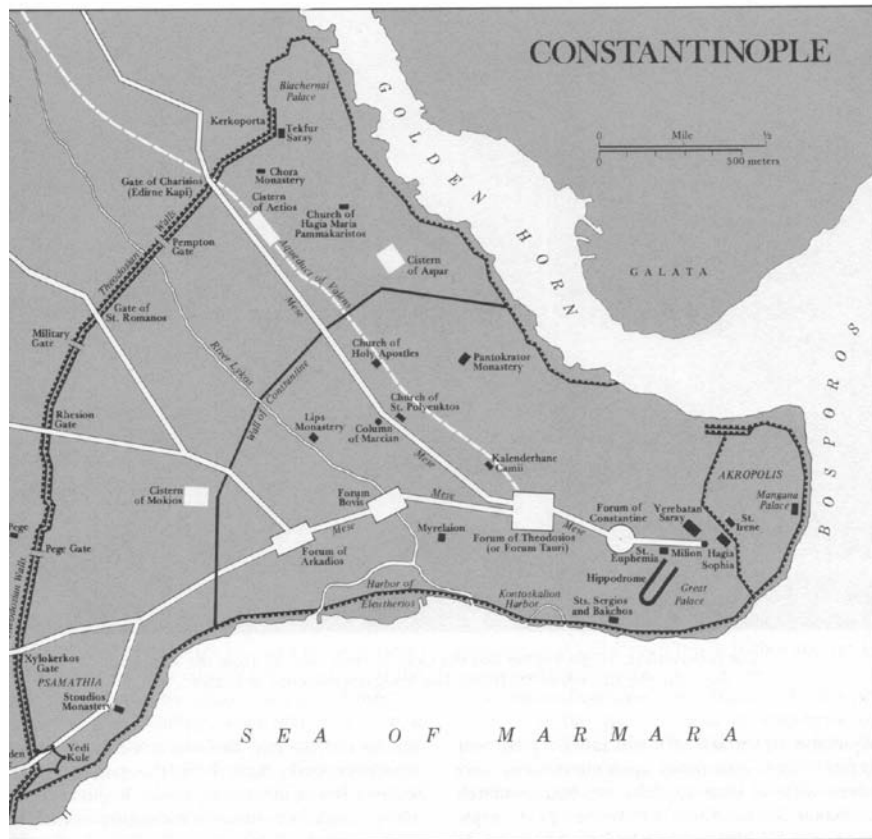


THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE (330-1453)

In 330 A.D. Emperor Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Byzantium (a Greek city in the eastern part of the empire). He renamed the city Constantinople.

The city was surrounded on three sides by water. Constantine added thick walls making it invulnerable to attack. The strategic location, on the Bosphorus Strait (a waterway connecting the Black Sea to the Mediterranean) made it a center for trade and cultural diffusion.



The western part of the Roman Empire collapsed in the 5th century but the eastern part, the Byzantium Empire survived for another thousand years. They maintained an Imperial system of government. They created their own version of Christianity, known as Eastern Orthodox Christianity. This was separate from the Roman Catholic Church. The main language of the Byzantine Empire was Greek.

Reasons for the Survival of the Byzantine Empire

Classic Cultures	Cultural Diffusion of Greek, Roman, Christian and Middle Eastern cultures
Location	At the crossroads of Europe and Asia. A Major trading center for silk and spices from the East, furs from Russia, grains, olives and wines from its own lands.
Strong Central Government	Ruled by series of powerful emperors. A strong central administration with a single set of laws.
Large Army	Merchants and peasants were highly taxed in order to maintain a large standing army

The Byzantine Empire had a great influence on Russia. Russia began as an organized state in the 800s. A group of tribes, known as Slavs came to dominate the region. Viking raiders organized the Slavs into a kingdom, its center being the city of Kiev. Other early cities were Moscow and Novgorod. These Russian cities traded with the Byzantine Empire. This trading led to the adoption of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, the Cyrillic Alphabet and Byzantine crafts and products.

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The absolute power held by the Byzantine emperors became the model for future Russian rulers.

Decline of the Byzantine Empire

In the early centuries it ruled over the Balkans, the Middle East and parts of Italy. Under the Emperor Justinian (527-565) the Byzantines conquered much of the old Roman Empire. However they were always at war with the Slavs and the Avars (to the north), the Persian Empire to the East and the spread of Islam in the South. In the 600s Muslim Arabs took most of the empire's territory in the Middle East.

The final decline of the empire began in the 11th century. The Northern Italian city-states began to compete with Constantinople's trading center. The Seljuk Turks defeated the Byzantines in 1071. They captured most of Asia Minor (except for Constantinople itself). The Byzantines still controlled the Balkans for another 400 years but they were constantly under attack. By the 1440s the great Byzantine Empire was reduced to a small area around Constantinople. The rest of their territories had been taken away by invaders. Finally, in 1453 the city of Constantinople was conquered by the Ottoman Turks.

The Byzantine Legacy

Preserved Ancient Cultures	Classical Roman and Greek texts were saved from the barbarians
Code of Justinian	Roman laws were converted into the Code of Justinian. It greatly influenced western legal systems.
Christianity	The Eastern Orthodox Church was led by a Patriarch and the Emperor in Constantinople rather than by the Pope in Rome.
Defense	The Byzantine Empire was a shield for Western Europe against the spread of Islam and the invasion by Slavs.
Arts	Mosaics, painted icons, jewelry and silks. The Hagia Sophia was built as the cities cathedral.

TIMELINE OF BYZANTINE EMPIRE

- 330 Greek city of Byzantium enlarged.
Renamed by Emperor Constantine I as Constantinople and became the empire's capital in 359. Known as "The City"
- 527 Justinian's reign begins. Conquest of Africa & Italy Codifies Roman Laws. Marries Theodora who co-rules the empire Puts down the Nike rebellion
- 610 Heraclius becomes emperor. Creates the system where soldiers who defend a district are free peasants of that district. They have a stake in their own survival. Fights first Holy War, loses Syria, Palestine, Persia and Egypt.
- 695 Justinian II deposed. Nose cut off and banished
- 705 Justinian II regains throne with help from Slavs and Bulgarians.
- 726 Iconoclastic Controversy – a crusade against the use of icons in the church. By end of 8th century divides the church.
- 860s Missionaries from Constantinople start to convert Bulgarians and Slavs to Christianity. Cyril devises an alphabet for the Slavs (Cyrillic)
- 1054 The Latin Roman Church and the Greek Orthodox Church excommunicate each other
- 1096 Emperor Alexius Comnenus pleads to Pope Urban II for crusaders and subsequently regain the Holy Lands for the empire.
- 1204 Venetians attack Constantinople during Fourth Crusade
- 1261 Venetians turn control to Paleologus Dynasty; empire loses size, economy and freedom
- 1453 Constantine XI & 4,000 troops hold off 160,000 Turks for four weeks but empire collapses and finally Constantinople falls on May 29th.