

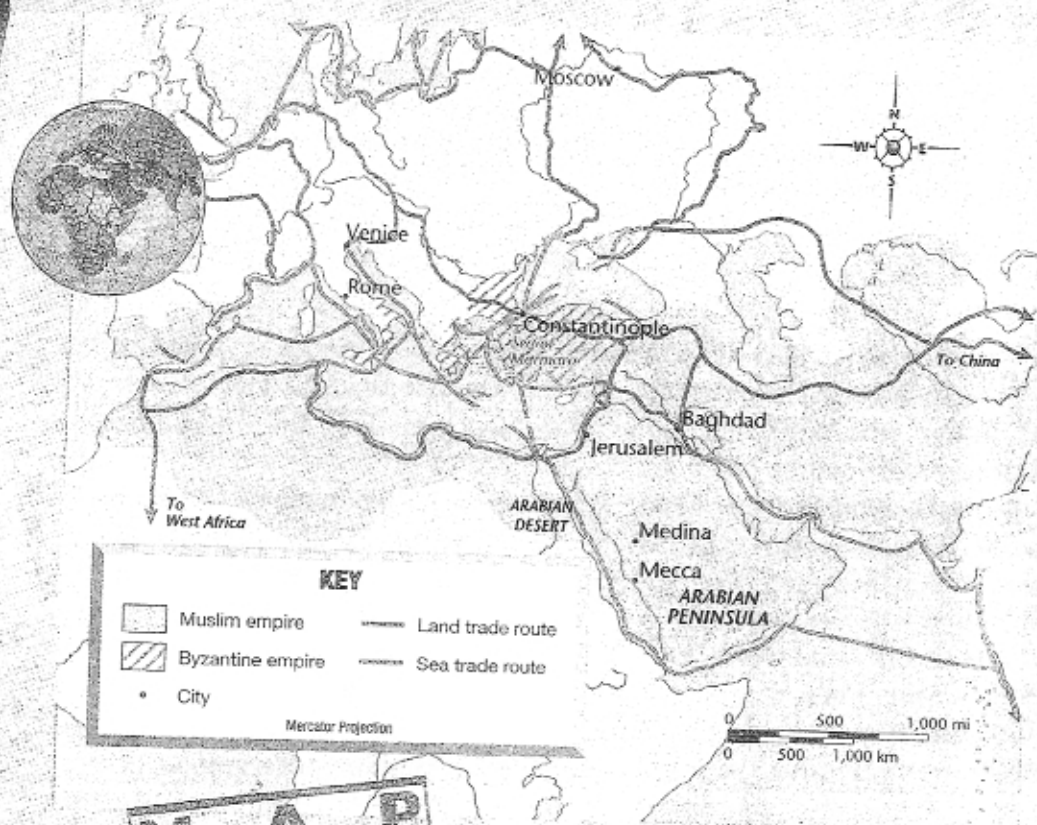
# The Byzantine and Muslim Empires

**Byzantium**  
ROME'S EASTERN  
EMPIRE

**The Rise and  
Spread of Islam**

**The Religion  
of Islam**

**Islam's  
Golden Age**



## MAP ACTIVITIES

*The Byzantine and Muslim empires covered a vast area stretching from Europe to India. The map shows lands and bodies of water that were important to one or both empires. To understand more about these empires, do the following activities.*

### Explore a city

Find Constantinople on the map. Study its location. Why do you think it is described as being at a crossroads between Europe and Asia?

### By land and by sea

Look closely at the map. Notice that some routes are land trade routes and some are sea trade routes. How many places can you find where a land route and a sea route join to become one continuous route?

# Byzantium

## ROME'S EASTERN EMPIRE



**BEFORE  
YOU  
READ**

### Reach Into Your Background

Think of the neighborhood in which you live. What advantages does your neighborhood have because of its location?

Perhaps it is near a shopping mall, a park, or the beach. How important is location to a community?

### Questions to Explore

1. How did the Byzantine empire survive for such a long time?
2. What major contributions did the Byzantine empire make to world culture?

### Key Terms

- strait
- icon
- patriarch
- schism

### Key People and Places

- Justinian
- Moscow
- Constantinople
- Rome
- Venice

**P**rince Igor (EE gor) of Moscow, in what today is Russia, watched as a large force of his warships sailed across the Black Sea in A.D. 941. The prince was sure that Constantinople, capital of the Byzantine empire, would soon be his.

As his fleet drew closer to the city, the prince's excitement turned to horror. Byzantine ships hurled "Greek fire" at the invaders from Moscow. Anything the "fire" touched burst into flames. Soon, most of Prince Igor's fleet was ablaze.

"Greek fire" was made from a formula so secret that it was never written down. Even today, no one knows exactly how it was made, except that it contained petroleum. But this deadly weapon gave the Byzantines tremendous power throughout the Mediterranean area.

▼ This painting was made about 700 years after "Greek fire" was invented. It shows a scene like the one that shocked Prince Igor. "Greek fire" exploded into flame when it contacted water, making it a deadly weapon in sea battles.



In A.D. 330, Constantine, the first Christian emperor of the Roman Empire, moved his capital from Rome to Byzantium. The city was then renamed Constantinople, which means "City of Constantine." Today, the city belongs to the modern country of Turkey and is called Istanbul.

**The Roman Empire Splits into East and West** Perhaps you already know something about the great Roman Empire, from which the Byzantine empire emerged. At its height, the Roman Empire reached all the way from Britain to Egypt.

But even the greatest and most powerful empires do not last forever. In your own lifetime, the world has seen the breakup of an empire called the Soviet Union. Hundreds of years ago, the Roman Empire broke apart. It split into eastern and western divisions.

The western half of the Roman Empire was overrun by invaders in A.D. 476. The eastern half survived as the Byzantine empire until 1453. Why did the Byzantine empire last so long? The simple answer is trade. Because Constantinople was a trading crossroads, the empire remained strong.

The Byzantines also had a strong army, the best in the world. Byzantine fighters used not only "Greek fire," but many other weapons, including stone missiles, to drive back their enemies.

**A Great Emperor** Clever rulers also helped to maintain the empire. Byzantine emperors had much more power than most rulers have today. They thought of themselves as representatives of God on the Earth.

Among the greatest of Byzantine emperors was Justinian, who ruled from 527 to 565. Justinian was not a typical emperor. He was born into a poor family, and he married an actress. He was easygoing and polite with everyone. He never lost his temper, even when provoked. Also, he was ready to listen to the ideas of all his subjects, from the highest noble to the poorest peasant. At the same time, he was very stubborn. His advisers knew that once he had made a decision, there was no point in trying to change his mind.

Justinian ruled long and well. His success was due, in part, to hard work. He had great energy and self-discipline, and rarely gave up on a task until it was completed. Another reason for Justinian's success was his wife, Theodora. As empress, she took an active role in politics. Many of Justinian's most intelligent decisions were made on her advice.

The great Irish poet William Butler Yeats wrote a poem called "Sailing to Byzantium." In it, Byzantium symbolizes a culture that stresses youth and art. Yeats describes an artificial bird made "of hammered gold and gold enameling." Legends said that birds like this "sang" from trees also made of gold. These legends also said that the goldsmiths who made the singing birds came from Greece.

In this mosaic made in the 500s, the Empress Theodora is shown wearing a crown. Theodora is famous for many things, including the work she did to gain rights for Byzantine women.



## Fall of the Byzantine Empire

After Justinian's death in 565, the Byzantine empire began to decline. In 1453, it completely collapsed. This fall was sparked by an argument about politics and religion.

**READ ACTIVELY**

**Ask Questions** Think of questions you might ask about the role of religion in the breakup of the Byzantine empire.

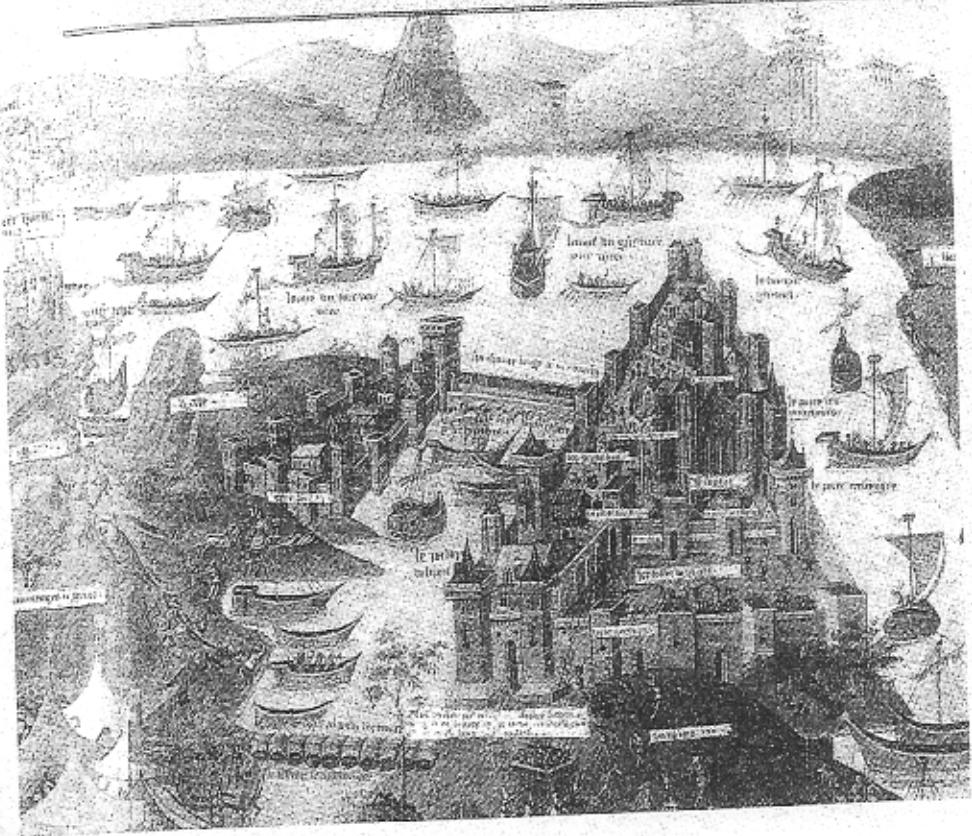
**A Religious Dispute** Most of the people and all of the rulers in the Byzantine empire were Christians. However, they did not agree on how to worship God. Some people prayed to saints or holy people represented on icons, or paintings of these saints or holy people. Others believed that people should pray only to God. The Byzantine empire grew weaker as its people took sides on religious questions.

The religious arguments spread from Constantinople to Rome. The patriarch, leader of the Church in Constantinople, and the pope, leader of the Church in Rome, took opposite sides. In 1054, they each took steps to throw the other out of the Church.

### Holy Paintings

Byzantine Christians treasured icons like this one of Mary and Jesus. They kept these holy paintings in their churches and their homes, where they worshipped and prayed before them. Artists made icons by applying color in hot wax or egg yolk to a board covered with plaster, glue, and cloth. **Critical Thinking** How did the issue of icons help to cause a split in the Christian Church?





In late March, 1453, a force of about 70,000 Ottoman Turks surrounded the city of Constantinople. The defending force, which numbered about 7,000, held out for two months. On May 29, 1453, however, the city fell to the Ottomans. This French painting of the attack shows a key to the Ottoman victory. The Ottomans dragged some of their ships overland and launched them into Constantinople's harbor—practically inside the city.

**Critical Thinking** Why do you think so many different groups of people wanted to gain control of Constantinople?

These acts by the Church's most powerful leaders led to a schism, or split, in the Christian world. Like the Roman Empire, the Church was divided into eastern and western halves. In the Byzantine east, the Church was called Greek Orthodox. In the west, it was called Roman Catholic. The Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches remain separate today.

**The Fall of Constantinople** Splitting from the Roman Catholic Church made the Byzantine empire a target for invasion. Encouraged by the Roman Catholic Church, an army from the west attacked Constantinople in 1204. This army captured, but could not hold, the city. Later, the Italian city of Venice took control of Constantinople. Eventually, in 1453, it was captured by the Ottoman Turks, non-Christian enemies of the Byzantines.

### What the Byzantines Gave Us

Major achievements of the Byzantines affect our world today. Perhaps the most important is a system of laws.

**The Code of Justinian** When Justinian became emperor, laws were completely disorganized. Some laws repeated others. Some laws contradicted each other. The greatest minds in the Byzantine empire could not make sense of the law—much less enforce it.



**CRITICAL THINKING** What happens when you play a game and the rules are not clear and easy to understand?



▲ Hagia Sophia, the largest church in the Byzantine empire, was the greatest monument of Justinian's reign. It took 10,000 workers five years to build the massive church with its 185-foot (56-m) high dome.

Justinian ordered his lawyers to clean up the mess. They worked long and hard to write a summary, called the Code of Justinian, that clearly spelled out the laws and explained their meanings. The Code became the backbone of the legal systems of many European nations.

**Preserving Ancient Knowledge** The Byzantines made another great contribution to our world. They recorded and saved the knowledge of ancient Greece and Rome. The period of Byzantine rule in the east was a period of disorder and destruction in Western Europe. If the Byzantines had not copied and cared for ancient books, Greek and Roman advances in science, mathematics, and health care would have been lost.

## SECTION 1 REVIEW

1. Define (a) strait, (b) icon, (c) patriarch, (d) schism.
2. Identify (a) Justinian, (b) Moscow, (c) Constantinople, (d) Rome, (e) Venice.

3. On what was the power and strength of the Byzantine empire based?
4. How do Byzantine achievements affect the world today?

### Critical Thinking

5. **Drawing Conclusions** Why do you think the disagreement over icons led to the split in the Christian Church?

### Activity

6. **Writing to Learn** You are a foreign visitor to Constantinople. Write a letter to your country's leaders explaining why they might want to gain control of the city.