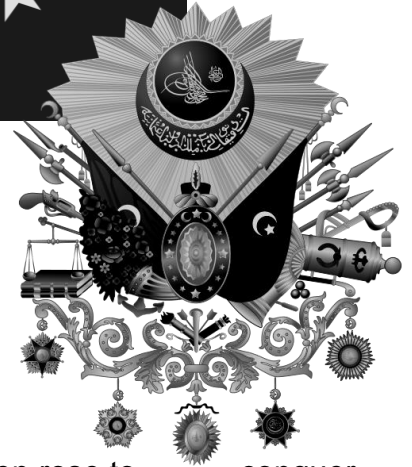


# The Ottoman Empire

## (1299-1922)



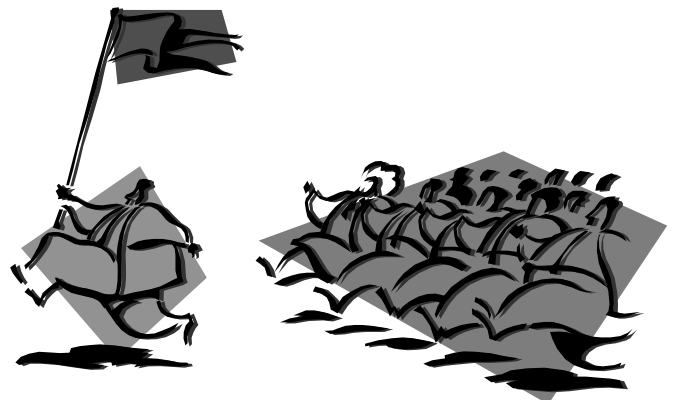
After Muhammad's death in 632 AD, Islam spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula and beyond. One of the largest and longest lasting dynasties to rule the Islamic world started in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (1200s AD) with **Osman**, a leader of a Muslim tribe in Turkey. A **dynasty** is a family or group that maintains power for generations. Osman started the Ottoman dynasty by defeating other Turkish tribes to become ruler of a small kingdom. Osman then rose to conquer what was left of the old Roman Empire (A.K.A *the Byzantine Empire*). The Turkish Ottoman Empire, whose name comes from Osman, eventually conquered most of the Middle East, North Africa, and southeast Europe. In 1453 the Ottomans captured the city of Constantinople, the capital of the eastern Roman Empire. The Ottomans renamed the city **Istanbul** and made it their capital. During the 15th and 16th centuries it was one of the most powerful states in the world. The Ottoman Empire lasted until the early 20th century (1900s), a span of almost 600 years.



### The "Sick Man" of Europe

The Ottomans were fine soldiers, but had difficulty ruling. As Muslims, they were tolerant (*accepting*) of religious differences and generally treated Jews and Christians fairly. This tolerance strengthened the empire. On the other hand, unlike the Muslim rulers of the past, the Ottoman sultans (*rulers*) tended to fear and distrust new ideas. This proved fatal (*deadly*) to the empire. The Ottomans were largely passed over by several major advancements in history. The European Renaissance in the 15th and 16th centuries, the Enlightenment of the 18th century, and the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century had all brought new knowledge and technologies to Europe, making its countries more resourceful and powerful.

While the rest of the world advanced, the Ottomans were too busy fighting and warring. Throughout their history the Ottomans were either trying to take over more land or defend the land they already had. Sadly the Ottoman Empire began a slow but steady decline in the last decades of the 16th century. Few rulers after their greatest sultan, Suleiman, were able to exercise real power when the need arose. The Ottoman Empire was weakening and often compared to a "**sick man**". As the Ottoman Empire began to decline, European colonial leaders, who had recently seized most of Africa, were eager to take over the Middle East too.





## The Fall of the Ottoman Empire

Warfare led to the final collapse of the empire in the first decades of the 20th century. In 1912–13 the empire lost almost all its remaining European territory in two military conflicts known as the **Balkan Wars**. Then when **World War I** (1914–18) began, the Ottoman Empire decided to join forces with Germany and Italy against the other European forces and the United States. Their side lost the war and as a result the Ottoman Empire was overthrown.

Their defeat in WWI forced the Ottoman leaders to give up much of their remaining territory. Unfortunately for the Ottoman Turks, the winning powers of World War I were eager to claim their influence in the Middle East at the end of the war. The winning European powers hoped to sell their manufactured goods to the people of the Middle East. They also hoped to exploit (*use*) the natural resources of the region. Oil had not yet been discovered, but the Middle East had many exotic spices. Britain also controlled India at that time, and they hoped to secure a safe route through the Middle East to India and other colonial lands in East Asia.



In 1920 a treaty known as the **San Remo Agreement** defined the new boundaries of Post-WWI Middle East. Britain and France had carved up and claimed most of the Ottoman Empire leaving only what we now know today as **Turkey** for the Ottomans.

Outraged by the weakness of their Ottoman leaders, a group of Turkish revolutionaries led by **Mustafa Kemal** formed a new government in what remained of the Empire. Humiliated by their defeat, former Ottoman leaders fled the country. In 1923 Turkey was declared a **republic** with **Mustafa Kemal** (later known as Atatürk, or “Father of the Turks”) as its president.

