

## The Middle East before Islam

# THE MIDDLE EASTERN ETHNICITIES

# In this Topic:

- ▶ How can we understand Middle Eastern Culture?
- ▶ What are the different ethnicities in the Middle East?
- ▶ What were Arab Societies like from the pre-Islamic, Arab 7<sup>th</sup> Era to the Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century?
- ▶ What was the status of Arab Women in pre-Islamic Arabia?
- ▶ What were the major religions in the Middle East in the pre-Islamic era?





**Name some of the Middle East  
Countries?**



France

Austria

Ukraine

Romania

Kazakhstan

Italy

Spain

Greece

Turkey

Uzbekistan

Kyrgyzstan

Portugal

Turkmenistan

Syria

Iraq

Iran

Afghanistan

Pakistan

Morocco

Tunisia

Algeria

Libya

Egypt

Saudi Arabia

Oman

Nepal

India

Myanma  
(Burma)

Mali

Niger

Sudan

Yemen

Chad

Burkina  
Faso

Nigeria

South Sudan

Ethiopia

Ghana

Somalia

Gulf of Guinea

Gulf of Aden

Arabian Sea

Bay of Bengal

Laccadive Sea

Map data ©2019 Google





**What are the different ethnicities in the  
Middle East & N. Africa?**

# The Middle East & N. Africa are a Crossroads of Civilization

- Most of the countries in this region are multiethnic.
- Major ethnic groups in the Middle East today include Arabs, Iranians, Turks, Jews (Israelis), Kurds, and many other minor native groups such as: Coptic Egyptians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans.
- This diversity enhanced the cultural richness of society, but it led to many political and religious conflicts.





# How can we understand the Middle East & N. Africa Cultures?

❑ To understand the Middle East & N. Africa Cultures, we need to know the following:

1. Ethnicities
2. Languages
3. Religions
4. Customs and Norms
5. Politics





# **The Nomads Dominate the Middle East & N. Africa!**





# **Who are *Arabs* / *Arabic* / *Arabians***



# Arabian Societies from the Pre-Islamic 7<sup>th</sup>.c. Era to Mid-20<sup>th</sup>. Century.



# Who are the Arabs/Arabians?

- **Arabians** are an **ethnic group** belong to the **Peninsula of Arabia**.
- Nomads / **Bedouins** (man of the desert)
- Descendent from **Abraham** (Ibrahim) through **Ishmael** his firstborn son from the maidservant Hagar.
- Nowadays; Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, and **Gulf countries**(Emirates – Qatar – Bahrain – Kuwait)



## GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC) COUNTRIES MAP

Enter your sub headline here





# Who are the Arabs?

## ▶ Cultural and Linguistic:

- ▶ Arabs are generally defined by their use of the Arabic language.
- ▶ Arabic is spoken by various ethnic groups across multiple countries, each with their own unique cultures and traditions.

## ▶ Religion:

- ▶ Islam originated in the Arabian Peninsula and Arabic is the liturgical language of Islam, not all Arabs are Muslims, and not all Muslims are Arabs.
- ▶ Arabs may follow various religions, including Christianity, Islam, Druze, and others.

## ▶ Arabization:

- ▶ Arabization refers to the spread of Arabic language and culture, often adapting, influencing, and coexisting with local cultures.





# The Arabian Societies as Nomad Bedouins

- Tribal culture based on Loyalty.
  - **Family, Clan, and Tribe**
    - My cousin and I against the alien, yet, my brother and I against my cousin;
  - **Lawlessness**
    - They have their own laws and rules





# The Arabian Societies as Nomad Bedouins

- ▶ **Trade Caravans** from **Yemen** to **Damascus**.
- ▶ **Mecca** was an important **Commercial Center**





















# Bedouin life

- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Q3uhqv8epM>

# Arabian / Bedouin Women in Pre-Islamic Era







**Bedouin Women**



# Women in Pre-Islamic Arabia

- ▶ Women under the tribal laws in Arabia before Islam, had **no legal status**, upper-class women had more rights.
- ▶ These tribes were patriarchal, and inheritance was passed through the male lines; women **could not inherit property**.
- ▶ Fathers sold their daughters into marriage for a price.
- ▶ Husband could terminate the union **at will**.
- ▶ Women had little or no property or succession rights.
- ▶ Women were often considered **property** to be inherited or seized in a tribal conflict.





# Women in Pre-Islamic Arabia

- ▶ There were patterns of homicidal abuse of women and girls, including instances of killing female infants if they were considered a liability
- ▶ The Quran mentions that the Arabs in **Jahiliyyah** (the period of ignorance or pre-Islamic period) used to **bury their daughters alive**.
- ▶ The motives were twofold:
  - the fear that an increase in female offspring would result in economic burden,
  - and the fear of the humiliation frequently caused when girls were captured by a hostile tribe and become **sex-slaves**.





# Women in Pre-Islamic Arabia

- ▶ One of the most important roles for women was to produce children, especially male offspring;
- ▶ Women also cooked meals, milked animals, washed clothes, prepared butter and cheese, spun wool, and wove fabric for tents.
- ▶ **Upper-class women** usually had **more rights** than tribal women and might own property or even inherit from relatives.









# Prostitution

- ▶ Prostitution was one of the most common source to survive.
- ▶ These women flew flags on their houses and were called “ladies of the flags” .
- ▶ It was banned by the early “Jews”, but some adopted that as a profession.





# Marriage

- ▶ Marriage was a flexible and loose institution.
  - Marriage by agreement
  - Marriage by capture
  - Marriage by purchase
  - Marriage by inheritance





# Marriage

- ▶ In pre-Islamic Arabian culture, women had little control over their marriages and were **rarely** allowed to **divorce** their husbands.
- ▶ Marriages usually consisted of an agreement between a man and his future wife's family and occurred either within the tribe or between two families of different tribes.
- ▶ As part of the agreement, the man's family might offer property such as camels or horses in exchange for the woman.
- ▶ Upon marriage, the woman would leave her family and reside permanently in the tribe of her husband.



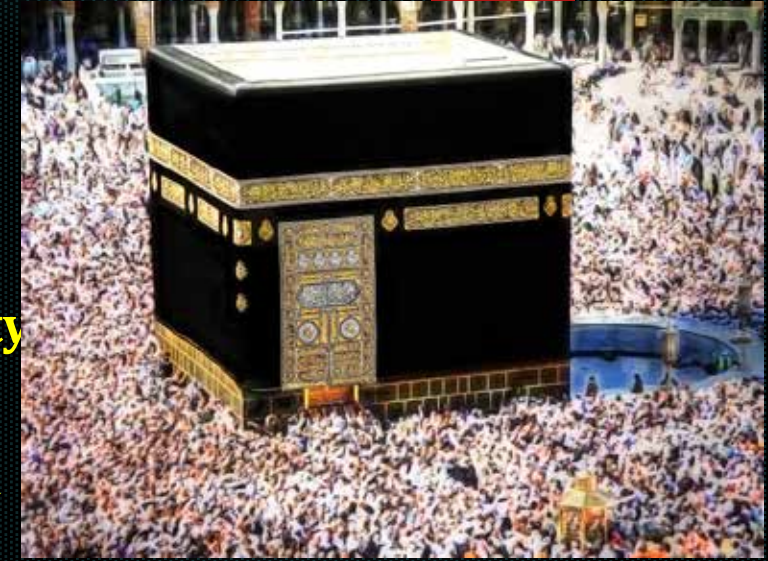


# Religion in Pre-Islamic Arabia



# Religion in Pre-Islamic Arabia

- ▶ In **pre-Islamic** Arabia 7<sup>th</sup>. CE, was a mix of **polytheism, Christianity, Judaism, & Zoroastrianism**.
- ▶ Most Arabs people practiced polytheism in the form of **animism & idolatry**.
- ▶ Arabs' polytheism, the dominant belief system, gods and goddesses were worshipped at **local shrines**, such as the **Kaaba** in Mecca.
- ▶ There were **360 idols gods worshipped** in and out of the Kaaba.



*The Kaaba is a cube-shaped building in Mecca*



*figurines from Yemen, now in the National Museum of Oriental Art, Rome*



# Religion in Pre-Islamic Arabia

- ▶ The chief god in pre-Islamic Arabia was **Hubal**, the Syrian god of the **moon**.
- ▶ The three daughters of Hubal were the chief goddesses of Meccan Arabian mythology: **Allāt**, **Al-‘Uzzá**, & **Manāt**.
- ▶ **Allāt** was the goddess associated with the **underworld**.
- ▶ **Al-‘Uzzá**, “The Mightiest One” or “The Strong,” was goddess of **fertility, protection**.
- ▶ **Manāt** was the goddess of **fate**.



Hubal, god of the moon



Allāt, Al-‘Uzzá, and Manāt.



# Gods of Arabs before Islam, CC – 2.5 min

- ▶ <https://www.3cmediasolutions.org/lti/coursemedia/play?id=16867&cid=d904f6a30f5bc86e643ac49ea7fee2fd7cc0a0a2>



# Religion in Pre-Islamic Arabia

- ▶ The Arabian peninsula had been subject to **Jewish migration** since the Romans time.
- ▶ **Three** of the ruling **tribes** of Yathrib (**Medina**) were **Jewish**.
- ▶ **Christianity** spread to Arabia after Constantine conquered Byzantium 324 CE
- ▶ **Christian** communities were mostly **Arians** and **Nestorians**.
- ▶ **Zoroastrianism** existed in the east and south.





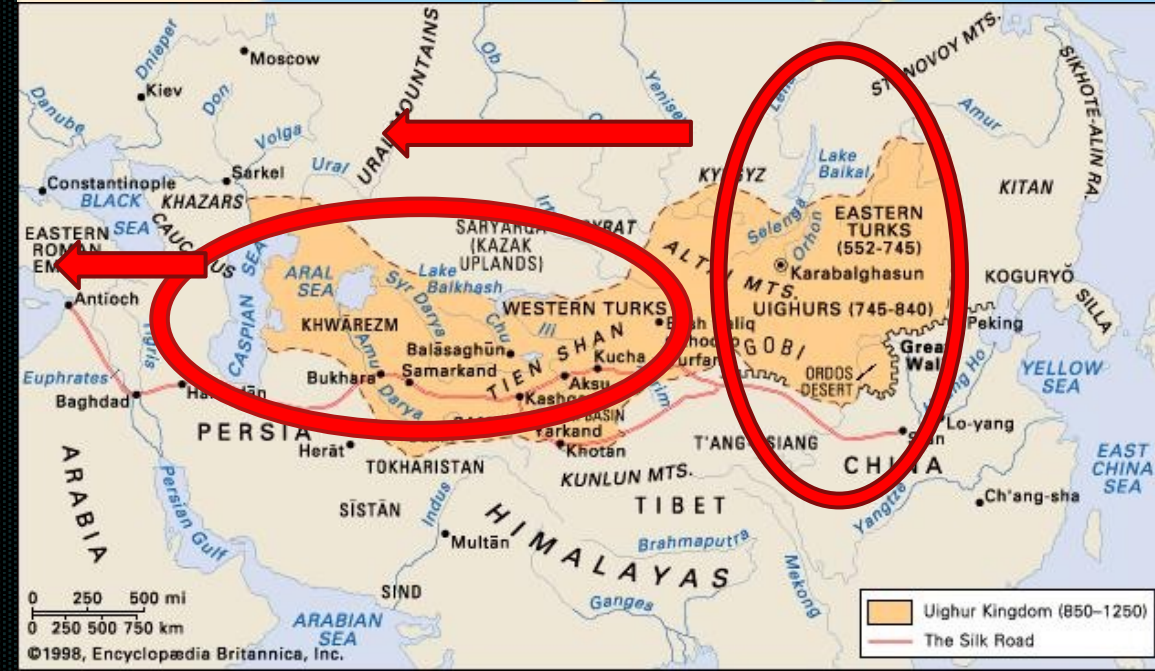
# 2. The Turks / Turkish



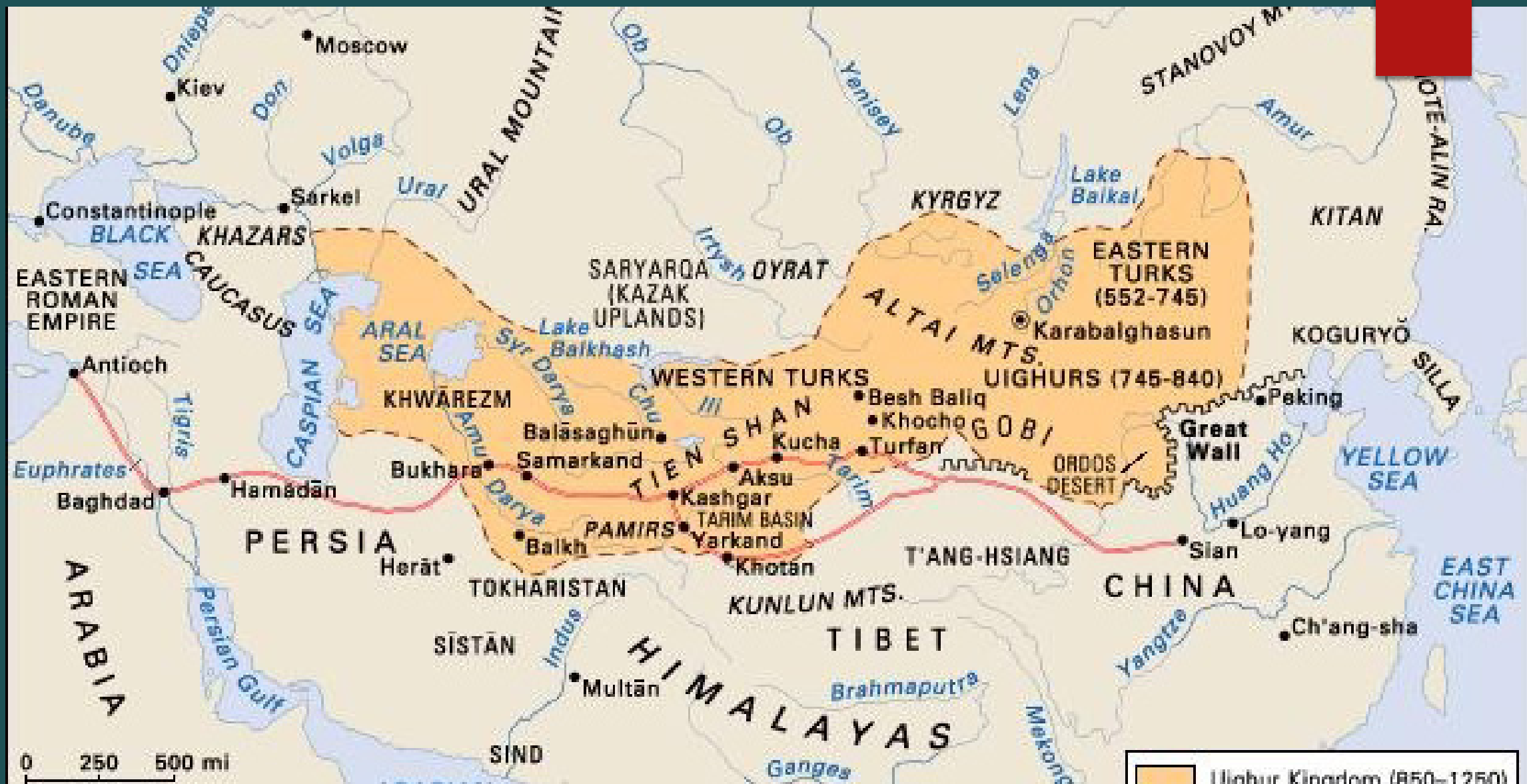


# Who are the Turks?

- The first Turkish tribe that is mentioned in history is **the Huns**.
- The earliest written records about the Huns date back to the **8th century B.C.**
- The Turks established an **empire** dominated the region from the **eastern Silk Road** cities of Central Asia through Mongolia and western China to the **Caspian Sea** on western Asia by **1250 A.D.**







Uighur Kingdom (850-1250)

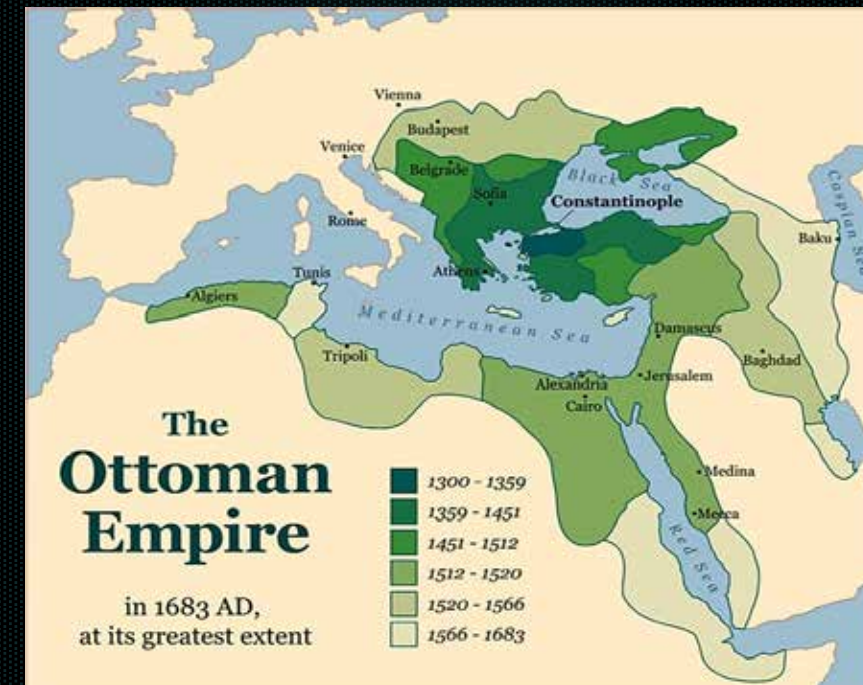




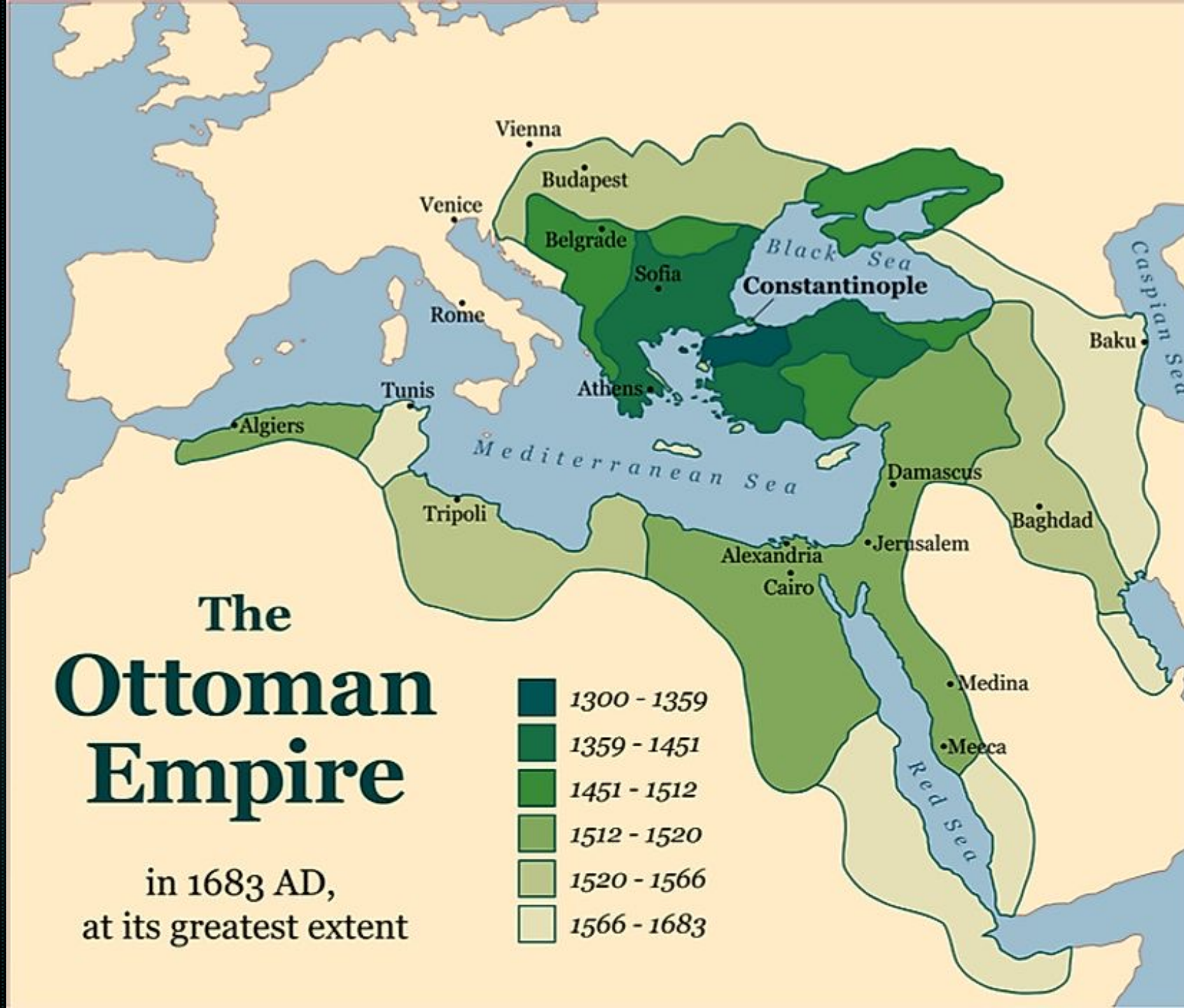


# The Era Of Turkish Predominance, 550–1500 CE

- ▶ The region then began to **transform** from a majority **Greek Christian** society into a **Turkish Muslim** one.
- ▶ **The Ottoman Empire** came to rule much of the **Balkans**, the **Caucasus**, the Middle East (excluding Iran), and **North Africa** over the course of several centuries.
- ▶ The empire lasted until the end of the **First World War**, when it was **defeated by the Allies** and partitioned.







# The Ottoman Empire

in 1683 AD,  
at its greatest extent

- 1300 - 1359
- 1359 - 1451
- 1451 - 1512
- 1512 - 1520
- 1520 - 1566
- 1566 - 1683



Good luck!

