty – first capital at Bursa
1366	Ottomans shifted capital to Adrianople – importance of European possessions
1400-1401	Timur the Lame, ruler of vast empire centered on Samarkand – looted Damascus
1453	Turkish Ottoman Empire captured Constantinople – ended Byzantine Empire
1517	Ottoman Turks conquered Levant, Egypt
1517-1918	Ottoman Empire – Turks ruled Levant from Istanbul
1520-1566	Emperor Suleiman the Magnificent ruled Ottoman Empire – peak of Ottoman power

1805-1848	Muhammad Ali Pasha ruled Egypt – modern military
1818-1833	Muhammad Ali conquered the Levant, the Hijaz, Sudan, Crete, and Cyprus
1915-1916	Hussein-McMahon letters – Britain promised parts of Levant to Sunni Arabs
1916	Sykes-Picot Agreement – Britain and France agreed to divide Ottoman Arabic provinces
1917	Balfour Declaration – Britain “viewed with favor” a future Jewish homeland in Palestine
1920	San Remo Conference – British rule of Iraq, Palestine, French rule of Syria, Lebanon
1920-1946	French mandates in Syria, Lebanon – British mandates in Palestine, Iraq
1943	Lebanon became independent – political power shared in an unwritten National Pact
1946	Republic of Syria – Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan – became independent
1948	Israel became independent – strong military force – growth of a modern economy
1948-1949	first Arab-Israeli war – Israel won, Syria gained Golan Heights
1952-1999	King Hussein ruled in Jordan – rapid economic growth – peace treaty with Israel

- 1956 Suez Crisis – Nasser nationalized Suez Canal – US and USSR forced British, French, and Israeli invaders to retreat
- 1958-1961 United Arab Republic – Syrian political union with Nasser’s Egypt – ended after military coup in Syria in 1961
- 1963 military coup in Syria – Ba’th (“National Renaissance”) Party took power – Arab nationalism and radical populism
- 1967 Israel defeated Arab coalition – claimed Golan Heights, Sinai Peninsula, West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem
- 1970 military coup in Syria – Hafiz al-Asad, Ba’thist general from an Alawi peasant family, seized power
- 1970-2000 Asad ran brutal dictatorship in Syria – Pan-Arab, anti-Israel policy with the hope of recovering Golan Heights
- 1973 Yom Kippur War – Syria and Egypt attacked Israel, lost the war – US and USSR intervened to ensure balanced peace
- 1975-1990 Lebanon disintegrated – experienced horrible civil wars
- 1976-2005 Syria intervened militarily in Lebanon
- 1978-2000 Israel occupied southern Lebanon

1999-present	King Abdullah II ruled in Jordan – enacted economic reforms – survived Arab Spring in 2011
2000-present	Bashar al-Asad – President of Syria – continued his father’s repressive policies – waged inhumane civil war to retain power
2005-present	Mahmoud Abbas – President of Palestinian Authority – headed government of (40% of) West Bank – Hamas ran Gaza, 2007-present
2009-present	Benjamin Netanyahu – Israel’s prime minister – Conservative coalition governments – West Bank settlements
2011	civil war in Syria began – Bashar al-Asad brutally repressed Arab Spring protests
2011-present	Syrian civil war – humanitarian crisis – 400,000 deaths, 6.2 million displaced persons, 6 million international refugees
2015	Russia intervened militarily in Syrian civil war – prevented impending defeat of Bashar al-Asad’s Syrian government forces
2016	Michel Aoun elected President of Lebanon – leader of a Maronite Christian party, former commander-in-chief of the Lebanese army
2020	Benjamin Netanyahu and Benny Gantz – formed national unity government in Israel – Netanyahu prime minister until Nov 2021

Bibliography

I am offering below annotations on selected books that I found particularly helpful in understanding the Levant's political and economic history. I have divided my recommendations into five categories – the Ancient Levant, the Roman Empire, the Arabic Caliphates and the Crusades, the Ottoman Empire, and the Modern Levant. In each category, I list two highly suggested readings and two supplementary readings.

Books on the Ancient Levant

Highly Suggested Readings

1. A. Bernard Knapp, *The History and Culture of Ancient Western Asia and Egypt*, Chicago: The Dorsey Press, 1988. This marvelously insightful book analyzes the rise and fall of dynasties in early Mesopotamia, dynastic Egypt, and the ancient Levant (the region caught in the middle). Written by an anthropologist, the book adroitly weaves together the cultural, political, and economic dimensions of the cultures from which Western civilization stemmed. Copies usually can be found on used-book websites.
2. Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*, New York: Norton & Company, 2005. I think this book is one of the most important of the past two decades. It examines why some cultures have been able to overpower others from the perspectives of geography, militarism, epidemiology, and economics. I include it here because it analyzes how agriculture first evolved in the Fertile Crescent and why agriculture was the basis of modern culture in the Levant and elsewhere.

Supplementary Readings

1. Daniel C. Snell, *Life in the Ancient Near East, 3100-332 B.C.E.*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997. Snell provides key insights into the politics, economy, culture, and lives of peoples residing in the Tigris-Euphrates region from the origin of cities there 7000 years ago until Alexander the Great ended the Persian Empire in 330 BCE. The book allows the reader to experience how ordinary people practiced agriculture, crafts, and trade and how governments influenced their every-day lives.

2. Bruce D. Smith, *The Emergence of Agriculture*, New York: Scientific American Library, 1995. Smith is an archaeobiologist and one of the world's leading experts on how agriculture began. This well-written book is a tour de force that combines insights from archaeology, botany, DNA sampling, and statistics to explain how agriculture originated in certain parts of the world and not in others. Its chapter on agriculture in the Fertile Crescent is a must-read for anyone interested in the rise of modern civilization.

Books on the Roman Empire

Highly Suggested Readings

1. Chris Scarre, *The Penguin Historical Atlas of Ancient Rome*, London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1995. This short atlas is a well-presented compilation of essential history, amply illustrated with colored maps. This very useful little book cuts to the core to explain why the Roman Empire rose, expanded, declined, and fell during a turbulent millennium of ancient history. Busy readers can focus on the Roman expansion in the east, the Levantine region between the Mediterranean Sea and the Euphrates River.

2. Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire, Economy, Society and Culture*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2015. This stimulating short book contains insightful analyses of how the economy of the Roman Empire worked and

how Rome's social hierarchy and culture underpinned imperial rule. The authors investigate how the small Roman bureaucracy organized and controlled the vast, multi-national empire. Although the argument and writing are dense, this book is very informative.

Supplementary Readings

1. Tim Cornell and John Matthews, *Atlas of the Roman World*, New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1995. This magnificent coffee-table book makes three valuable contributions to introduce readers to the Roman world. Its compact text is thoroughly researched and presented well by two British experts on the Roman Empire, its extraordinary 62 colored maps provide geographical insights, and its 257 color illustrations offer visual insights into Roman life. The book thus is a wonderful complement to more detailed studies.

2. Richard Stoneman, *Palmyra and Its Empire, Zenobia's Revolt Against Rome*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1994. In Stoneman's hands, Palmyra's history becomes an adventure story. In the late 3rd century, Palmyra, an oasis city on the Silk Road, played imperial Rome against Sassanid Persia. Queen Zenobia declared Palmyra's independence and conquered the eastern Roman Empire. Emperor Aurelian defeated Palmyra and exiled Zenobia to Rome. This true tale is a great story.

Books on the Arabic Caliphates and the Crusades

Highly Suggested Readings

1. Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010. It is rare that a detailed history book enjoys a lengthy stay on the New York Times bestseller list. This book fully deserves all of the acclaim that it has received. It gives an insightful analysis of the rise and spread of Islam and of its impact on the Arab peoples and

the Middle East. This superb book places the history of the Levant during the past fourteen centuries in a broad regional context.

2. Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East, A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years*, New York: Touchstone, 1997. This controversial book, along with Hourani's impressive work, gives readers a choice of extraordinary histories of the Middle East during the past two millennia. Lewis's book explores the antecedents of the Arab Muslim jihad and diaspora, examines the intricate linkages effecting social, political, economic, and cultural change, and focuses on themes rather than time periods.

Supplementary Readings

1. John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat, Myth or Reality?*, Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1999. This balanced, well-written essay examines recent Islamic revivalism and explores how it constitutes a threat to Western democracy. The author nicely summarized the rise, expansion, decline, and revival of Islamic religion, culture, and power. The book is helpful in explaining modern Islamist politics and in placing the tragic events of September 11, 2001 into historical and contemporary context.

2. Roland Oliver and J. D. Fage, *A Short History of Africa*, London: Penguin Books, 1995. This little paperback is deservedly in its sixth edition. I have been using it for five decades, because it is the most balanced history of settlement and change covering the entire African continent. I recommend it highly for those who would like to understand history in a broad African context. It will help you appreciate the pattern of complicated interactions between the peoples of the Levant, Egypt, and North Africa.

Books on the Ottoman Empire

Highly Suggested Readings

1. Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs: From the Earliest Times to the Present*, Basingstroke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

This classic reference book is one of the main sources on the history and cultures of the Arabs and Islamic civilizations – from pre-Islamic times to the 20th century. Hitti's insightful book has gone through ten printings and remains one of the very few sources that deals both with the history of the Mamluks and the Ottomans at the same time. Though long, it is thoughtful and balanced.

2. Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries, The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire*, New York: Morrow Quill Paperbacks, 1977.

Kinross was a Scottish historian who published widely on Turkey, Egypt, and Greece. This monumental book (620 pages) remains a classic study of the Ottoman Empire. Kinross is equally adept in interpreting political, economic, and diplomatic history. His writing is clear and entertaining. The book is particularly good in weaving together the many related causes of Ottoman decline.

Supplementary Readings

1. Suraiya Faroqhi, Bruce McGowan, Donald Quataert, and Sevet Pamuk, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, Volume Two, 1600-1914*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1997. This extraordinary, 1000-page book is the definitive study of the economy of the Ottoman Empire – population and society, agriculture and land tenure, trade and transport, manufacturing and policy. But the writing is dense. A companion study covers the first 300 years of the empire.

2. Jason Goodwin, *Lords of the Horizon, A History of the Ottoman Empire*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998. Goodwin is an award-winning British travel writer and novelist who occasionally writes books on history. This book is recommended for those who prefer to read picaresque history, studded with

colorful anecdotes. Goodwin is especially effective in describing historical turning points, such as the Ottoman defeat at the Battle of Vienna (1683), and shifts in military technology and tactics.

Books on the Modern Levant

Highly Suggested Readings

1. Philip Robins, *A History of Jordan*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004. This well-written book tells the history of Jordan from the perspective of an Oxford don who has specialized in Middle Eastern politics for three decades. Robins explains how Jordan grew out of British commitments in World War I and of the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and why the future of Jordan is inextricably linked with the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The book is compelling and balanced.

2. Clive Jones and Emma C. Murphy, *Israel, Challenges to Identity, Democracy and the State*, London: Routledge, 2002. It is a huge challenge to summarize intelligently and fairly the turbulent history of modern Israel, especially in less than 140 pages. But this admirable book does that very well. The authors are English academics who present balanced interpretations of three controversial issues – the founding of Israel as a nation-state, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and Israel's remarkable economic success.

Supplementary Readings

1. Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syria, Revolution from Above*, London: Routledge, 2001. This short book provides an insightful explanation of how modern Syria emerged after the First World War and why the Ba'athist generals in independent Syria turned to the USSR to support its choices of socialist and anti-Israeli policies. The volume is one of a very good, concise (but

unfortunately high-priced) trilogy on Syria, Jordan, and Israel, all written by well-informed British specialists on the Middle East.

2. Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions, The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1988. How did sophisticated Lebanon implode in 1975 and dissolve into 15 brutal years of civil war? Salibi provides an answer this vexing question. In this outstanding book, he tackles the question through an understanding of Lebanon's history under Caliphate, Mamluk, Ottoman, and French rule and of the causes of Lebanon's deep-seated ethnic and religious conflicts.

Sites Visited in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon

The World Less Traveled by Private Jet

Stanford Travel/Study Program

January 24-February 16, 2013

Airplane-based, Aboard a TCS and Starquest Expeditions Jet

Beirut, Lebanon

Lebanon's 4 million people live in a tiny state (half the size of Massachusetts) on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Most Lebanese (95 percent) are Arabs. About 60 percent are Muslims and 40 percent are Christians. In 1861, France and Britain set up the Mutesarrifate of Mount Lebanon as a Christian-ruled province of the Ottoman Empire. In 1920, France added coastal regions and the Bekaa valley to Mount Lebanon to form the colony of Lebanon, and in 1943, that area became the independent Lebanese Republic. Between 1945 and 1975, Beirut was the commercial and financial gateway to the Middle East and a favored refuge for European and Middle-eastern tourists. Lebanon struggled through civil wars between 1975 and 1990. Syrian military forces entered Lebanon in 1976 and stayed until 2005. Israel occupied south Lebanon between 1982 and 2000. Political instability continues to plague independent Lebanon.

Our private jet is owned by a British company. The jet could not stay overnight in Lebanon because of a British government security warning. Therefore, we stayed in a hotel in Cyprus and commuted to Lebanon for a one-day visit. Most of our group chose to spend the day in Beirut, whereas others drove to Byblos, the former Phoenician port (during the first millennium BCE). Beirut has been rebuilt in the past two decades, in large part with diaspora investments. In Beirut, we made an extensive guided visit to the National Museum. Beirut has been a target of conquerors

for four millennia. An art historian from a Beirut university interpreted the ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman statuary and the modern art forms in the museum's diverse collection. On a walking tour of Beirut, we observed Roman baths, a Greek Orthodox cathedral, and the Great Mosque.

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Egypt and Jordan by Private Air, A Family Adventure
Bushtracks Expeditions
December 17-28, 2010
Airplane-based

Jerash, Mt. Nebo, and Madaba, Jordan

We spent Christmas day in Jerash (Roman Jerasa), observing well-preserved ruins of the Roman Empire (1st and 2nd centuries CE). Jerasa was one of the ten Decapolis cities, each with populations of about 30,000, which the Romans built between Petra and Damascus. In Jerash, we walked to the Temple of Dionysius (the Roman god of wine) and attended a live demonstration of Roman chariot races and legionnaire combat. We spent two nights in a resort on the Dead Sea, where we floated in the salty water of the world's lowest point (1300 feet below sea level). As we bussed south on the former Kings' Highway, we drove up to Mt. Nebo, where Moses looked over the promised land of Israel and vowed not to enter it, and we stopped briefly in Madaba to see the remnants of a Byzantine mosaic map of the Middle East (in the Orthodox Church of St. George).

Wadi Rum, Jordan

On our last day in Jordan, we took a fascinating excursion to Wadi Rum, a high desert region of naturally sculpted mountains. T. E. Lawrence (of Arabia) made Wadi Rum famous while fighting

during World War I as a British agent in the Great Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire (1916-1918) and in writing his classic book, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. In 1962, the film, *Lawrence of Arabia*, was shot in Wadi Rum. We took numerous photos of the sun-streaked mountain formations, and we enjoyed exciting rides in four-wheel-drive vehicles into canyons to see hieroglyphics carved in stone by the Thalmudic people who lived in Wadi Rum three millennia ago. Wadi Rum, a spectacularly scenic region, was on the Spice Road on which frankincense and myrrh moved from South Arabia to Rome via Petra.

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**Israel Suitcase Seminar and Jordan Extension
Stanford Travel/Study Program
October 16-November 2, 2010
Land-based**

Petra, Jordan

Petra, the capital of the Nabataean kingdom, arose in the 4th century BCE and was taken over by the Roman Empire in 106 CE. The entrepreneurial Nabataeans (northwest Arabs) sited Petra at a crossroads of the Incense Route (on which moved high-value frankincense and myrrh from South Arabia to Rome) and branches of the Silk Road (connecting the Persian Gulf with the Mediterranean). The city prospered as an entrepôt and caravanserai until the Romans built a new north-south road and shifted the lucrative Incense Route away from Petra. During the second century, Rome cleared the Red Sea of piracy and developed better merchant marine ships. Petra then lost both the north-south trade to the Red Sea and the east-west trade to Palmyra further north. By the 4th century, most Nabataean merchants had moved away from Petra to new trading centers.

We spent a spectacular day in Petra, the fabled rose-red city, enjoying perfect weather (70 degrees and clear skies). The ceremonial entrance to Petra is the Siq, the mile-long, incredibly scenic gorge. There the Nabataeans created holy shrines to their pantheon of gods, especially Duh-Shara, their principal god. At the end of the Siq we observed the Al-Khasneh (Treasury) in bright sunlight. The Khasneh, Petra's landmark, was chiseled in sandstone between 40 BCE and 60 CE as a royal tomb. We strolled down the Street of Facades in awe of numerous Nabataean stone-cut tombs and temples, notably the royal tombs carved in a mountainside. We marveled at the Nabataean theater, also chiseled from sandstone, and the Temple of Duh-Shara. Some visited a recently rediscovered 5th century Byzantine church, decorated with beautiful mosaic floors.

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A Cruise in the Mediterranean
Silversea Cruises
October 6-24, 2006
Ship-based, Aboard the *Silver Whisper*

Aqaba, Jordan

The *Silver Whisper* docked in Aqaba, Jordan for two days and one night. Sandra and I spent time in Aqaba, an expanding port of 75,000 that provides Jordan's only link to the sea. Aqaba offered a limited menu for curious tourists – an Ottoman fort and museum, an archeological site of ruins from the original Muslim Arab settlement of Ayla, a Byzantine church, and a glitzy Imax production of sites for tourists to see in Jordan. On our second day in Aqaba, we took a fascinating excursion to Wadi Rum, a high desert region of naturally sculpted mountains. Sandra took numerous photos of the sun-streaked mountain formations, and we both enjoyed hikes into canyons to see hieroglyphics carved in

stone by the Thalmudic people who lived in Wadi Rum four millennia ago.

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Suitcase Seminar in Syria and Jordan
Stanford Travel/Study Program
September 12-25, 2005
Land-based

Damascus, Syria

We began our tour of Syria in Damascus, one of the world's oldest cities and the ancient and modern capital of Syria. Nearly one-third of contemporary Syria's 18 million people live in Damascus. It is a city full of entrepreneurship and commerce, regularly frustrated by Syria's stifling bureaucracy. We first visited the Umayyad Mosque, an architectural jewel that was constructed in the 8th century when Damascus housed the first Islamic Caliphate outside Arabia. Shoppers took advantage of the bargains in Damascus's nearby souq – the endless warren of covered shops and craft centers in the old section of the city – and everyone enjoyed the traditional restaurants and coffee bars (where younger Syrians court by smoking four-foot-long water pipes). The National Museum in Damascus holds an enormous collection of monuments, statuary, and artifacts from Levantine civilizations – from the bronze-making Eblaites of northern Syria (more than four millennia ago) through the Turkish Ottoman Empire (16th-early 20th centuries).

Crac des Chevaliers, Hama, and Apamea, Syria

We next headed north and recreated the battles between the Frankish Crusaders and the Muslim Defenders (led by Salah ad-Din) at the Crac des Chevaliers, the largest and strongest Crusader

Castle (occupied by Crusaders between 1144 and 1270). We watched the filming of yet another (probably-to-be-third-rate) Crusader movie on site at the Crac. In Hama, we observed the technology of the old giant waterwheels (norias) that have lifted water to higher levels since the Roman era. The first of many impressive Graeco-Roman sites that we saw in Syria was Apamea, once a trading city of 50,000 residents but now a colonnaded ruin.

Aleppo, Syria

Aleppo, Syria's second largest city, has traditionally been the leading center of northern Syria, located on trade crossroads connecting Anatolia with the Levant (north-south) and the eastern Mediterranean with the Tigris-Euphrates region (east-west). We toured Aleppo's impressive and impregnable Citadel and shopped in its non-touristy, traditional souq. We then took a jaunt westward to visit St. Simeon's Cathedral and Monastery, for several centuries the second largest Christian cathedral in the world (after the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (now Istanbul)).

Palmyra and Bosra, Syria

The most renowned tourist attraction in Syria is Palmyra, a former oasis city of 200,000 that serviced the Silk Road between the 1st and 3rd centuries CE. The site is gargantuan and barren, and the ruins today are among the most impressive in all of the former Roman Empire. Queen Zenobia, a local ruler, made the mistake of trying to declare independence from Rome in the late 3rd century and the Romans destroyed the city in retaliation. En route to Jordan, we made a quick stop in Bosra, formerly a key Nabataean and Roman trading city, that today features one of the best-preserved, large extant Roman amphitheaters with a seating capacity of 15,000.

Kerak and the Dead Sea, Jordan

En route to the Dead Sea, we observed a large Crusader Castle in Kerak, disputed by Christians and Muslims for two centuries. We then went on to spend a night in a resort on the Dead Sea, where we floated in the salty water of the world's lowest point (1300 feet below sea level) and celebrated our trip with a farewell banquet featuring cross-cultural roasts and toasts.

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Jordan and Egypt College
Stanford Travel/Study Program
April 8-24, 2005
Ship-based, Aboard *Le Ponant*

Amman, Jordan

Our college focused on the rise, accomplishments, and fall of empires, kingdoms, and states that occupied the fertile Jordan and Nile Valleys and controlled the Red Sea during the past 5000 years. We visited several outstanding sites in Jordan. We spent our first day in Amman, visiting the American Center of Oriental Research, a leading center for archeological research in Jordan. Later in Amman (Philadelphia during Roman times), we visited the Citadel, the Museum of Archeology, and the Roman Theatre.

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