

EUROPEAN UNITY AND DISUNITY: HISTORY-ECUMENE-FRAGMENTATION

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"History of European Integration," Summer 2009

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Overview

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Abstract:

History is not merely a simple order of events. As historiography, it is also a specific narration, and an explanation of how and why events happened. The history of Europe can be seen as history of traumatic breaks; but also of continuities.

This presentation provides an outline of European history since antiquity, focusing on larger trends and continuities.

Contents:

1. „History“ as Narration
2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii
3. Fragmentation

1. „History“ as Narration

History is not approached in a neutral way - there are several contested ways of conceptualizing and representing the past.

1. “History” as Narration

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- Why tell history?
 - ▣ Social function: narrating the nation
 - History as tradition, explanation for the now
 - Creating a common story / imagining community
 - Creating a sense of belonging and a common identity
 - ▣ Scope of History:
 - National history
 - Minority history as it relates to national history
 - Tribal history – intertribal history – American history

- ▣ history can be told in various ways

1. “History” as Narration

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- How to tell history?
 - ▣ Mythologizing
 - “Classical” approach before Thucydides
 - History as a just-so-story with problematic reliability
 - ▣ Oral History
 - Performative aspect: presence of the past through stories
 - ▣ History through artifacts
 - Remembrance through fixed items; fetishized history (ruins)
 - ▣ Historical Literature / fictionalized accounts of history
 - Less reliable on obvious levels through fictional content
 - More relatable by telling a “human story”
 - Less strict; allowing for counterfactuals

1. “History” as Narration

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- These are often about memory
- History as disenchantment, vs. Memory:
 - “ Memory is inherently contentious and partisan: one man’s acknowledgement is another’s omission. [..]
Unlike memory, which confirms and reinforces itself, history contributes to the disenchantment of the world. Most of what it has to offer is discomfoting, even disruptive – which is why it is not always politically prudent to wield the past as a morel cudgel with which to beat and berate a people for its sins. But history does need to be learned – and periodically re-learned.

(Tony Judt, *Postwar*, 829f)

1. “History” as Narration

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- Historiography / Historical Narratives
 - ▣ usually perceived as “neutral” and “objective” representations
 - ▣ criticism:
 - Elements of narrativity (Hayden White, Post-Structuralism)
 - Whose story? (Marxism / Subaltern Studies / Postcolonial studies)
 - Historiography as literature (Mommsen: nobel prize)
 - ▣ science: continuity of knowledge vs. paradigm shifts (Kuhn)
 - ▣ objectivity as ideal, not reality --- surrendering objectivity?

1. “History” as Narration

- Subaltern Studies:
 - ▣ Subaltern Studies Journal
12 regular, 2 special issues, 1982-2005
 - ▣ founding editor: Ranajit Guha
 - ▣ other contributors (select.):
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Dipesh Chakrabarty,
Partha Chatterjee, David Arnold
 - ▣ topics: Indian colonial and post-colonial history and society
 - ▣ strong influence on post-colonial theory
 - ▣ term „subaltern“ originally by Antonio Gramsci, Marxist
context, denoting workers mostly
(Prison Notebooks, The Modern Prince)

1. “History” as Narration

- focus on telling history: history used to be (and oftentimes still is) told from the perspective of the leaders
- Question: Who possesses historical agency?
- Subaltern Studies et al: including “other” histories by incorporating the “colonial” story into academic discourse
- pointing towards inadequacies in the historical record
- reclaiming material not contained in official historiographies
- side note: most people nowadays seem to identify with the ruling party in the past (histories of kings & queens etc., popularity medieval festivals), while they are mostly neither nobility nor upper class themselves. You do not need to self-identify as subaltern to **be** one.

1. “History” as Narration

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□ Hindsight and Hierarchy of Knowledge:

- “ It is only from our knowledge of the subsequent history of Western Europe that we can presume to rank events in terms of their world-historical significance, and even then that significance is less world historical than simply Western European, representing a tendency of modern historians to rank events in the record hierarchically from within a perspective that is culture-specific, not universal at all.

(Hayden White. "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality." 9.)

1. “History” as Narration

- inbuilt tendency to narrate the “universal”, the new Ecumene, from the view of the imperial (Western/Greco-Roman/...) position
- questioning & critiquing historiography = occasionally, revising our sense of history
- history is what happened – vs. history is about finding out why sth happened?

1. “History” as Narration

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- who is an agent in history?
- who is described by history - rulers and privileged classes vs. subalterns
- “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (Spivak, 1988)
(= who speaks: do they speak for themselves – or does someone else do the speaking for them)
- does being able to speak also create political agency?
(who is listening / who can change material conditions?)

1. “History” as Narration

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□ Knowledge Production is not Neutral:

- “ The knowledge systems that make up any dominant culture are all contained within the dominant consciousness and have therefore the latter’s deficiencies built into their optics.

(Ranajit Guha. „Dominance Without Hegemony And Its Historiography.“
216)

1. “History” as Narration

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- Hegel: „History“ as directed
- Marx
- Fukuyama

- does history lead somewhere?
- is there a „natural“ route history is supposed to take? is „modernity“ better and universal?
- is there a way of living that holds true universally?
- is nationalism normal and inevitable?
- can capital fulfill the transformation to „modernity“?

1. “History” as Narration

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- disconnect between capitalist-liberal theory and practice:

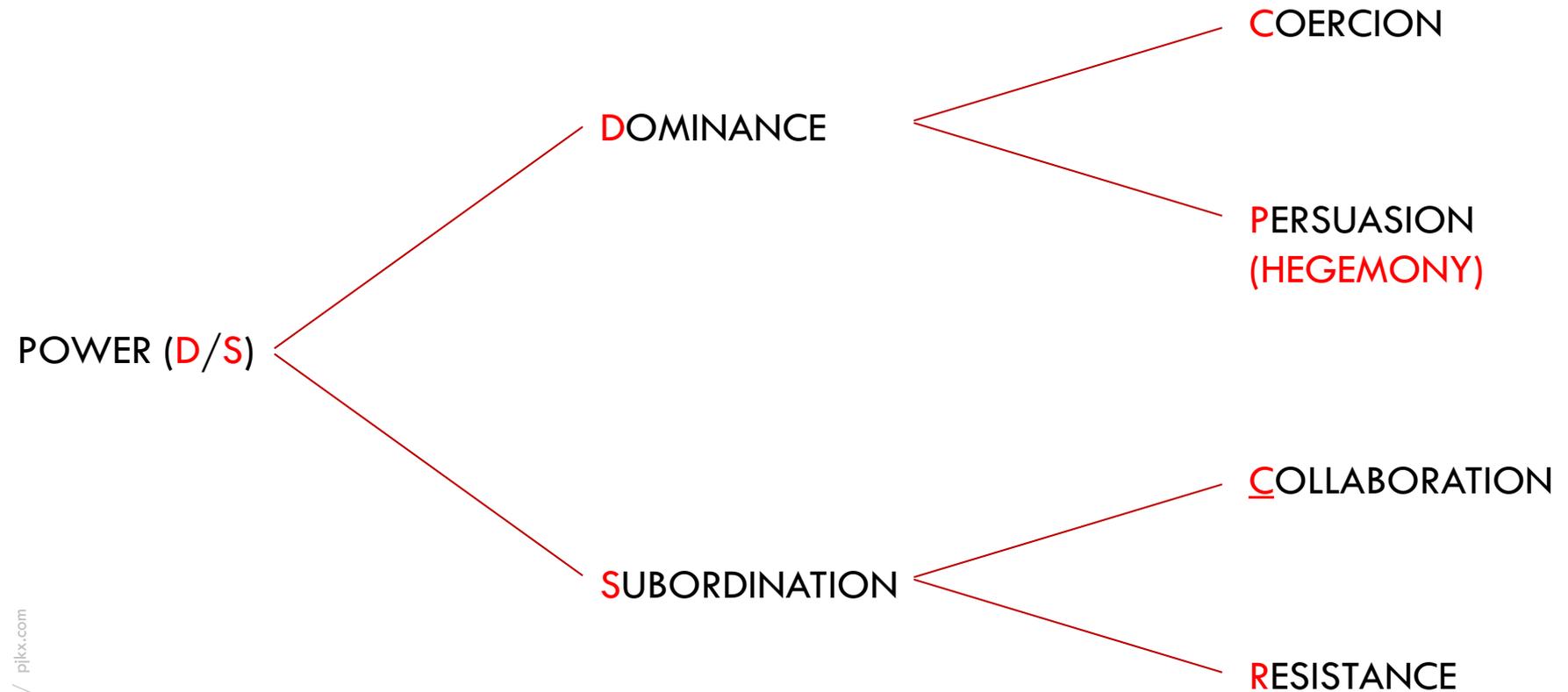
“ .. historiography has got itself trapped in an **abstract universalism** thanks to which it is unable to distinguish between the **ideal** of capital’s striving towards self-realization and the **reality** of its failure to do so. [...] It is this critical failure which has been primarily responsible for a **serious misrepresentation of the power relations** of colonialism in historical discourse. The crux of this misrepresentation is that dominance under colonial conditions has quite erroneously been endowed with hegemony. Hence the attempt, in colonialist writings, to make the rule of British capital in India appear as a rule based on the consent of the subject population.

(Ranajit Guha. „Dominance Without Hegemony And Its Historiography.“
228)

- in our context: substitute e.g. Roman for British etc.

1. “History” as Narration

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(Ranjit Guha. “Dominance Without Hegemony And Its Historiography.”)

1. “History” as Narration

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- hegemony: ruling through consent
- center: the „empire“ – the governing discourse
- periphery: the dependent

- democracy assumes consent
- semblances of democracy may create semblances of hegemony where there is domination instead („false consciousness“)
- in our context: the EU as empire?
(to be discussed later on)

1. “History” as Narration

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- this maintains and strengthens the governing interpretation of history:
 - ▣ „Orientals“/“Barbarians“ as uncivilized, benefiting from conquest and colonial rule
 - ▣ the imperial colonial past is seen as glorious and benign
 - ▣ „*mission civilatrice*“ into the heart of darkness

- Subaltern Studies aims to question this interpretation by
 - ▣ not only looking at the victims but also taking their view
 - ▣ restoring agency (which will also include complicity in conquest)
 - ▣ questioning the imperial project as a whole
 - ▣ refining „our“ view of the past
 - ▣ refining „our“ view of identity

1. “History” as Narration

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To conclude:

- history is told in a specific way
- this is not an arbitrary choice

- the writing (and teaching) of history is often linked to communicating civics lessons and to identify with an ideological narrative

2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

Polities are organized around governing paradigms – that of Rome has influenced Europe for millennia.

2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

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- Europe is a continent with borders that are somewhat artificial
- „Europe“ has always been linked to a story
 - ▣ Zeus as bull takes the Phoenician princess Europa to Crete
 - ▣ „Eastern“ civilization taken to the „West“?
 - ▣ imperial narrative of unifying „Europe“

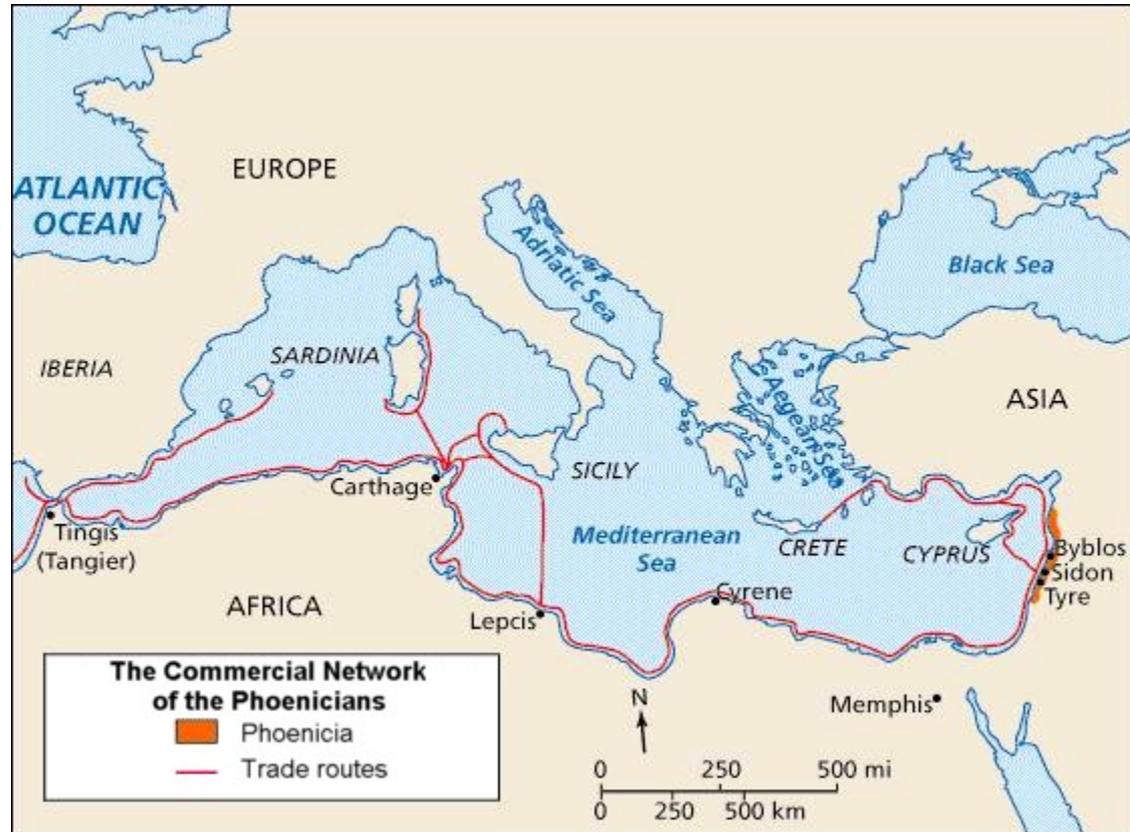


source: Wikimedia Commons

2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

- The Phoenician empire (2300–65 B) originated from Canaan and spread via city states and trade

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2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

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- „Greek approach“: a world of autonomous *πολεῖς* sharing a same culture, language, religion (*οἰκουμένη*)



2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

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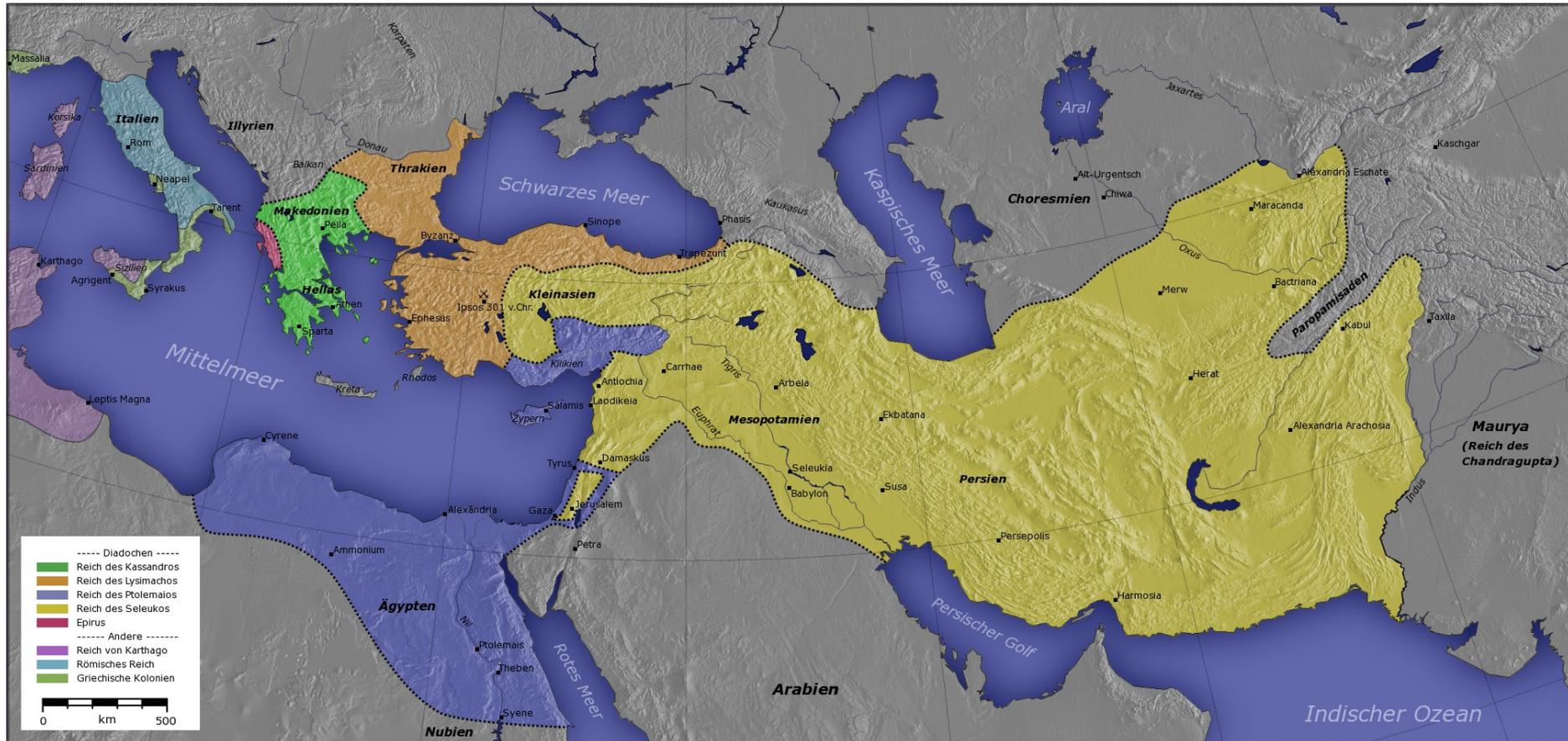
□ the Greek-Phoenician world (8th-6th century BC)



2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

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□ Heirs of Alexander's Empire (323 BC)



2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

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- what remained of the Phoenecians (Carthage)...



2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

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- Greek and Phoenicians: common culture, sort-of hegemony, local sort-of autonomy
- Phoenician Alphabet (possibly derived from Demotic, a version of Hieroglyphic) as original alphabet
- Roman culture: imperial from the start; conquest of Etruscans, Italians, Phoenicians, Greeks (often starting out from the weaker position)

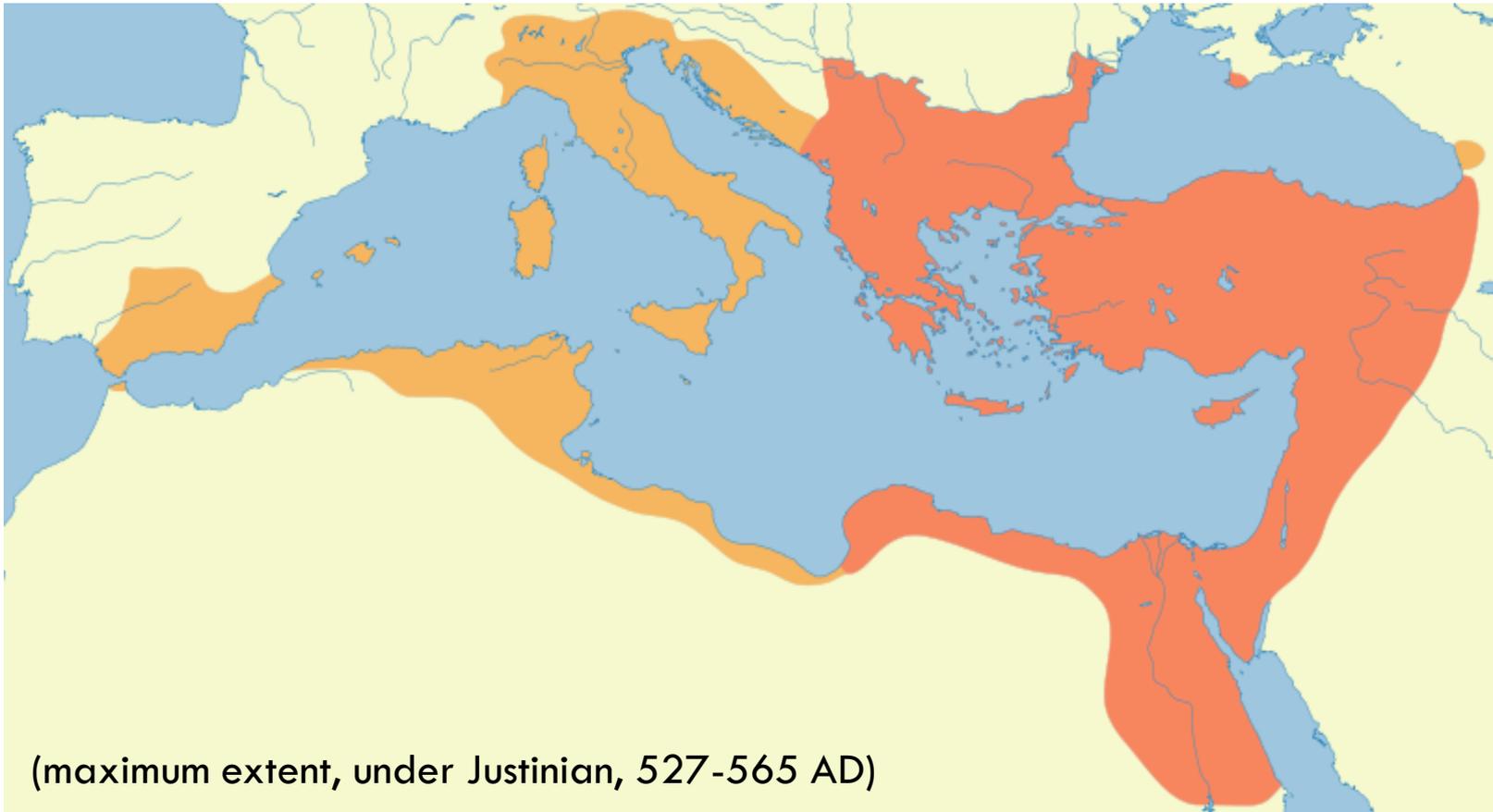
2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

- Rome creates a lasting state
 - ▣ 753 BC – 509 BC: Kingdom / Etruscan domination
 - ▣ 509 BC – 27 BC: Republic
 - ▣ 27 BC – 395 AD: Empire
 - ▣ 395 AD – 476 AD: West Roman Empire
 - ▣ 395 AD – 1453: East Roman / Byzantine Empire
- 380 AD Christianity as State Religion

2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

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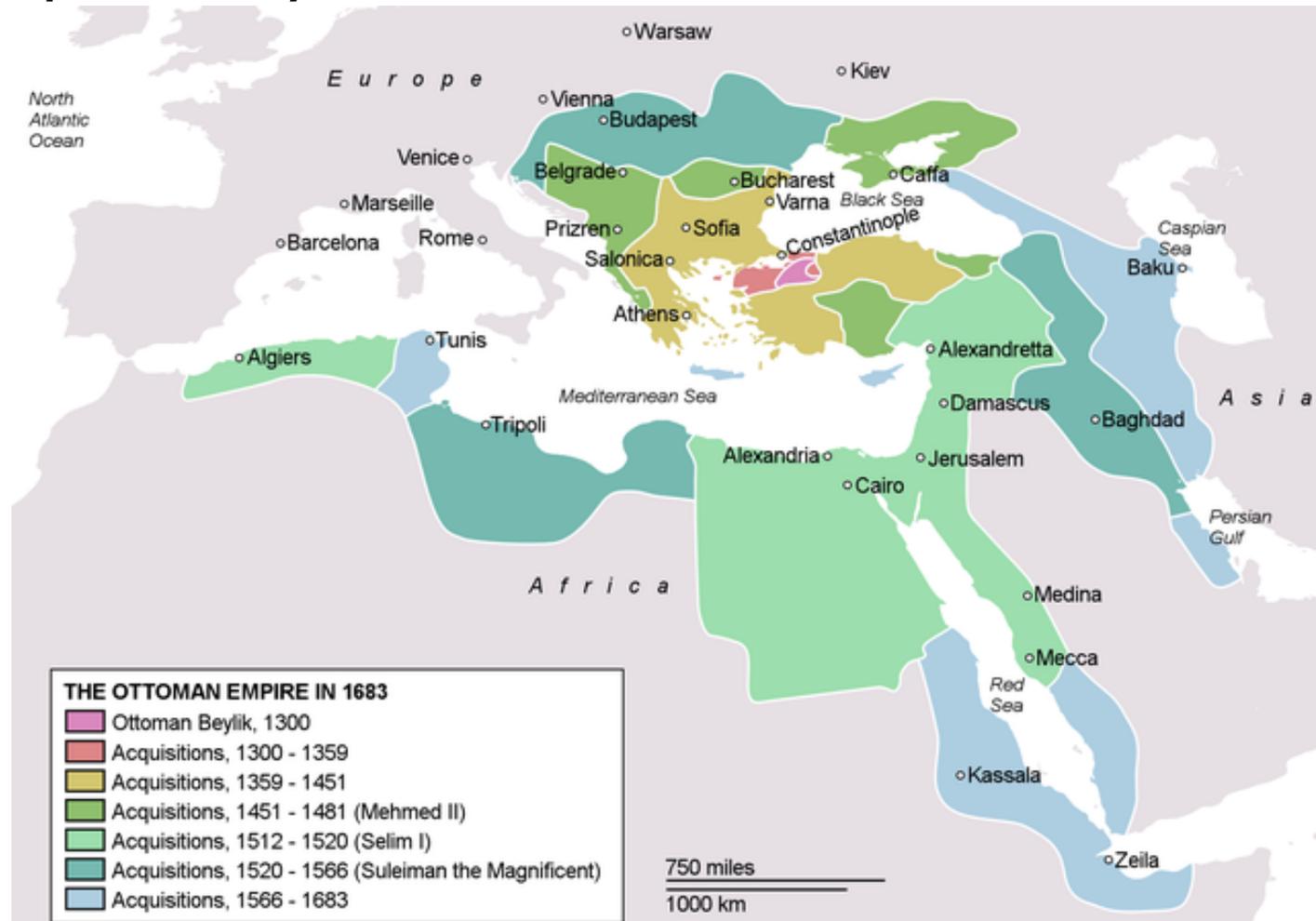
□ Eastern Rome...



(maximum extent, under Justinian, 527-565 AD)

2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

□ ...was conquered by the Ottomans



2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

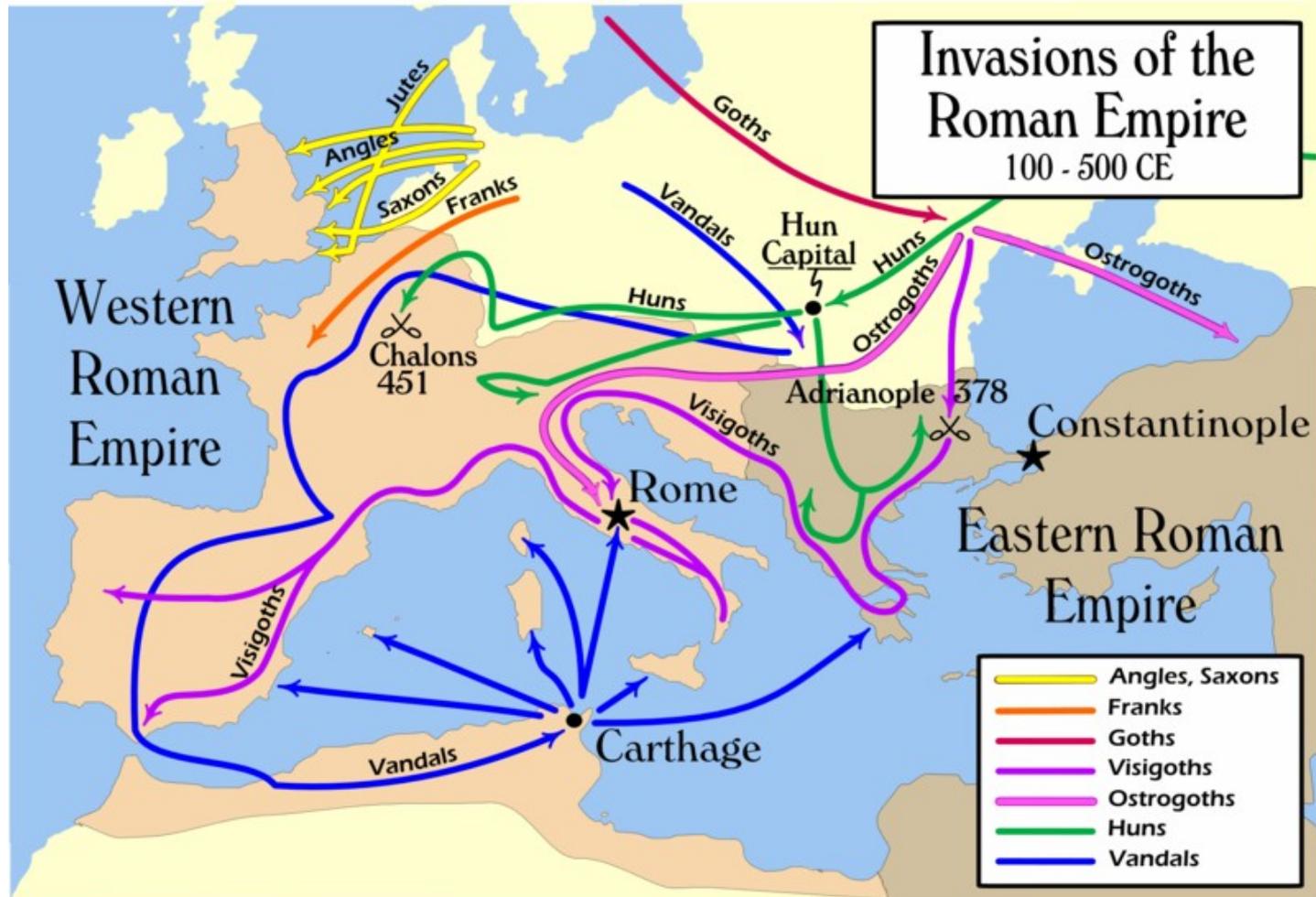
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□ Western Rome...



2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

□ ... is invaded by Germans and Huns



2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

- The Germanic kingdoms seek to create hybrid Roman-Germanic successor states.
- The empire is transferred ideologically unto new people, and under the reign of the Roman Church.

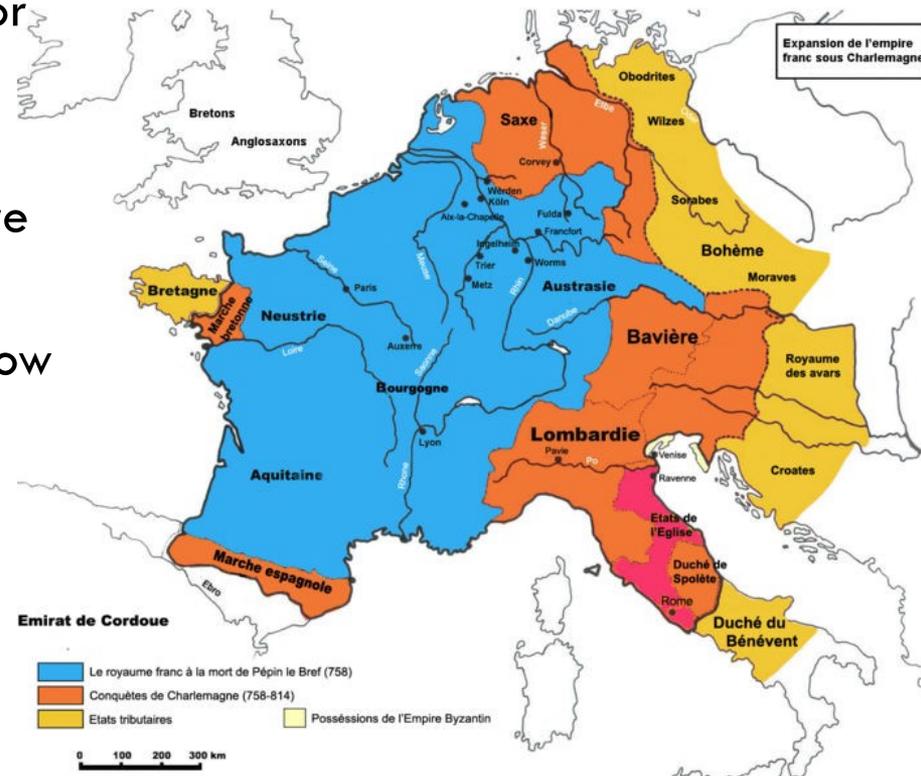


2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

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□ Translatio Imperii: Empire of Charlemagne (800)

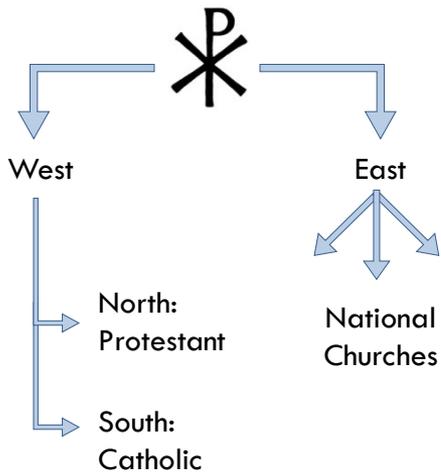
- the imperial ideology can be transferred onto a new people which will then be Roman emperor
- Charlemagne (800), later Otto „inherit“ Rome: foundation for Holy Roman Empire (962-1806)
- Kiev (880-1132) and later Moscow „inherit“ Byzantium
- Napoleon understood himself as a new Caesar



2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

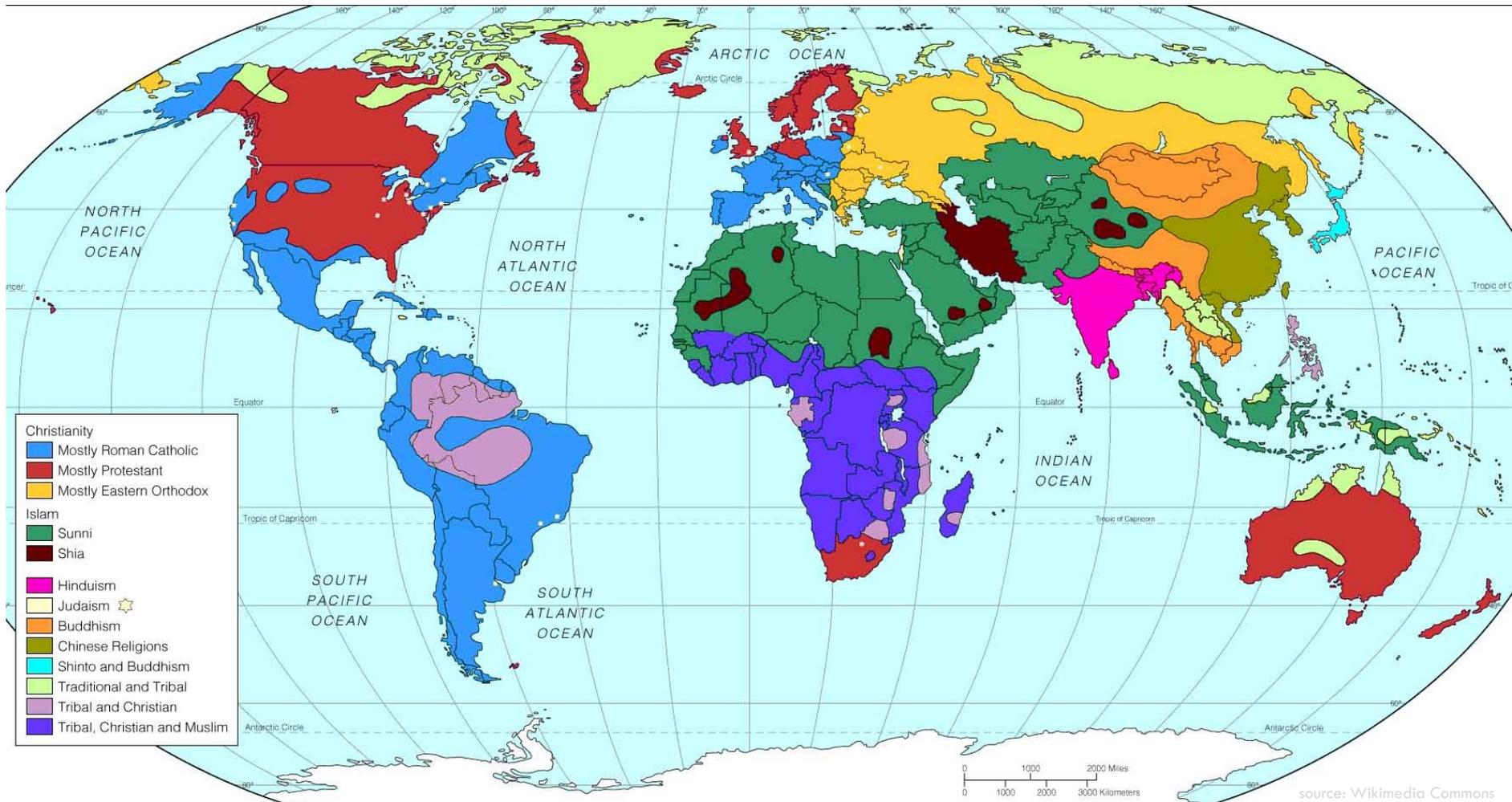
- Empire as carrier of religion: Religion in Europe today

- Division:



2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

□ Christianity (and other religions) in the world today



2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

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□ iconography



Titus Arch, Rome, 70 AD --- Tropaeum Detail



Arlington National Cemetery, D.C.

2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

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□ iconography



Christ Monogram – Constantine, 327 AD?
„ΕΝ ΤΟΥΤΩ ΝΙΚΑ“ - „In Hoc Signo Vinces“ - IHS

2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

□ iconography



Flag of the Byzantine Empire / Greek Orthodox Church



Great Duchy of Moscow 1263-1547



Habsburg Empire 1526-1918



Russian Federation 1991-...

2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

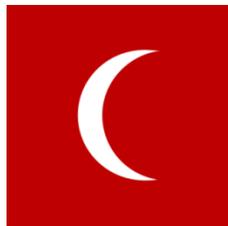
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□ iconography

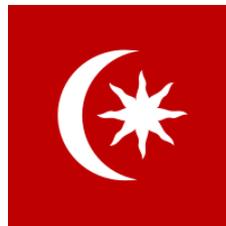
- moon in 1st quarter as early religious symbol --- agrarian importance
- Astarte (war & sex goddess from Egypt, Ugarit, Hittites, Canaan) / Akkadian: Ishtar, Later: Egyptian: Isis, Hathor, Greco-Roman: Aphrodite, Artemis, Juno
- Legend: Appearance of the moon saved Byzantium from surprise attack (*Encycl. Britannica*, „Crescent“)
- moon also Christian symbol (Mary)



City of Byzantium,
667 BC-330 AD



Constantinople
330 AD-1453 AD



Ottoman Empire
1299-1923



Republic of Turkey
1923-...



2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

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□ iconography



“And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of 12 stars; she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery.” (Revelations 12:1-6)

2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

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□ repeat:

“ The knowledge systems that make up any dominant culture are all contained within the dominant consciousness and have therefore the latter's deficiencies built into their optics.

(Ranjit Guha. „Dominance Without Hegemony And Its Historiography.“ 216)

- after the defeat of Rome, its Germanic and Turkish conquerors seem to oftentimes have internalized its ideology and symbols

- Imperial Rome as governing paradigm
- mythologizing of rule

- syncretism / hybridity

2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

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- Do theories of rule arise out of the polity ---
- --- or do polities get formed by such theories?

- probably both

2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

- however: empires always need a mission:
 - “ All empires that have lasted any length of time have chosen as their self-justifying objective a world-historical task or mission that confers cosmological or redemptive meaning on their activity. Hegemonic powers do not need a mission, but empires cannot do without one. In the competition with their rivals, hegemonic powers have to assert their own position; ideological power can certainly come into play here, but the main sphere of operations is foreign policy. The imperial mission, on the other hand, is directed at people within the empire, especially at those in the imperial centre. It is from auto-suggestion more than anything else, however, that the political elites draw the conviction and energy to press on with the imperial project. (Münkler 84)

2. Ecumene: Translatio Imperii

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- ❑ English Empire: White Man's Burden
- ❑ French Empire: Mission Civilisatrice
- ❑ US: Manifest Destiny
- ❑ Nazi Germany: Volk

- ❑ &c &c &c



John Gast,
American Progress, ca. 1972

source: Wikimedia Commons

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3. Fragmentation

There is continuity – and there are breaks.

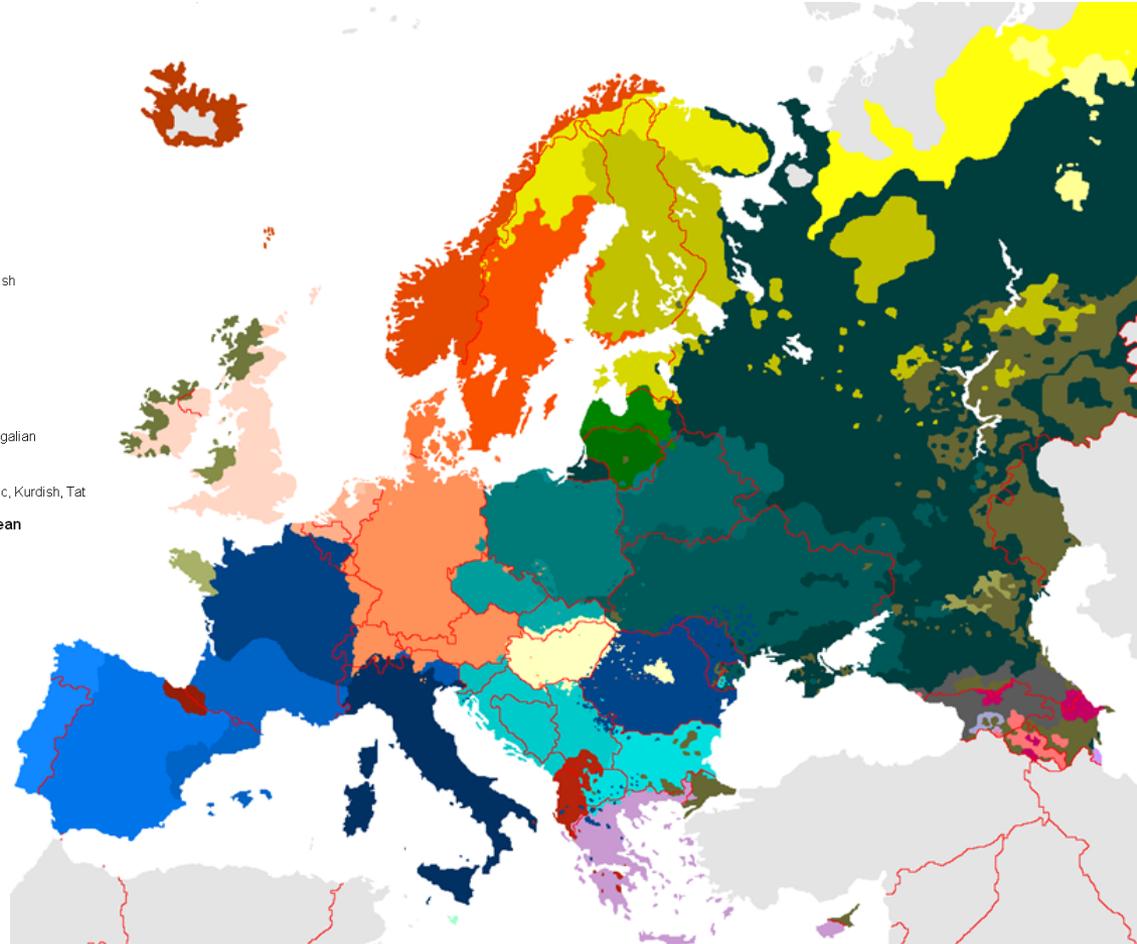
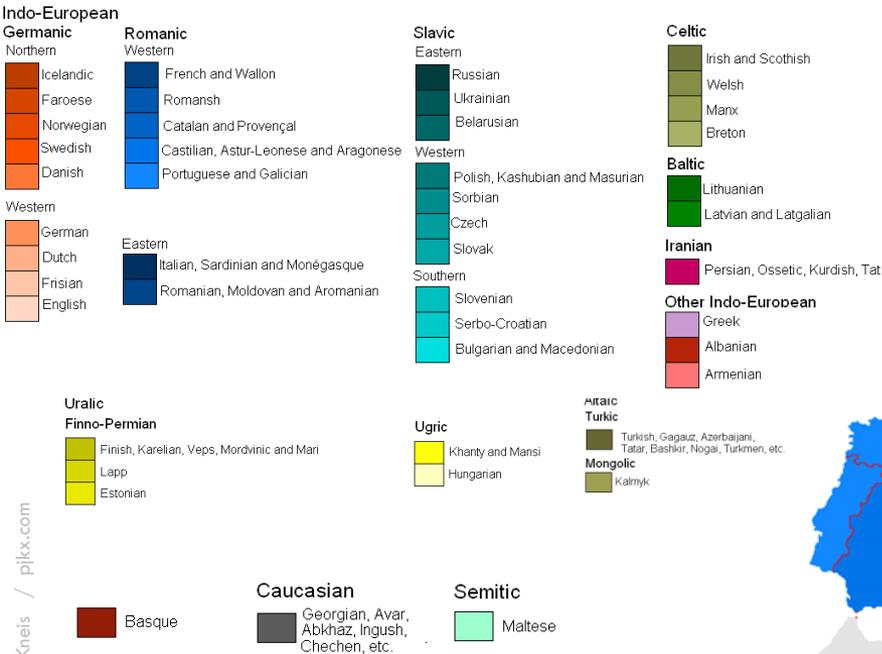
3. Fragmentation

- The theory of *translatio imperii* „legitimized“ the taking over of the imperial „burden“ by „barbarian“ peoples.
- The Roman world breaks apart – and is continued in (modified) spirit.

- Rome was transformed:
 - ▣ different nationalities
 - ▣ process of transformation of Antiquity
 - ▣ social changes

3. Fragmentation

□ Languages today:



3. Fragmentation

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- The end of Rome was understood as a loss – alas, constructions like „Holy Roman Empire“, Napoleon as Caesar, etc.

- Exceptions, e.g.:
 - Reformation: Break-up with Roman church – acceptance and reinforcement of „lay“ culture instead of Latinitas
 - German Romanticism (cult of Hermann, idealization of „alte Germanen,“ mainly as reaction to Napoleonic conquest), English Arthur legends, etc.

3. Fragmentation

- Religious diversity: reformation as political project also: Freedom from Rome



3. Fragmentation

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- European history since Rome can be read as a post-imperial aftermath.
- The Middle Ages created a syncretic Roman-Germanic World under one Catholic church
- this was not to last
- Protestantism lays roots for Capitalism (Max Weber. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. 1905)

3. Fragmentation

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- **Period of Transformation:**
 - ▣ Fall of Constantinople 1453
 - ▣ Reconquista finished 1492
 - ▣ Columbus 1492
 - ▣ Reformation 1517
 - ▣ England Breaks with Rome 1534
 - ▣ 30 years war 1618-1648
 - ▣ English Revolution 1640-1660

 - ▣ American Revolution 1775-1783
 - ▣ French Revolution 1789-1799; Napoleon 1799-1815

3. Fragmentation

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- answer to Napoleon: rise of Nationalism
- answer to World War I: continuance of Nationalism, mellow internationalism (League of Nations)
- answer to Hitler: rise of Supra-Nationalism (European unity process), slightly less mellow internationalism (UN)
- where did we go from here?

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