[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [Template:Pp-semi](/wiki/Template:Pp-semi) [Template:Infobox](/wiki/Template:Infobox) The **Levant** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en); [Arabic](/wiki/Arabic): المشرق [Template:IPA](/wiki/Template:IPA)[[1]](#cite_note-1)[[2]](#cite_note-2)[[3]](#cite_note-3)[[4]](#cite_note-4)[[5]](#cite_note-5)[[6]](#cite_note-6)[[7]](#cite_note-7)) is an approximate historical geographical term referring to a large area in the [eastern Mediterranean](/wiki/Eastern_Mediterranean). In its widest historical sense, the Levant included all of the eastern Mediterranean with its islands,[[8]](#cite_note-8) that is, it included all of the countries along the eastern Mediterranean shores, extending from [Greece](/wiki/Greece) to [Cyrenaica](/wiki/Cyrenaica).[[1]](#cite_note-1)[[9]](#cite_note-9) The term *Levant* entered English in the late [15th century](/wiki/15th_century) from French.[[8]](#cite_note-8) It derives from the Italian *Levante*, meaning "rising", implying the rising of the sun in the east.[[1]](#cite_note-1)[[9]](#cite_note-9) As such, it is broadly equivalent to the Arabic term [*Mashriq*](/wiki/Mashriq),[[2]](#cite_note-2) 'the land where the sun rises'.

In the 13th and 14th centuries, the term *levante* was used for Italian maritime commerce in the eastern Mediterranean, including Greece, [Anatolia](/wiki/Anatolia), [Syria-Palestine](/wiki/Syria-Palestine), and Egypt, that is, the lands east of [Venice](/wiki/Republic_of_Venice).[[1]](#cite_note-1) Eventually the term was restricted to the Muslim countries of Syria-Palestine and Egypt.[[1]](#cite_note-1) In 1581 England set up the [Levant Company](/wiki/Levant_Company) to monopolize commerce with the [Ottoman Empire](/wiki/Ottoman_Empire).[[1]](#cite_note-1) The name *Levant States* was used to refer to the [French mandate over Syria and Lebanon](/wiki/French_Mandate_for_Syria_and_the_Lebanon) after [World War I](/wiki/World_War_I).[[1]](#cite_note-1)[[9]](#cite_note-9) This is probably the reason why the term *Levant* has come to be used synonymously with Syria-Palestine.[[1]](#cite_note-1) Some scholars misunderstood the term thinking that it derives from the name of Lebanon.[[1]](#cite_note-1) Today the term is typically used in conjunction with prehistoric or ancient historical references. It has the same meaning as Syria-Palestine or the [region of Syria](/wiki/Syria_(region)) ([Arabic](/wiki/Arabic): الشام [Template:IPA](/wiki/Template:IPA)), that is, it means an area bounded by the [Taurus Mountains](/wiki/Taurus_Mountains) of Turkey in the North, the [Mediterranean Sea](/wiki/Mediterranean_Sea) in the west, and the north [Arabian Desert](/wiki/Arabian_Desert) and [Mesopotamia](/wiki/Mesopotamia) in the east.[[10]](#cite_note-10) It does not include [Anatolia](/wiki/Anatolia) (the former [Asia Minor](/wiki/Asia_Minor), now Asian Turkey; although at times [Cilicia](/wiki/Cilicia) may be included), the [Caucasus](/wiki/Caucasus) Mountains, or any part of the [Arabian Peninsula](/wiki/Arabian_Peninsula) proper. The [Sinai](/wiki/Sinai) Peninsula (Asian Egypt) is sometimes included, though more considered an intermediate, peripheral or marginal area forming a land bridge between the Levant and northern African [Egypt](/wiki/Egypt).[Template:Citation needed lead](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed_lead)

The Levant has been described as the "crossroads of [western Asia](/wiki/Western_Asia), the [eastern Mediterranean](/wiki/Eastern_Mediterranean) and [northeast Africa](/wiki/Northeast_Africa)",<ref name=UCL/> and the "northwest of the [Arabian plate](/wiki/Arabian_plate)".[[11]](#cite_note-11)

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## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumbnail|The](/wiki/File:Levantine_Sea.jpg) [Levantine Sea](/wiki/Levantine_Sea), the eastern portion of the [Mediterranean](/wiki/Mediterranean_sea). The term *Levant*, which appeared in English in 1497, originally meant the [East](/wiki/East) in general or "Mediterranean lands east of Italy".<ref name=dictionary>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> It is borrowed from the [French](/wiki/French_(language)) *levant* 'rising', referring to the rising of the sun in the east,[[12]](#cite_note-12) or the point where the sun rises.[[13]](#cite_note-13) The phrase is ultimately from the Latin word *levare,* meaning 'lift, raise'. Similar etymologies are found in [Greek](/wiki/Greek_language) Ἀνατολή (*Anatolē*, *cf.* [Anatolia](/wiki/Anatolia)), in [Germanic](/wiki/Germanic_languages) *Morgenland* (literally, "morning land"), in [Italian](/wiki/Italian_language) (as in "Riviera di Levante", the portion of the Liguria coast east of [Genoa](/wiki/Genoa)), in [Hungarian](/wiki/Hungarian_language) *Kelet*, in [Spanish](/wiki/Spanish_language) and [Catalan](/wiki/Catalan_language) *Levante* and *Llevant*, ("the place of rising"), and in [Hebrew](/wiki/Hebrew) ([*mizrah*](/wiki/Mizrah)). Most notably, "Orient" and its [Latin](/wiki/Latin) source *oriens* meaning "east", is literally "rising", deriving from [Latin](/wiki/Latin) *orior* "rise".[[14]](#cite_note-14) [thumbnail|French medal commemorating the](/wiki/File:Médaille_commémorative_de_Syrie-Cilicie.jpg) [war](/wiki/Franco-Turkish_War#Cilicia_Campaign_.28Cilicia_war.29) in [Cilicia](/wiki/Cilicia), which was initially part of the [French mandate](/wiki/French_Mandate_for_Syria_and_the_Lebanon). The notion of the Levant has undergone a dynamic process of historical evolution in usage, meaning, and understanding. While the term "Levantine" originally referred to the European residents of the eastern Mediterranean region, it later came to refer to regional "native" and "minority" groups.[[15]](#cite_note-15) The term became current in [English](/wiki/English_language) in the 16th century, along with the first English merchant adventurers in the region; English ships appeared in the Mediterranean in the 1570s, and the English merchant company signed its agreement ("[capitulations](/wiki/Capitulation_(treaty))") with the [Grand Turk](/wiki/Great_Sultan) in 1579 (Braudel). The English [Levant Company](/wiki/Levant_Company) was founded in 1581 to trade with the [Ottoman Empire](/wiki/Ottoman_Empire), and in 1670 the French [Compagnie du Levant](/wiki/Fr:Compagnie_du_Levant) was founded for the same purpose. At this time, the [Far East](/wiki/Far_East) was known as the "Upper Levant".<ref name=OEAGR/>

In early 19th-century [travel writing](/wiki/Travel_writing), the term sometimes incorporated certain Mediterranean provinces of the [Ottoman empire](/wiki/Ottoman_empire), as well as independent [Greece](/wiki/Greece) (and especially the [Greek islands](/wiki/Greek_islands)). In 19th-century archaeology, it referred to overlapping cultures in this region during and after prehistoric times, intending to reference the place instead of any one culture. The [French mandate of Syria and Lebanon](/wiki/French_Mandate_for_Syria_and_the_Lebanon) (1920–1946) was called the Levant states.[[1]](#cite_note-1)[[9]](#cite_note-9)

## Geography and modern-day use of the term[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

[thumb|Satellite view of the Levant including](/wiki/File:Levant_-_Satellite.png) [Cyprus](/wiki/Cyprus), [Syria](/wiki/Syria), [Israel](/wiki/Israel), [Jordan](/wiki/Jordan), [Lebanon](/wiki/Lebanon), [Palestine](/wiki/State_of_Palestine) and the Northern Sinai Today, "Levant" is the term typically used by archaeologists and historians with reference to the history of the region. Scholars have adopted the term Levant to identify the region due to it being a "wider, yet relevant, cultural corpus" that does not have the "political overtones" of Syria-Palestine.<ref name=Burke>Burke, Aaron. “The Transformation of Biblical and Syro-Palestinian Archaeology." Historical Biblical Archaeology and the Future: The New Pragmatism. Ed. Thomas Evan. Levy. London: Equinox Pub., 2010. “Nevertheless, despite such a well-reasoned basis for the identification of Levantine archaeology, the adoption of this term by many scholars has been, for the most part, simply the result of individual attempts to consider a wider, yet relevant, cultural corpus than that which is suggested by the use of terms like Canaan, Israel, or even Syria-Palestine. Regardless of the manner in which the term has come into common use, for a couple of additional reasons it seems clear that the Levant will remain the term of choice. In the first place scholars have shown a penchant for the term Levant, despite the fact that the term ‘Syria-Palestine’ has been advocated since the late 1970s. This is evident from the fact that no journal or series today has adopted a title that includes ‘Syria-Palestine’. However, the journal Levant has been published since 1969 and since 1990 Ägypten und Levante has also attracted a plethora of papers relating to the archaeology of this region. Furthermore, a search through any electronic database of titles reveals an overwhelming adoption of the term ‘Levant’ when compared to ‘Syria-Palestine’ for archaeological studies. Undoubtedly, this is mostly due to the fact that ‘Syria-Palestine’ is, correctly speaking, the title for a Roman administrative division of the Levant created by Hadrian (Millar 1993). The term ‘Syria-Palestine’ also carries political overtones that inadvertently evoke current efforts to establish a full-fledged Palestinian state. Scholars have recognized, therefore, that—for at least the time being—they can spare themselves further headaches by adopting the term Levant to identify this region”</ref>[[16]](#cite_note-16) The term is also occasionally employed to refer to modern events, peoples, states or parts of states in the same region, namely [Cyprus](/wiki/Cyprus), [Egypt](/wiki/Egypt), [Iraq](/wiki/Iraq), [Israel](/wiki/Israel), [Jordan](/wiki/Jordan), [Lebanon](/wiki/Lebanon), [Palestine](/wiki/State_of_Palestine), [Syria](/wiki/Syria), and [Turkey](/wiki/Turkey) are sometimes considered Levant countries (compare with [Near East](/wiki/Near_East), [Middle East](/wiki/Middle_East), [Eastern Mediterranean](/wiki/Eastern_Mediterranean) and [Western Asia](/wiki/Western_Asia)). Several researchers include the island of [Cyprus](/wiki/Cyprus) in Levantine studies, including the [Council for British Research in the Levant](/wiki/Council_for_British_Research_in_the_Levant),[[17]](#cite_note-17) the [UCLA](/wiki/UCLA) Near Eastern Languages and Cultures department,[[18]](#cite_note-18) [*Journal of Levantine Studies*](/wiki/Journal_of_Levantine_Studies)[[19]](#cite_note-19) and the [UCL](/wiki/University_College_London) Institute of Archaeology,<ref name=UCL>[. The Ancient Levant](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/events/conferences/ancient-levant-2008/AncLevFINAL.doc), [UCL](/wiki/University_College_London) Institute of Archaeology, May 2008</ref> the last of which has dated the connection between Cyprus and mainland Levant to the early [Iron Age](/wiki/Iron_Age). Archaeologists seeking a neutral orientation that is neither biblical nor national have used terms such as [Syro-Palestinian archaeology](/wiki/Syro-Palestinian_archaeology) and archaeology of the southern Levant.<ref name=DeverEncyclopedia>Dever, William G. "Syro-Palestinian and Biblical Archaeology", pp. 1244-1253.</ref><ref name= Sharon>Sharon, Ilan "Biblical archaeology" in *Encyclopedia of Archaeology* Elsevier.</ref>

While the usage of the term "Levant" in academia has been relegated to the fields of archeology and literature, there is a recent attempt to reclaim the notion of the Levant as a category of analysis in political and social sciences. Two academic journals were recently launched: [*Journal of Levantine Studies*](http://www.levantine-journal.org), published by the [Van Leer Jerusalem Institute](/wiki/Van_Leer_Jerusalem_Institute) and *The Levantine Review*, published by [Boston College](/wiki/Boston_College).

[ISIL](/wiki/Islamic_State_of_Iraq_and_the_Levant) has adopted the term "Levant" within the English translation of their self-designation.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

## People, religion, and culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Template:Refimprove section](/wiki/Template:Refimprove_section) The populations of the Levant[[20]](#cite_note-20)[[21]](#cite_note-21)[[22]](#cite_note-22) share not only the geographic position, but cuisine, some customs, and a very long [history](/wiki/Ancient_Near_East). The largest religious group in the Levant are the [Muslims](/wiki/Muslim) and the largest [cultural-linguistic](/wiki/Culture) group are primarily [Arab](/wiki/Arab) due to [Arabization](/wiki/Arabization) of the region over the centuries, but there are also many other groups.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

The majority of Levantines are [Sunni](/wiki/Sunni_Islam), [Salafi](/wiki/Salafi), [nondenominational](/wiki/Non-denominational_Muslim) or [Shia](/wiki/Shia_Islam) [Muslim](/wiki/Muslim). There are also [Jews](/wiki/Jews), [Christians](/wiki/Christians), [Yazidi](/wiki/Yazidi) [Kurds](/wiki/Kurdish_people), [Alawites](/wiki/Alawites), [Nizari](/wiki/Nizari), [Druze](/wiki/Druze), and [Ismailis](/wiki/Ismailism).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Until the creation of the modern [State of Israel](/wiki/Israel) in 1948, [Jews](/wiki/Mizrahi_Jews) lived throughout the Levant alongside Muslims and Christians; since then, almost all have been [expelled from their homes](/wiki/Jewish_exodus_from_Arab_and_Muslim_countries) and sought refuge in Israel.

There are many Levantine Christian groups such as [Greek](/wiki/Greek_Orthodox_Church_of_Antioch) and [Oriental](/wiki/Oriental_Orthodoxy) Orthodox, [Maronite](/wiki/Maronite), [Roman Catholic](/wiki/Latin_Church), and [Protestant](/wiki/Protestantism). [Armenians](/wiki/Armenians) mostly belong to the [Armenian Apostolic Church](/wiki/Armenian_Apostolic_Church). There are [Levantines or Franco-Levantines](/wiki/Levantines_(Latin_Christians)) who are mostly [Roman Catholic](/wiki/Roman_Catholic). There are also [Circassians](/wiki/Circassians), [Turks](/wiki/Turkish_people), [Samaritans](/wiki/Samaritans), and [Nawars](/wiki/Nawar_people). There are [Assyrian peoples](/wiki/Assyrian_people) belonging to the [Assyrian Church of the East](/wiki/Assyrian_Church_of_the_East) (autonomous) and the [Chaldean Catholic Church](/wiki/Chaldean_Catholic_Church) (Catholic).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

## Language[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

Most Levantine populations speak [Levantine Arabic](/wiki/Levantine_Arabic), also known as Mediterranean Arabic (شامي, Šāmī). In Israel, the primary language is [Hebrew](/wiki/Hebrew_language), while Arabic is also an official language (but de facto a minority language). In Cyprus, the majority language is Greek, followed by Turkish, and then a dialect of [Levantine Arabic](/wiki/Levantine_Arabic), [Cypriot Maronite Arabic](/wiki/Cypriot_Maronite_Arabic). Some communities and populations speak [Aramaic](/wiki/Western_Neo-Aramaic), [Greek](/wiki/Greek_language), [Armenian](/wiki/Armenian_language), [Circassian](/wiki/Circassian_language), [French](/wiki/French_language), [English](/wiki/English_language), or other languages in addition to [Levantine Arabic](/wiki/Levantine_Arabic).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[Template:Portal](/wiki/Template:Portal) **Overlapping regional designations**

* [Fertile Crescent](/wiki/Fertile_Crescent)
* [Mashriq](/wiki/Mashriq)
* [Mesopotamia](/wiki/Mesopotamia)
* [Near East](/wiki/Near_East) and [Middle East](/wiki/Middle_East)
* [Western Asia](/wiki/Western_Asia)

**Sub-regional designations**

* [Southern Levant](/wiki/Southern_Levant) and [History of the Southern Levant](/wiki/History_of_the_Southern_Levant)

**Other**

* [French post offices in the Ottoman Empire](/wiki/French_post_offices_in_the_Ottoman_Empire) ("Levant" stamps)
* [History of the Levant](/wiki/History_of_the_Levant)
* [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant](/wiki/Islamic_State_of_Iraq_and_the_Levant) (Referred to in current events as ISIL or ISIS)
* [Levantines (Latin Christians)](/wiki/Levantines_(Latin_Christians)), Catholic Europeans in the Levant
* [Levantine Sea](/wiki/Levantine_Sea)

## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist)

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* [Levantine Heritage](http://www.levantineheritage.com/) site. Includes many oral and scholarly histories, and genealogies for some Levantine Turkish families.
* Philip Mansel, *Levant: Splendour and Catastrophe on the Mediterranean*, London, John Murray, 11 November 2010, hardback, 480 pages, ISBN 978-0-7195-6707-0, New Haven, Yale University Press, 24 May 2011, hardback, 470 pages, ISBN 978-0-300-17264-5

## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[Template:Commons](/wiki/Template:Commons)

* [*France and the Levant*](http://www.wdl.org/en/item/11769/)

[Template:Regions of the world](/wiki/Template:Regions_of_the_world)

[Category:Levant](/wiki/Category:Levant) [Category:Eastern Mediterranean](/wiki/Category:Eastern_Mediterranean) [Category:Mediterranean](/wiki/Category:Mediterranean) [Category:Near East](/wiki/Category:Near_East) [Category:Western Asia](/wiki/Category:Western_Asia) [Category:Geography of Syria](/wiki/Category:Geography_of_Syria) [Category:Geography of Lebanon](/wiki/Category:Geography_of_Lebanon) [Category:Geography of Israel](/wiki/Category:Geography_of_Israel) [Category:Geography of Jordan](/wiki/Category:Geography_of_Jordan) [Category:Geography of Cyprus](/wiki/Category:Geography_of_Cyprus) [Category:Geography of the Palestinian territories](/wiki/Category:Geography_of_the_Palestinian_territories) [Category:Geography of Hatay Province](/wiki/Category:Geography_of_Hatay_Province) [Category:Regions of Asia](/wiki/Category:Regions_of_Asia)