

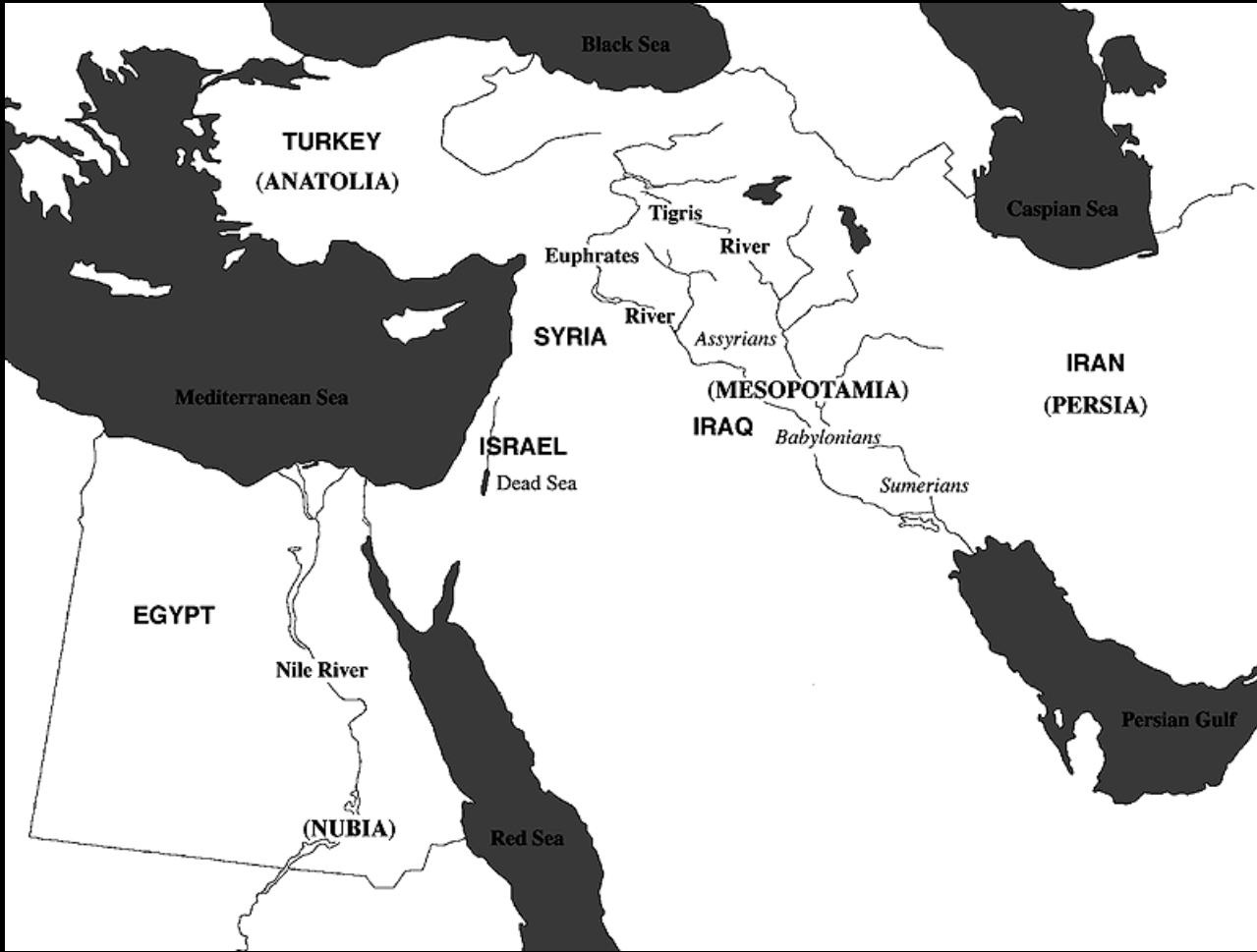
Introduction to the Roman world

HIST 325 Lecture 1



The Roman world

- Geography
 - Mediterranean and Near East
 - Rivers
 - Seas
 - Climate
 - Agriculture
- Historical background
 - Hellenistic kingdoms
 - Roman Republic





River valleys

- Geographical homes of first civilizations
 - Mesopotamia:
 - Tigris and Euphrates: irrigation of floodplain allows cultivation of rich soils
 - Egypt:
 - Nile: annual flooding brings water, fertilizes soil
- Similar patterns in other world regions (e.g. China)



Valley of the Nile

The Mediterranean Basin



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Water: Limit and Link

- Seas:
 - Smaller seas serve as links
 - Central Mediterranean long a barrier
- Rivers:
 - Rhine, Rhone, Danube, Tigris, Euphrates
 - Trade and transport where navigable (e.g. Nile)
 - Barriers to invasion (esp. Rhine, Danube, Euphrates)



Aegean coast of Turkey seen from the island of Chios (foreground)



Climate and Weather

- Typical climate
 - Dry and sunny in summer, often hot
 - Little if any rain (dry season)
 - Wet, but usually mild in winter
 - Snow at high elevations (wet season)
- Complex and unpredictable
 - Regional and micro-regional variation
 - Topography creates microclimates
 - Year-to-year variation
 - “Typical” climate is an average of extremes



Impact of Climate and Geography

- Variability is key
 - Regional
 - Regions and micro-regions must specialize
 - Interdependence and trade necessary for survival
 - Annual: life is always unstable
- Average climate deceptively pleasant
 - City life takes place out of doors
 - Public sphere overwhelmingly important

Mediterranean Agriculture

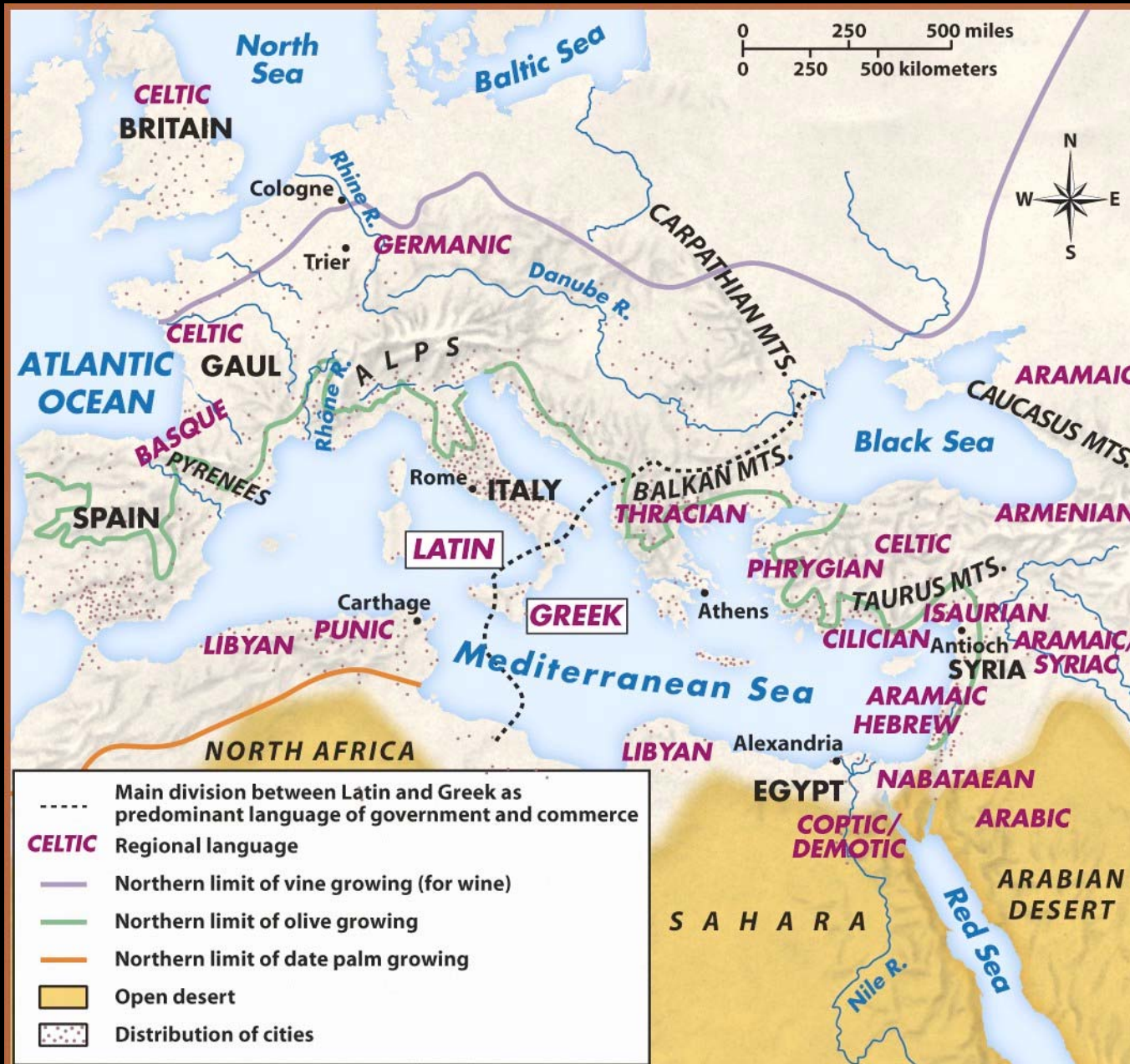
- “Mediterranean trinity”
 - Wheat, olives, and the vine
- Animal husbandry
 - Pigs; cattle for labor
- Pastoralism
 - Sheep, goats
- Tree crops
 - E.g. apples, figs, dates
- Hunting and gathering
- Labor-intensive
- Yields barely adequate
- Trade required for survival





Geographic Limits

- “Wine line”
 - Northern boundary
- Olive trees
 - True Mediterranean climate
 - North: too cold
 - South: too hot and dry
- Date palms
 - Southern boundary: beginning of Sahara



Map 5.2
The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures: A Concise History, Second Edition
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The Eurasian Steppe—Eastern Mongolia



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Map 5.1

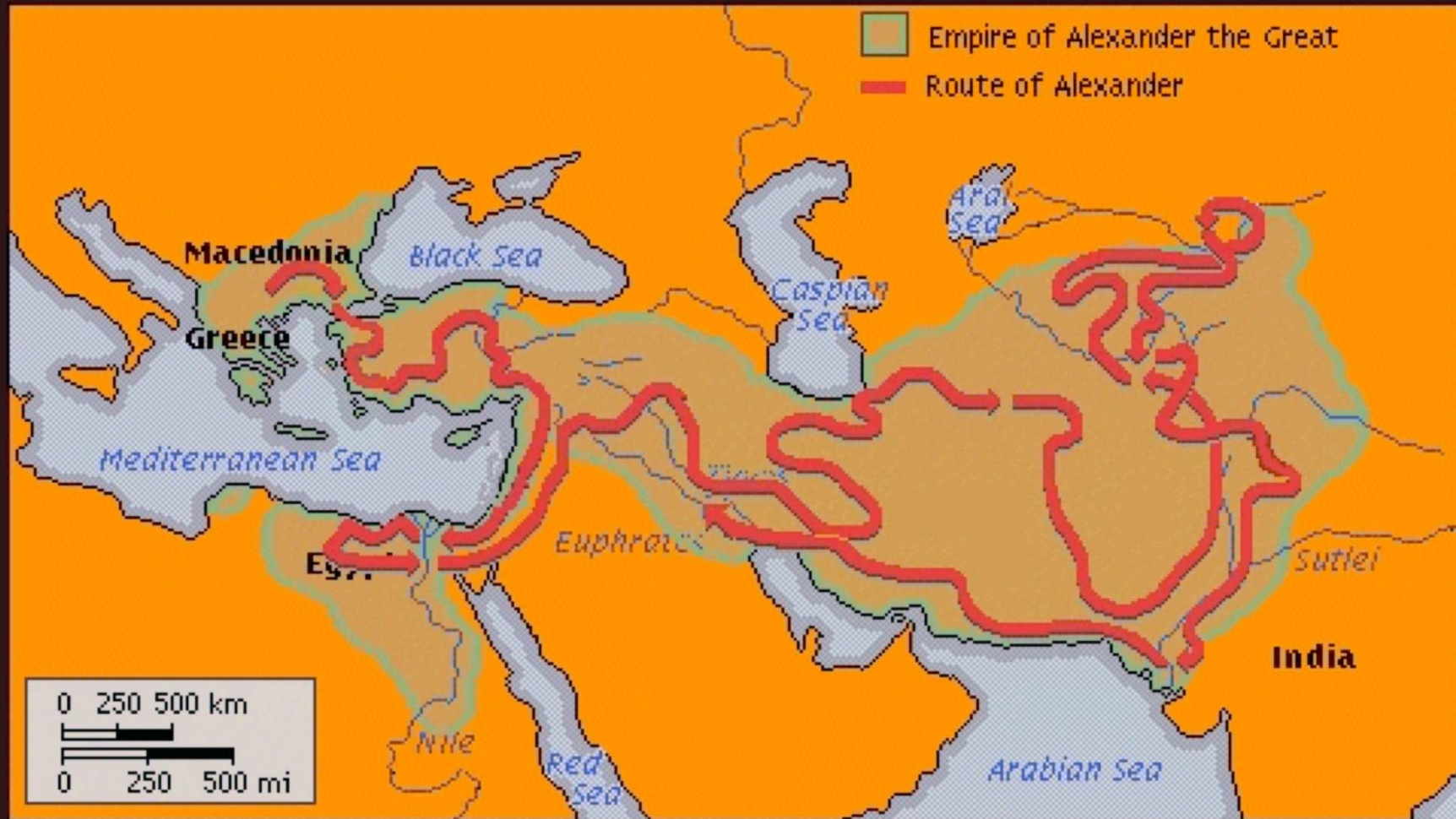
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Alexander the Great



Alexander's conquests



Kingdoms of Alexander's successors





The early Roman empire

- Rome and Italy
- Hellenistic Mediterranean
 - Alexander and his successors
 - Carthage and the Punic Wars
 - Roman expansion
- The Roman Revolution
 - Transition from republic to empire
- Early emperors
 - Government
 - Dynasties

Pre-Roman Italy

- Italy composed of many city-states
 - Different systems of government
 - Different languages and cultures
 - Latin (with many variants), Etruscan, Greek
- Rome one city-state among many
- Dominant powers in 5th C BCE:
 - Etruscans (north Italy)--kingdom
 - Greeks (south Italy, Sicily)—many city-states



The Roman Republic

- City-state w/ expanding territories
 - Italy, Sicily
 - Spain, N Africa
 - Asia Minor, Levant
- Complex system of government
 - Basically an oligarchy
 - But political roles also for masses
- *Cursus honorum*
 - Series of offices held in order in a political career
 - Many titles (e.g. praetor, quaestor...) continue under the empire
- Senate
 - Property qualification
 - Ultimate source of law and authority



Rome's Conquest of Italy

- Slow, painful, many setbacks
- Roman power spread both by alliance and conquest
- Result: status of Italians varied under Roman rule
 - Different civic (city) statuses
 - Different personal statuses



Rome in the Hellenistic World

- Conquests of Alexander the Great
- Kingdoms of Alexander's successors
 - Seleucids: Syria and Mesopotamia
 - Ptolemies: Egypt
 - Others in Asia Minor, Greece
- Carthage
 - Power in N Africa, Sicily, Spain
 - Clash w/ Rome in Punic Wars
- Rome gradually expands rule...



Carthage: Rome's Rival

- Carthage:
 - Major city of North Africa
 - Colony of Phoenicia (now Lebanon)
 - Punic (Semitic) language and culture
- Carthage as empire:
 - Controlled much of North Africa, Sicily, parts of Spain





Conquest and Empire

- Mediterranean conquered in stages
 - Conquest of Italy
 - Punic Wars against Carthage
 - Interventions among Hellenistic successor states
- Non-Mediterranean territories added later
 - Gaul (France, Low Countries): Julius Caesar
 - Britain: Claudius
 - Dacia (Romania): Trajan



Governing the new territories

- Territories added by various means
 - Conquest
 - Treaty
 - Legacy
- Roman rule replaces top layer of government
- Administration continues to operate through existing structures
- Local law remains in place
- Result: varied statuses for cities, individuals

Civil Wars and Reorganization

- Growth of empire strengthens military leaders
 - Generals rise to power
 - They fight each other in two bloody civil wars
- End of second civil war
 - Victory of Octavian (the future Augustus) over Anthony and Cleopatra (last Ptolemaic ruler of Egypt)
 - Battle of Actium, 31 BCE (naval battle)
 - Octavian's armies establish total military dominance
- Octavian establishes monarchy
 - Returns to Rome 29 BCE
 - Becomes "Augustus" 27 BCE

Augustus

First Roman emperor

Ruled 29 (27) BCE-14 CE

Original name Octavian

Adopted by Julius Caesar

Given title “Augustus” 27
BCE

