

OLLI Eurasia 6: From Steppes to SSRs

The next few classes are looking at the long interaction between the Russian/Soviet world that lasted from the 1500s to 1990. Since the dissolution of the USSR it has become clearer that the Turkic population base of Eurasia was never erased by Russian expansion or Soviet demographic engineering.

First, we return to the era of the Turkic nomadic base that preceded Rus expansion, then the rise of the Turkic Khazar State (800s-1000s); the Mongol conquest, 1200; and the Mongol-Rus era of the Grand Princes 1300s.





Remember the Turks controlled and populated (with nomadic Khaganates) Eurasia before the Rus.

Review:

Turkic migrants moving West out of Mongolia Orkhon valley in 500s
1st Turkic Khanate, Gokturks, 600s, Avar Khanate in West.
Collapse of Gokturks leads to Khazar Khanate, c. 700-900s

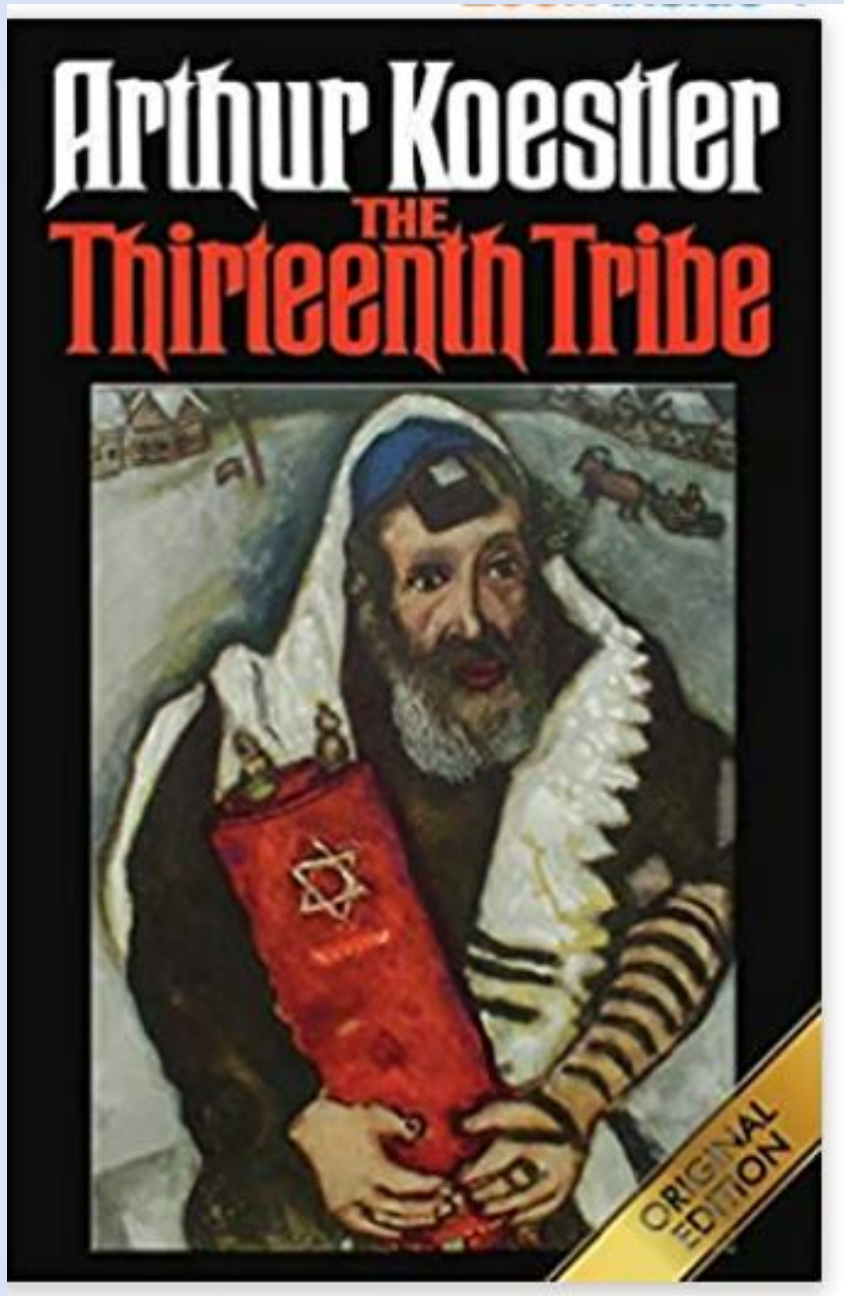


The Khazar Khanate, late 600-900s, has an unusual history



The Khazar Khanate c. 600-900s

- Semi nomadic, Turkic people who took control of river trade routes
- Wide variety of religions – Tengrism, Christianity, Judaism, later Muslim (we know from descriptions of visiting traders that the Khazars tolerated many religious legal systems)
- The Khazars became a buffer state between Byzantium, Sassanids (pre-Islamic Persia) and, after 700s, the Muslim Arab empires arising in the South
- Eventually conquered by expanding Kiev state in the 900s
- The conversion of the Khazar elite to Judaism c. 800 has contributed to their mystique and controversy even today.



The Khazar elite probably converted to Judaism to preserve independence from the Byzantine and Baghdad Monarchs who claimed religious authority over orthodox and Muslim subjects. Their “Jewishness” has provoked debate. Koestler’s 1976 book argued that the Khazar’s were part of the diaspora and later formed the base of East European Jewry (the Khazar-Ashkenazi thesis). Schlomo Sand says Koestler’s thesis tells more about 1976 than the 800s.



















(1970s Politics of concern with the plight of Russian jews, post Holocaust quest for jewish survivors says Sands).



You tube is full of the variety of Khazar theories! A Hot topic.

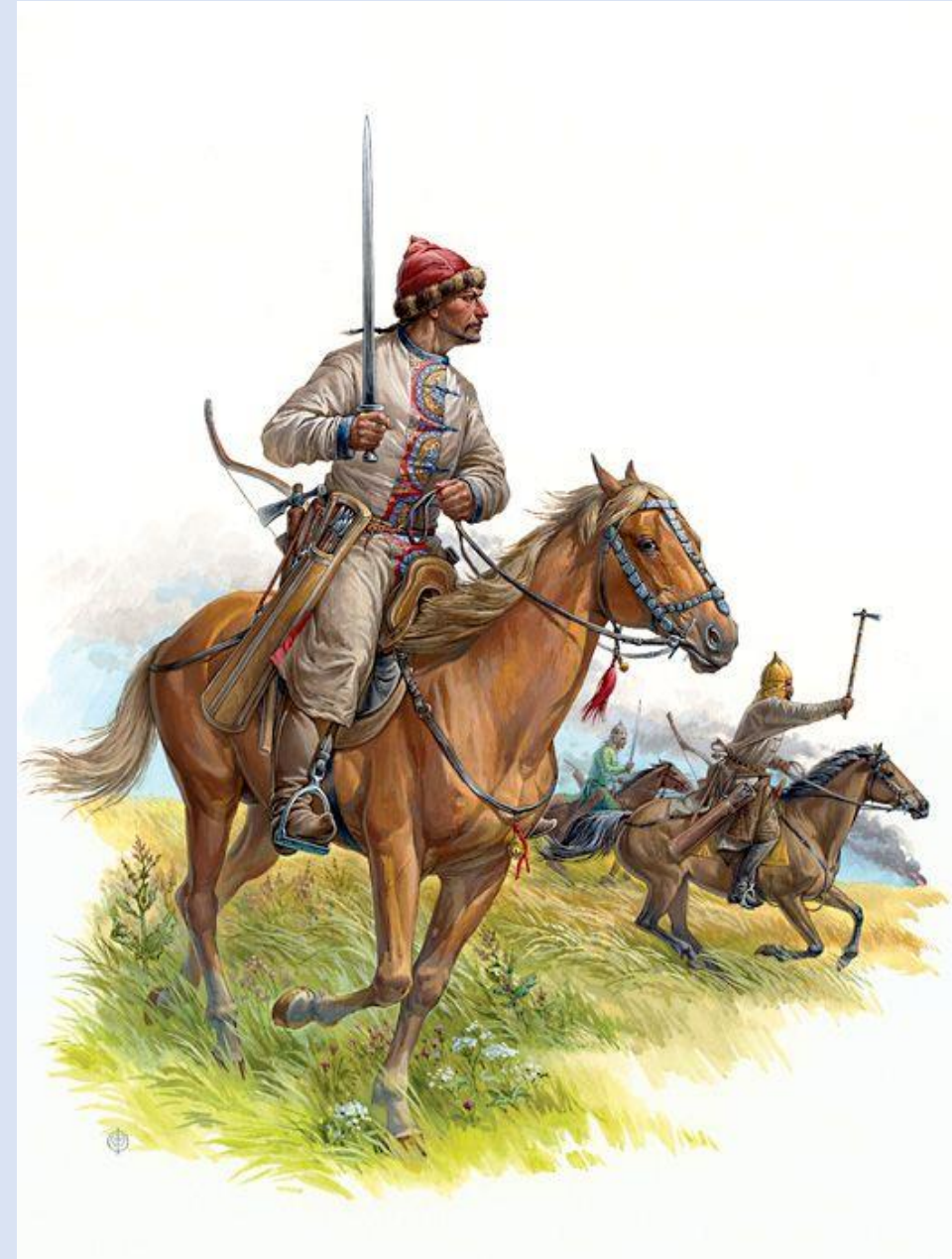
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-S7zweg67v4> (DNA project-some looking for a magic DNA answer to the Khazar-Ashkenazi thesis)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRbMcxBTWFs> (Kazakh tribe of Khazars who insist there is no “lost tribe” or jewish link)

 <p>Khazars: History of the Jewish Turkic Nomads 2 years ago youtube.com</p>	 <p>Ashkenazi Jews not Khazars - Culture of the Khazar Turks 11 years ago youtube.com</p>	 <p>History Answer - Where are the Khazars Now? 3 years ago youtube.com</p>	 <p>History of the Khazars - Origins and the First Arab-Khazar W... 3 years ago youtube.com</p>	 <p>The Ashkenazi Jews & The Khazarian Empire 2 months ago youtube.com</p>	 <p>The Truth about Ashkenazi Jews Unpacked 2 years ago youtube.com</p>
 <p>Ashkenazi Jews are not Khazars Casual Historian ... 3 years ago youtube.com</p>	 <p>The History of the Khazars: Every Year 1 year ago youtube.com</p>	 <p>56. No, Ashkenazi Jews are not Khazars (Jewish History...) 1 year ago youtube.com</p>	 <p>The Origins of the Khazars DNA - Geneticist Razib Khan 7 months ago youtube.com</p>	 <p>Are Jews descendants of Khazars? POLIN Museum 7 years ago youtube.com</p>	 <p>What do you think of the theory of the Khazars? 9 years ago youtube.com</p>
 <p>Who Are The Turkish Khazars People? 4 years ago</p>	 <p>Neglected History: The Khazar Khaganate 5 years ago</p>	 <p>The So Called Jews (Imposter Israelites Called Khazars) !!! 5 years ago</p>	 <p>Pt. 1 - Nations of The World // Thirteenth Tribe / Khazars / ... 2 years ago</p>	 <p>Are Ashkenazi Jews really Khazars? - Khazarian music 2 years ago</p>	 <p>Khazar Jews? - Khazarian Jews? - Khazars are Muslim 2 years ago</p>



Some physical evidence of the Khazar world: The Khazar Tengric Sun disc is often mistaken for a Star of David, A Khazar coin proclaiming Moses as messenger of God (altering the Islamic pronouncement), an iron helmet and some guesswork on warriors' appearance.



Some aspects of Khazar culture are not so easily romanticized in the 20th c.

Slavery: The Khazar tribes, like others before and after them, captured Slavs and sold them south across the Black Sea.

Dual Kingship and the scheduled execution of Kings.

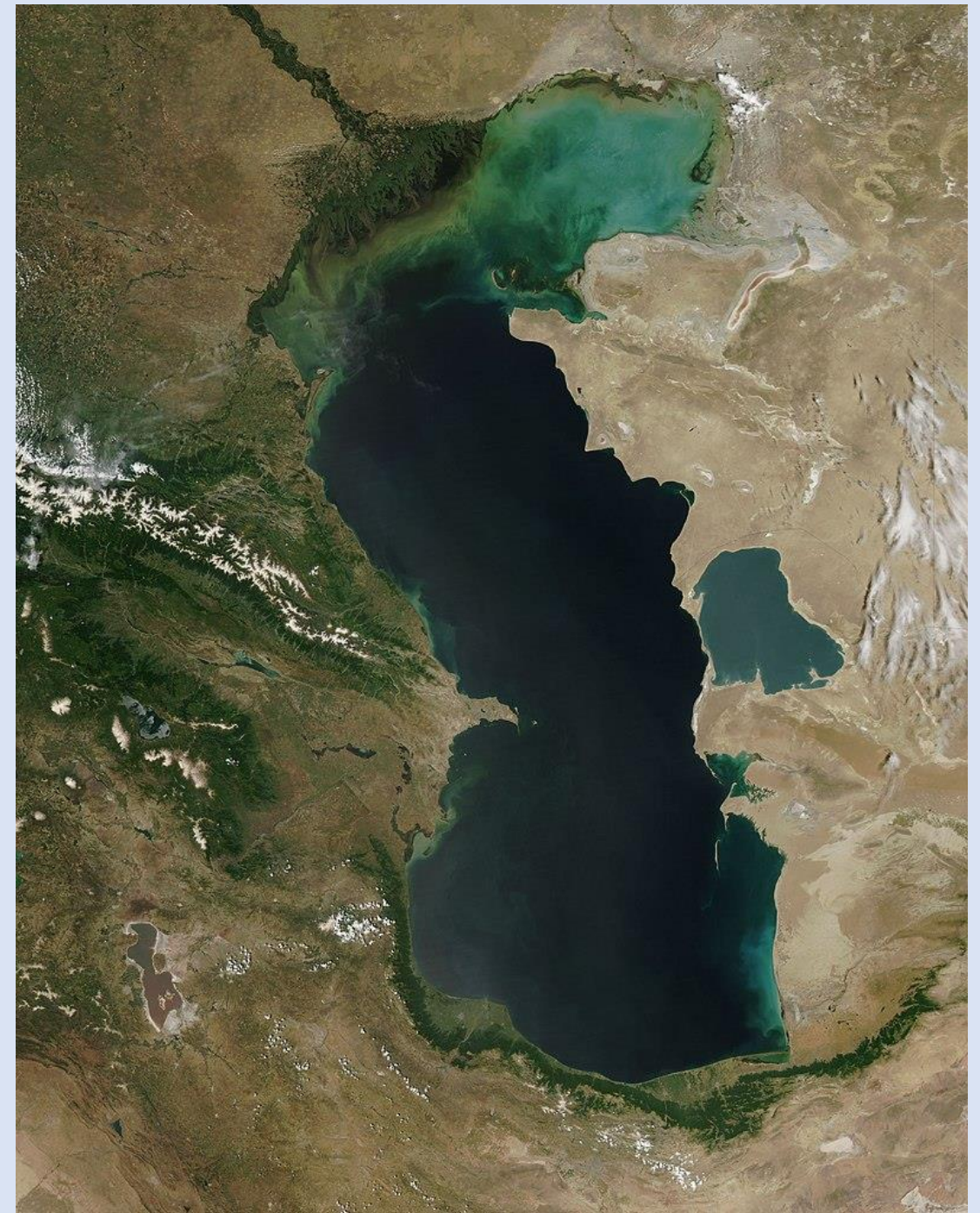
And the occasional burial of wives in the graves...



The Khazar's did make a good living selling captured Slavs south across the Black Sea c. 1000 ce.

This 19th c. Russian Painting titled "Khazar slave market".

The Khazars limited Arab expansion north into the Caucasuses by controlling the key mountain passes, but trade and religious ideas still crossed the mountains.



The Derbent fortress on the edge of the Caspian Sea controlled one passage through the mountains. It has been made and remade since at least the time of Alexander.



The Darial Gorge is the only other crossing possible, but only in the Summer. Not really a good military pass.





<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAwoaCjVLXg> (video of landscape in the Darial Gorge region)

The end of the Khazar Khanate, c. 900

The trade wealth of the Khazars attracting the attention of the Rus by 800s

Viking trade routes linked the Black and Baltic Seas, bringing awareness of the riches of the Silk Road



Next class Preview: Four zones of Russian expansion with different histories and timelines.

900s- Rus/viking expansion along the rivers into Kiev/Ukraine challenges Khazar State

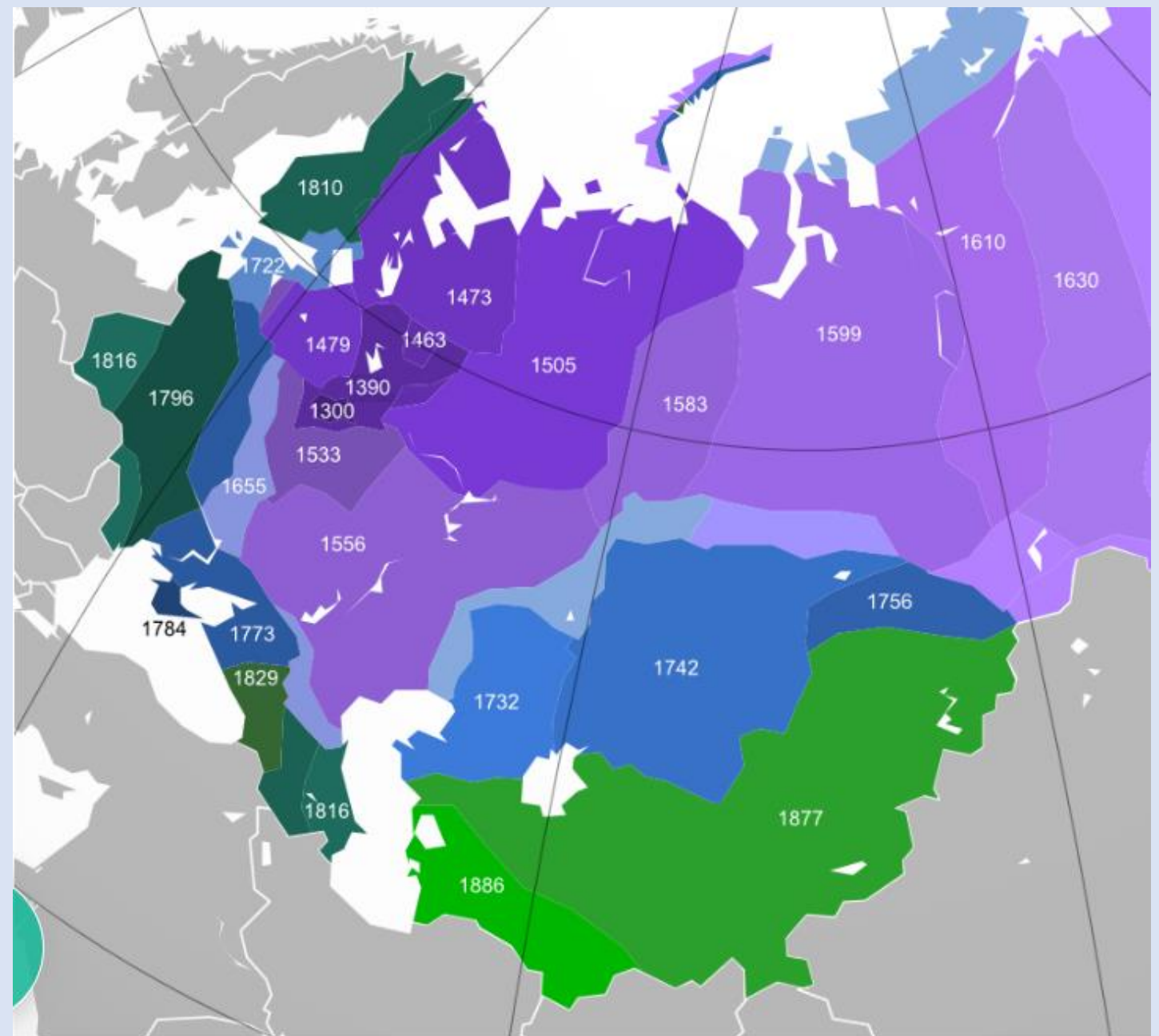
1200s Mongol invasion, establish tribute states over the Rus in Ukraine

1300s-1600s post-Mongol Rus emerge in Moscow, Cossack led expansion into Siberia

Push into E. Europe, the Baltic and Black Sea Rivers 1770-1816

The Caucasus – a path into Persia 1773-1829

Central Asia – to control Silk Road cities and counter the British and Chinese 1732-1886



The Expansion of Russia, 1300-1945