

# **TransAnatolie 3401: Theodora: 4 Day Cultural Tour in Turkey Istanbul: Cultural Heritage Tour to Turkey: Byzantium, Constantinople, Istanbul: The Capital-City of Byzantium**

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## Day 1: Arrival in Istanbul

Sightseeing city tour, dinner and overnight at the 4 star Armada Hotel. [i](#)

## Day 2: Istanbul

In the morning, discovery of the Golden Horn and of the Pierre Loti area. Visits to Ottoman Imperial Cemetery and Eyüp Mosque. Walks along the Roman-Byzantine city walls and visit the Chora Church and Mihrimah Sultan Mosque.

The great Mosque of Eyüp lies outside the city walls, near the Golden Horn, at the supposed place where Eyüp, the standard bearer of the Prophet Mohammed, died in the Islamic assault on Constantinople in 670 A.D. The first mosque built after the

Ottoman conquest of the city, this greatly venerated shrine attracts many pilgrims.

The Kariye Museum (Chora Church), the 11th century church of "St. Savior" in Chora, is, after St. Sophia, the most important Byzantine monument in Istanbul. Unremarkable in its architecture, inside, the walls are decorated with superb 14th century frescoes and mosaics. Illustrating scenes from the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary, these brilliantly coloured paintings embody the vigour of Byzantine art. Restored wooden houses in the area surrounding the church offer tea and coffee in a relaxed, atmosphere far removed from the city's hectic pace.

Walls of glass fill the four immense arches that support the central dome at the Mihrimah Sultan Mosque inside the Edirne gate of the old city walls. One hundred and sixty-one windows illuminate this mosque, built by Sinan for Mihrimah Sultana, the daughter of Süleyman the Magnificent in 1555.

Lunch is next to the Roman Circus in a well known Turkish-Greek restaurant.

In the afternoon, we visit St. Sofia (Ayasofya) and Topkapi Palace Museums, and the Grand Bazaar.

The Basilica of St. Sophia, now called the Ayasofya Museum, is unquestionably one of the finest buildings of all time. Built by Constantine the Great and reconstructed by Justinian in the 6th century, its immense dome rises 55 meters above the ground and its diameter spans 31 meters. You should linger here to absorb the building's majestic serenity and to admire the fine Byzantine mosaics.

On a spot of land at the confluence of the Bosphorus, the Golden Horn and the Marmara Sea, stands Topkapi Palace, a maze of buildings at the center of the Ottoman Empire between the 15th and 19th centuries. In these opulent surroundings the sultans and their court lived and governed. A magnificent wooded garden fills the outer, or first, court. To the right of the second court, shaded by cypress and plane trees, stand the palace kitchens, now galleries exhibiting the imperial collections of crystal, silver and Chinese porcelain. To the left, the Harem, the secluded quarters of the wives, concubines and children of the sultan, charms visitors with echoes of a centuries old intrigue.

Today, the third court holds the Hall of Audience, the Library of Ahmet III, an exhibition of imperial costumes worn by the sultans and their families, the famous jewels of the treasury and a priceless collection of miniatures from medieval manuscripts. In the center of this innermost sanctuary, the Pavilion of the Holy Mantle enshrines the relics of the Prophet Mohammed brought to Istanbul when the Ottomans assumed the caliphate of Islam

The cascading domes and four slender minarets of Süleymaniye Mosque dominate the skyline on the Golden Horn's west bank. Considered the most beautiful of all imperial mosques in Istanbul, it was built between 1550 and 1557 by Sinan, the renowned architect of the Ottoman golden age. On the crest of a hill, the building is conspicuous by its great size, which the four minarets that rise from each corner of the courtyard emphasize. Inside, the mihrab (prayer niche) and the mimber (pulpit) are of finely carved white marble; fine stained glass windows color the incoming streams of light. It was in the gardens of this complex that Süleyman and his wife Hürrem Sultan, Roxelane, had their mausolea built, and near here also that Sinan built his own tomb. The mosque complex also includes four medrese, or theological schools, a school of medicine, a caravanserai, a Turkish bath, and a kitchen and hospice for the poor.

We dine at Istanbul By Night at Kumkapi and overnight at the 4 star hotel with high QoS. [i](#)

## Day 3: Istanbul

In the morning, visit the Hippodrome, Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum located at the Ibrahim Pascha Palace as well as the Ethnographical Museum in Istanbul.

The dark stone building that houses the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art was built in 1524 by Ibrahim Pasa; Grand Vizier to Süleyman the Magnificent, as his residence. It was the grandest private residence ever built in the Ottoman Empire. Today, it houses a superb collection of ceramics, metalwork miniatures, calligraphy, textiles, and woodwork as well as some of the oldest carpets in the world.

Then we visit the sixth century Byzantine cistern known as the Yerebatan Sarnici. Three hundred and thirty-six massive

Corinthian columns support the immense chamber's fine brick vaulting.

Walking along the Sultan Ahmet Square we arrive in the famous Blue Mosque. Facing St. Sophia stands the supremely elegant, six-minaret, imperial Sultanahmet Mosque. Built between 1609 and 1616 by the architect Mehmet, the building is more familiarly known as the Blue Mosque because its interior gleams with a magnificent paneling of blue and white Iznik tiles. During the summer months an evening light and sound show both entertain and inform.

Before lunch we become familiar with Turkish Cultural Products: carpets and kilims, jewellery and leather. Delicious lunch is at the Mesopotamian restaurant.

In the afternoon, pay a visit to the Old Egyptian Market and Second-Hand Market. We then fully enjoy the wonderful Bosphorus Cruise between two continents Asia and Europe, A stay in Istanbul is not complete without the traditional and unforgettable boat excursion up the Bosphorus, the winding strait that separates Europe and Asia. Its shores offer a delightful mixture of past and present, grand splendor and simple beauty. Modern hotels stand next to yali (shorefront wooden villas), marble palaces abut rustic stone fortresses, and elegant compounds neighbour small fishing villages. During the journey, you pass in front of the magnificent Dolmabahçe Palace; farther along rise the green parks and imperial pavilions of Yildiz Palace. On the edge of this park, on the coast, stands Çiragan Palace, now restored as a grand hotel. Refurbished in 1874 by Sultan Abdülaziz, it stretches for 300 meters along the Bosphorus shore, its ornate marble facades reflecting the swiftly moving water. In Ortaköy, the next stop, artists gather every Sunday to exhibit their works in a streetside gallery. The variety of people create a lively scene; sample a delicious bite from one of the street vendors. In Ortaköy, there is a church, mosque and a synagogue that have existed side by side for hundreds of years - a tribute to Turkish secularism and tolerance. Overshadowing Istanbul's traditional architecture is the Bosphorus Bridge, one of the world's largest suspension bridges linking Europe and Asia.

We finally dine and enjoy the night at our 4 star hotel with high QoS. [i](#)

## Day 4: Istanbul

Breakfast. Free day until the transfer to the Airport. Another TransAnatolie Tour Services end with Turkish Baklava. [i](#)

## Pricing

- For Pricing Click [List of TransAnatolie Turkey Tours, Services and Pricing](#) or
- Contac Us: [Contact Information for TransAnatolie Tour](#) [i](#)

## Optional evening activities

- Special Dinner with show at the Caravanserai Night Club at Galata Tower or at the Orient House Istanbul.
- Turkish Belly Dance [i](#)

## Rates include

- 4 days/3 nights in Istanbul
- 4 Star Armada Hotel (or similar) BB
- Transportation in Istanbul with Mercedes, WW mini-, midi-bus, Prensas 403 (depending on the size of group).
- 2 lunches in Turkish restaurants with specialities, dinner of the 1st arrival date and breakfast of the departure date
- all admission fees to the visits planned
- services of the Professional Certified Guide [i](#)

## Rates exclude

- Flights Europe/Istanbul/Europe
- Insurance
- Airport Tax
- Drinks
- Tips [i](#)

## Links

- Istanbul,
- Byzantium,
- Ottoman Empire
- Museums [i](#)

## Theodora (6th century)

Empress Theodora (c. 500–June 28, 548) was empress of the Byzantine Empire and the wife of Emperor Justinian I 3. Along with her husband, she is a saint in the Orthodox Church, commemorated on November 14.

Theodora was of Greek Cypriot descent, into the lowest class of Byzantine society, the daughter of Acacius, a native of Cyprus who was a bear keeper at the Hippodrome in Constantinople, while her mother, whose name is not recorded, was a dancer and an actress. Much of the information from this earliest part of her life comes from the Secret History of Procopius, published posthumously. Critics of Procopius (whose work reveals a man seriously disillusioned regarding his rulers) have dismissed his work as a severely biased source, vitriolic and pornographic, but have been unable to discredit some of its facts. For example, the sources do not dispute Theodora emerged as a comic actress in burlesque theater, and that her talents tended toward what might be called low physical comedy. While her advancement in Byzantine society was up and down, she made use of every opportunity. She had admirers by the score. Procopius writes that she was a courtesan (and, according to other sources, firstly a prostitute) and briefly served as the mistress of Hecebolus, the governor of Pentapolis, by whom she bore her only child, a son. There was a downside to her repertoire as well; Procopius also repeatedly notes her lack of shame and cites a number of scenes to demonstrate it, and also the low regard in which she was held by respectable society.

Theodora as Empress was associated with the cause of Monophysitism, often acting as an advocate on their behalf. Scholars usually hold that Theodora was converted by Monophysites before meeting Justinian and remained a partisan to that view throughout her life. Other scholars however argue that this association was largely a role assigned to her by Justinian, who courted the Monophysites to finally reunite them to the Church. According to this view, Theodora herself was a Chalcedonian but pastorally favored the Monophysites.

In 523 Theodora married Justinian, the nephew of Emperor Justin I. On his accession to the Roman Imperial throne in 527, he made her joint ruler of the empire, and appears to have regarded her as a full partner in their rulership. This proved to

be a wise decision. A strong-willed woman, she showed a notable talent for governance. In the Nika riots of 532, her advice and leadership for a strong (and militant) response caused the riot to be quelled and probably saved the empire. A contemporary official, Joannes Laurentius Lydus, remarked that she was "superior in intelligence to any man".

Some scholars believe that Theodora was Byzantium's first noted proponent — and, according to Procopius, practitioner — of abortion; she convinced Justinian to change the law that forbade noblemen to marry lower class women (like herself). Theodora also advocated the prohibition of killing adulteress women, and the rights of women to be socially serviced, helping to advance protections and delights for them; and was also something of a voice for former prostitutes and the downtrodden. She also helped to mitigate the breach in Christian sects that loomed large over her time; she probably had a large part in Justinian's efforts to reconcile the Non-Chalcedonians to the Chalcedonian party.

Other scholars (and those who venerate Theodora as a saint) instead regard Theodora's achievements for women not as a "liberation" allowing abortion or adultery but rather as a truly egalitarian drive to give women the same legal rights as men, such as establishing homes for ex-prostitutes, granting women more rights in divorce cases, allowing women to own and inherit property, giving mothers some guardianship rights over their children, and enacting the death penalty for rape, all of which raised women's status far above the status quo.

There were less charitable acts as well. Rumors spoke of private dungeons in her quarters into which people she disapproved of disappeared forever, though such rumors can be found regarding nearly any royal figure. More congenial is the story of how she sheltered a deposed patriarch for 12 years without anyone knowing of it.

Theodora died of an unspecified cancer before the age of 50, some 20 years before Justinian died. It should be noted that there is no documentation to suggest that she died of breast cancer as some scholars have suggested. Her body was buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles, one of the splendid churches the emperor and empress had built in Constantinople. Both Theodora and Justinian are represented in beautiful mosaics that exist to this day in the Basilica of San Vitale at



Ravenna in northern Italy, which was completed a year before her death. [i](#)

## Justinian, Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire

Justinian I or Justinian the Great (Latin: Flavius Petrus Sabbatius Iustinianus. 482/483 – November 13 or November 14, 565) was Eastern Roman Emperor from 527 until his death, and second member of the Justinian Dynasty, after his uncle Justin I. He is considered a saint amongst Eastern Orthodox Christians. He has also sometimes been considered the "Last Roman".

Justinian's rule constitutes a distinct epoch in the history of the Byzantine Empire, the impact of his administration extending far beyond the boundaries of his time and his empire.

Justinian's reign is marked by the ambitious but ultimately failed *renovatio imperii*, "restoration of the empire". This ambition was expressed in the partial recovery of the territories of the Western Roman Empire, including the city of Rome itself; a still more resonant aspect of his legacy was the uniform rewriting of Roman law, the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, which is still the basis of civil law in many modern states. His reign also marked a blossoming of Byzantine culture, and his building program yielded masterpieces such as the church of Hagia Sophia, which was to be the center of Eastern Orthodox Christianity for many centuries. The devastating Plague of Justinian in the early 540's, however, marked the end of an age of splendor; after that, the empire entered a period of decline which would not be reversed until the 9th century. Justinian is considered a saint in the Eastern Orthodox Church and is also commemorated by the Lutheran Church.

Procopius provides our primary source for the history of Justinian's reign. The Syriac chronicle of John of Ephesus, which does not survive, was used as a source for later chronicles, contributing many additional details of value. Both historians became very bitter towards Justinian and his empress, Theodora. Procopius also wrote the *Anekdotia* (the so-called Secret History), which reports on various scandals at Justinian's court. Other sources include the histories of Agathias, Menander Protector, John Malalas, the Paschal

Chronicle, the chronicles of Marcellinus Comes and Victor of Tunnuna. [i](#)

## **Life**

Justinian was born into a Latin-speaking peasant family in a small village called Tauresium (near Justiniana Prima, which he founded later), in what is today the Republic of Macedonia, around 482. He was born as Petrus Sabbatius; the cognomen Justinianus, which he later took, is indicative of adoption by his uncle Justin. His mother was Vigilantia, the sister of Justin, who was in the imperial guard (the Excubitors) before he became emperor. Justin adopted Justinian, brought him to Constantinople, and ensured the boy's education. As a result, Justinian was well educated in jurisprudence, theology and Roman history. Justinian served for some time with the Excubitors but the details of his early career are unknown. When Emperor Anastasius died in 518, Justin was proclaimed the new emperor, with significant help from Justinian. During Justin's reign (518-527), Justinian was the emperor's close confidant. Justinian showed a lot of ambition, and it has been thought that he was functioning as virtual regent long before Justin made him associate emperor on April 1, 527, although there is no conclusive evidence for this. As Justin became senile near the end of his reign, Justinian became the de facto ruler. Justinian was appointed consul in 521, and later commander of the army of the east. Upon Justin I's death on August 1, 527, Justinian became the sole sovereign. The Barberini Ivory, which is thought to portray either Justinian or Anastasius I. As a ruler, Justinian showed great energy. He was known as "the Emperor who never sleeps" on account of his work habits. Nevertheless, he seems to have been amenable and easy to approach. Justinian's family came from a lowly and provincial background, and therefore he had no power base in the traditional aristocracy of Constantinople. Instead, he surrounded himself with men and women of extraordinary talent, whom he selected not on the basis of aristocratic origin, but on the basis of merit. Around 525 he married Theodora, who was by profession a courtesan about 20 years his junior. Justinian would have, in earlier times, been unable to marry her because of her class, but his uncle

Emperor Justin I had passed a law allowing intermarriage between social classes. Theodora would become very influential in the politics of the Empire, and later emperors would follow Justinian's precedent in marrying outside the aristocratic class. The marriage caused a scandal, but Theodora would prove to be very intelligent, "street smart", a good judge of character and Justinian's greatest supporter. Other talented individuals included Tribonian, his legal adviser; his finance ministers John the Cappadocian and Peter Barsymes, who managed to collect taxes more efficiently than any before, thereby funding Justinian's wars; and finally, his talented general Belisarius. Also Justinian inherited 400,000 pounds of gold in the treasury from Anastasius I and Justin I. Justinian's rule was not universally popular; early in his reign he almost lost his throne during the Nika riots, and a conspiracy against the emperor's life by dissatisfied businessmen was discovered as late as 562. Justinian was struck by the plague in the early 540's, but recovered. Theodora died, perhaps of cancer, in 548, at a relatively young age, and Justinian outlived her by almost twenty years. Justinian, who had always had a keen interest in theological matters and actively participated in debates on Christian doctrine, became even more devoted to religion during the later years of his life. When he died, on the night of November 13-November 14, 565, he left no children. He was succeeded by Justin II, the son of his sister Vigilantia, who was married to Sophia, the niece of Empress Theodora. Justinian's body was entombed in a specially built mausoleum in the Church of the Holy Apostles. [i](#)

### **Legislative activities**

Justinian achieved lasting fame through his judicial reforms, particularly through the complete revision of all Roman law, something that had not previously been attempted. The total of Justinian's legislature is known today as the Corpus juris civilis. It consists of the Codex Justinianus, the Digesta or Pandectae, the Institutiones, and the Novellae.

Early in his reign, Justinian appointed the quaestor Tribonian to oversee this task. The first draft of the Codex Justinianus, a codification of imperial constitutions from the 2nd century onward, was issued on April 7, 529. (The final version

appeared in 534.) It was followed by the *Digesta* (or *Pandectae*), a compilation of older legal texts, in 533, and by the *Institutiones*, a textbook explaining the principles of law. The *Novellae*, a collection of new laws issued during Justinian's reign, supplements the *Corpus*. As opposed to the rest of the *corpus*, the *Novellae* appeared in Greek, the common language of the Eastern Empire; Latin, the traditional language of the Roman Empire, was only poorly understood by most citizens of the Eastern Empire.

The *Corpus* forms the basis of Latin jurisprudence (including ecclesiastical Canon Law) and, for historians, provides a valuable insight into the concerns and activities of the later Roman Empire. As a collection it gathers together the many sources in which the *leges* (laws) and the other rules were expressed or published: proper laws, senatorial consults (*senatusconsulta*), imperial decrees, case law, and jurists' opinions and interpretations (*responsa prudentum*).

Tribonian's law code ensured the survival of Roman law. It formed the basis of later Byzantine law, as expressed in the *Basilica* of Basil I and Leo VI the Wise. The only western province where the Justinianic code was introduced was Italy (after the conquest, by the so-called Pragmatic Sanction of 554), from where it was to pass to Western Europe in the 12th century and become the basis of much European law code. It eventually passed to Eastern Europe where it appeared in Slavic editions, and it also passed on to Russia. It remains influential to this day. [i](#)

## **Nika riots**

Justinian's habit of choosing efficient, but unpopular advisors nearly cost him his throne early in his reign. In January 532, partisans of the chariot racing factions in Constantinople, normally divided among themselves, united against Justinian in a revolt that has become known as the Nika riots. They forced him to dismiss Tribonian and two of his other ministers, and then attempted to overthrow Justinian himself and replace him by the senator Hypatius, who was a nephew of the late emperor Anastasius. While the crowd was rioting in the streets, Justinian considered fleeing the capital, but he remained in the city on the advice of Theodora. Shortly thereafter he ordered

the brutal suppression of the riots by his generals Belisarius and Mundus. Procopius relates that 30,000 unarmed civilians were killed in the Hippodrome. Justinian had Anastasius' nephews executed.

The destruction that had taken place during the revolt provided Justinian with an opportunity to tie his name to a series of splendid new buildings, notably the domed Hagia Sophia.

Military activities

One of the most spectacular features of Justinian's reign was the recovery of large stretches of land around the Western Mediterranean basin which had slipped out of imperial control in the 5th century. As a Christian Roman emperor, Justinian considered it his divine duty to restore the Roman Empire to its ancient boundaries. Although he never personally took part in military campaigns, he boasted of his successes in the prefaces to his laws and had them commemorated in art. The reconquests were in large part carried out by his general Belisarius.

From his uncle, Justinian inherited ongoing hostilities with the Sassanid Empire. In 530 a Persian army was defeated at Daraa, but the next year saw the defeat of Roman forces under Belisarius near Callinicum. When king Kavadh I of Persia died (September 531), Justinian concluded an "Eternal Peace" (which cost him 11,000 pounds of gold) with his successor Khosrau I (532). Having thus secured his eastern frontier, Justinian turned his attention to the West, where Arian Germanic kingdoms had been established in the territories of the former Western Roman Empire. [i](#)

### **Conquest of North Africa, 533–534**

The first of the western kingdoms Justinian attacked was that of the Vandals in North Africa. King Hilderic, who had maintained good relations with Justinian and the North African Catholic clergy, had been overthrown by his cousin Gelimer in 530. Imprisoned, the deposed king appealed to Justinian. In 533, Belisarius with a fleet of 92 dromons escorting 500 transports, landed at Caput Vada (modern Ras Kaboudia) in modern Tunisia with an army of about 15,000 men, as well as a number of barbarian troops. They defeated the Vandals, who were caught completely off-guard, at Ad Decimum on 14

September 533 and Tricamarum in December; Belisarius took Carthage. King Gelimer fled to Mount Pappua in Numidia, but surrendered the next spring. He was taken to Constantinople, where he was paraded in a triumph. Sardinia and Corsica, the Balearic Islands, and the stronghold Septem near Gibraltar were recovered in the same campaign.

An African prefecture was established in April 534, but it would teeter on the brink of collapse during the next 15 years, amidst warfare with the Moors and military mutinies. The area was not completely pacified until 548, but remained peaceful thereafter and enjoyed a measure of prosperity. The recovery of Africa cost the empire about 100,000 pounds of gold. [i](#)

### **War in Italy, first phase, 535–540**

As in Africa, dynastic struggles in Ostrogothic Italy provided an opportunity for intervention. The young king Athalaric had died on 2 October 534, and a usurper, Theodahad, had imprisoned queen Amalasantha, Theodoric's daughter and mother of Athalaric, on an island in Lake Bolsena, where he had her assassinated in 535. Thereupon Belisarius with 7,500 men<sup>[27]</sup> invaded Sicily (535) and advanced into Italy, sacking Naples and capturing Rome on 9 December 536. By that time Theodahad had been deposed by the Ostrogothic army, who had elected Vitigis as their new king. He gathered a large army and besieged Rome from February 537 to March 538 without being able to retake the city. Justinian sent another general, Narses, to Italy, but tensions between Narses and Belisarius hampered the progress of the campaign. Milan was taken, but was soon recaptured and razed by the Ostrogoths. Justinian recalled Narses in 539. By then the military situation had turned in favour of the Romans, and in 540 Belisarius reached the Ostrogothic capital Ravenna. There he was offered the title of Western Roman Emperor by the Ostrogoths at the same time that envoys of Justinian were arriving to negotiate a peace which would leave the region north of the river Po in Gothic hands. Belisarius feigned to accept the offer, entered the city in May 540, and reclaimed it for the Empire. Then, having been recalled by Justinian, Belisarius returned to Constantinople, taking the captured Vitigis and his wife Matasuentha with him. [i](#)

## **War with the Sassanid Empire, 540–562**

Modern or early modern drawing of a medallion celebrating the reconquest of Africa, c. 535. Belisarius had been recalled in the face of renewed hostilities by the Persians. Following a revolt against Byzantium in Armenia in the late 530s and possibly motivated by the pleas of Ostrogothic ambassadors, king Khosrau I broke the "Eternal Peace" and invaded Roman territory in the spring of 540.<sup>[29]</sup> He first sacked Beroea and then Antioch (allowing the garrison of 6,000 men to leave the city), besieged Daras, and then went on to attack the small but strategically significant satellite kingdom of Lazica near the Black Sea, exacting tribute from the towns he passed along his way. He forced Justinian I to pay him 5,000 pounds of gold, plus 500 pounds of gold more each year.

Belisarius arrived in the East in 541, but, after some success, was again recalled to Constantinople in 542. The reasons for his withdrawal are not known, but it may have been instigated by rumours of disloyalty on behalf of the general reaching the court. The outbreak of the plague caused a lull in the fighting during the year 543. The following year Khosrau defeated a Byzantine army of 30,000 men, but unsuccessfully besieged the major city of Edessa. Both parties made little headway, and in 545 a truce was agreed upon for the southern part of the Roman-Persian frontier. After that the Lazic War in the North continued for several years, until a second truce in 557, followed by a Fifty Years' Peace in 562. Under its terms, the Persians agreed to abandon Lazica in exchange for an annual tribute of 400 or 500 pounds of gold (30,000 solidi) to be paid by the Romans. [i](#)

## **War in Italy, second phase, 541–552**

While military efforts were directed to the East, the situation in Italy took a turn for the worse. Under their respective kings Ildibad and Eraric (both murdered in 541) and especially Totila, the Ostrogoths made quick gains. After a victory at Faenza in 542, they reconquered the major cities of Southern Italy and soon held almost the entire peninsula. Belisarius was sent back to Italy late in 544, but lacked sufficient troops. Making no headway, he was relieved of his command in 548. Belisarius

succeeded in defeating a Gothic fleet with 200 ships. During this period the city of Rome changed hands three more times, first taken and depopulated by the Ostrogoths in December 546, then reconquered by the Byzantines in 547, and then again by the Goths in January 550. Totila also plundered Sicily and attacked the Greek coastlines. Finally, Justinian dispatched a force of approximately 35,000 men (2,000 men were detached and sent to invade southern Visigothic Spain) under the command of Narses. The Byzantine Roman army reached Ravenna in June 552, and defeated the Ostrogoths decisively within a month at the battle of Busta Gallorum in the Apennines, where Totila was slain. After a second battle at Mons Lactarius in October that year, the resistance of the Ostrogoths was finally broken. In 554, a large-scale Frankish invasion was defeated at Casilinum, and Italy secured for the Empire, even though it would take Narses several years to reduce the remaining Gothic strongholds. The recovery of Italy cost the empire about 300,000 pounds of gold.

#### Other campaigns

In addition to the other conquests, the Eastern Empire established a presence in Visigothic Spain, when the usurper Athanagild requested assistance in his rebellion against king Agila. In 552, Justinian dispatched a force under the octogenarian Liberius, who had served under the Ostrogoth kings of Italy since the 490s. The Byzantines took Cartagena and other cities on the southeastern coast and founded the new province of Spania before being checked by their former ally Athanagild, who had by now become king. This campaign marked the apogee of Byzantine expansion.

During Justinian's reign, the Balkans suffered from several incursions by the Turkic and Slavic peoples who lived north of the Danube. Here, Justinian resorted mainly to a combination of diplomacy and a system of defensive works. In 559 a particularly dangerous invasion of Sklavinoi and Kutrigurs under their khan Zabergan threatened Constantinople, but they were repulsed by the aged general Belisarius. [i](#)

## Results

The enlargement of the Byzantine Empire's territory between the rise to power of Justinian (red, 527) and his death (orange,



565) Justinian's ambition to restore the Roman Empire to its former glory was only partly realised. In the West, the brilliant early military successes of the 530s were followed by years of stagnation. The dragging war with the Goths was a disaster for Italy, even though its long-lasting effects may have been less severe than is sometimes thought. The heavy taxes that the administration imposed upon its population were deeply resented. While the final victory in Italy and the conquest of the coast of southern Spain significantly enlarged the area over which Byzantium could project its power and influence, and while they must have contributed to the empire's prestige, most of the conquests proved ephemeral. The greater part of Italy would be lost to the invading Lombards three years after Justinian's death (568), and within a century and a half Africa and Spain were forever lost for the empire.

Events of the later years of the reign showed that Constantinople itself was not safe from barbarian incursions from the north, and even the relatively benevolent historian Menander Protector felt the need to explain the emperor's failure to protect the capital from the weakness of his body in his old age. In his efforts to renew the old Roman Empire, Justinian dangerously stretched the resources of the Eastern Empire while failing to take into account the changed realities of 6th-century Europe. Paradoxically, Justinian's military successes probably contributed to the empire's subsequent decline. [i](#)

## **Religious activities**

### **Religious policy**

Justinian was one of the first emperors to be depicted wielding the cross on the obverse of a coin. Justinian I, depicted on an AE Follis coin. As with his secular administration, despotism appeared also in the emperor's ecclesiastical policy. He regulated everything, both in religion and in law.

At the very beginning of his reign, he deemed it proper to promulgate by law the Church's belief in the Trinity and the Incarnation; and to threaten all heretics with the appropriate penalties; whereas he subsequently declared that he intended

to deprive all disturbers of orthodoxy of the opportunity for such offense by due process of law. He made the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan creed the sole symbol of the Church, and accorded legal force to the canons of the four ecumenical councils. The bishops in attendance at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 recognized that nothing could be done in the Church contrary to the emperor's will and command; while, on his side, the emperor, in the case of the Patriarch Anthimus, reinforced the ban of the Church with temporal proscription. Justinian protected the purity of the church by suppressing heretics. He neglected no opportunity for securing the rights of the Church and clergy, for protecting and extending monasticism. He granted the monks the right to inherit property from private citizens and the right to receive solemnities or annual gifts from the imperial treasury or from the taxes of certain provinces and he prohibited lay confiscation on monastic estates.

Although the despotic character of his measures is contrary to modern sensibilities, he was indeed a "nursing father" of the Church. Both the Codex and the Novellae contain many enactments regarding donations, foundations, and the administration of ecclesiastical property; election and rights of bishops, priests and abbots; monastic life, residential obligations of the clergy, conduct of divine service, episcopal jurisdiction, etc. Justinian also rebuilt the Church of Hagia Sophia (which cost 20,000 pounds of gold), the original site having been destroyed during the Nika riots. The new Hagia Sophia, with its numerous chapels and shrines, gilded octagonal dome, and mosaics, became the centre and most visible monument of Eastern Orthodoxy in Constantinople. [i](#)

## **Religious relations with Rome**

From the middle of the fifth century onward increasingly arduous tasks confronted the emperors of the East in ecclesiastical matters. For one thing, the radicals on all sides felt themselves constantly repelled by the creed adopted by the Council of Chalcedon to defend the biblical doctrine of the nature of Christ and bridge the gap between the dogmatic parties. The letter of Pope Leo I to Flavian of Constantinople was widely considered in the East as the work of Satan; so that

nobody cared to hear of the Church of Rome. The emperors, however, had a policy of preserving the unity between Constantinople and Rome; and this remained possible only if they did not swerve from the line defined at Chalcedon. In addition, the factions in the East which had become stirred up and disaffected because of Chalcedon needed restraining and pacifying. This problem proved the more difficult because, in the East, the dissenting groups exceeded supporters of Chalcedon both in numerical strength and in intellectual ability. Tension from the incompatibility of the two aims grew: whoever chose Rome and the West must renounce the East, and vice versa.

Justinian entered the arena of ecclesiastical statecraft shortly after his uncle's accession in 518, and put an end to the Monophysite schism that had prevailed between Rome and Byzantium since 483. The recognition of the Roman see as the highest ecclesiastical authority remained the cornerstone of his Western policy. Offensive as it was to many in the East, nonetheless Justinian felt himself entirely free to take a Despotic stance toward the popes such as Silverius and Vigilius. While no compromise could ever be accepted by the dogmatic wing of the church, his sincere efforts at reconciliation gained him the approval of the major body of the church. A signal proof was his attitude in the Theopaschite controversy. At the outset he was of the opinion that the question turned on a quibble of words. By degrees, however, Justinian came to understand that the formula at issue not only appeared orthodox, but might also serve as a conciliatory measure toward the Monophysites, and he made a vain attempt to do this in the religious conference with the followers of Severus of Antioch, in 533.

Again, Justinian moved toward compromise in the religious edict of March 15, 533, and congratulated himself that Pope John II admitted the orthodoxy of the imperial confession. The serious blunder that he had made at the beginning by abetting a severe persecution of the Monophysite bishops and monks and thereby embittering the population of vast regions and provinces, he remedied eventually. His constant aim now remained to win over the Monophysites, yet not to surrender the Chalcedonian faith. For many at court, he did not go far enough: Theodora especially would have rejoiced to see the

Monophysites favoured unreservedly. Justinian, however, felt restrained by the complications that would have ensued with the West. But in the condemnation of the Three Chapters Justinian tried to satisfy both the East and the West, but succeeded in satisfying neither. Although the pope assented to the condemnation, the West believed that the emperor had acted contrary to the decrees of Chalcedon. Though many delegates emerged in the East subservient to Justinian, many, especially the Monophysites, remained unsatisfied; all the more bitter for him because during his last years he took an even greater interest in theological matters. [i](#)

### **Suppression of non-Christian religions**

Justinian was one of the first emperors to be depicted wielding the cross on the obverse of a coin. Justinian's religious policy reflected the imperial conviction that the unity of the Empire unconditionally presupposed unity of faith; and it appeared to him obvious that this faith could be only the Orthodox (Nicaean). Those of a different belief had to recognize that the process of consolidation, which imperial legislation had effected from the time of Constantius II, would now vigorously continue. The Codex contained two statutes which decreed the total destruction of paganism, even in private life; these provisions were zealously enforced. Contemporary sources (John Malalas, Theophanes, John of Ephesus) tell of severe persecutions, even of men in high position.

Perhaps the most noteworthy event occurred in 529 when the Neoplatonic Academy of Athens was placed under state control by order of Justinian, effectively strangling this training-school for Hellenism. Paganism was actively suppressed. In Asia Minor alone, John of Ephesus claimed to have converted 70,000 pagans. Other peoples also accepted Christianity: the Heruli, the Huns dwelling near the Don, the Abasgi, and the Tzani in Caucasia.

The worship of Amun at Augila in the Libyan desert was abolished; and so were the remnants of the worship of Isis on the island of Philae, at the first cataract of the Nile. The Presbyter Julian and the Bishop Longinus conducted a mission among the Nabataeans, and Justinian attempted to strengthen Christianity in Yemen by despatching a bishop from Egypt.

The Jews, too, had to suffer; for not only did the authorities restrict their civil rights, and threaten their religious privileges, but the emperor interfered in the internal affairs of the synagogue, and forbade, for instance, the use of the Hebrew language in divine worship. The recalcitrant were threatened with corporal penalties, exile, and loss of property. The Jews at Borium, not far from Syrtis Major, who resisted Belisarius in his Vandal campaign, had to embrace Christianity; their synagogue became a church.

The emperor had much trouble with the Samaritans, finding them refractory to Christianity and repeatedly in insurrection. He opposed them with rigorous edicts, but yet could not prevent hostilities towards Christians from taking place in Samaria toward the close of his reign. The consistency of Justinian's policy meant that the Manicheans too suffered severe persecution, experiencing both exile and threat of capital punishment. At Constantinople, on one occasion, not a few Manicheans, after strict inquisition, were executed in the emperor's very presence: some by burning, others by drowning. [i](#)

### **Building activities, learning, art and literature**

Justinian was a prolific builder; the historian Procopius bears witness to his activities in this area. Under Justinian's patronage the San Vitale in Ravenna, which features two famous mosaics representing Justinian and Theodora, was completed. Most notably, he had the Hagia Sophia, originally a basilica style church that had been burnt down during the Nika riots, splendidly rebuilt according to a completely different ground plan. This new cathedral, with its magnificent dome filled with mosaics, remained the centre of eastern Christianity for centuries. Another prominent church in the capital, the Church of the Holy Apostles, which had been in a very poor state near the end of the 5th century, was likewise rebuilt. Works of embellishment were not confined to churches alone: excavations at the site of the Great Palace of Constantinople have yielded several high-quality mosaics dating from Justinian's reign, and a column topped by a (now lost) bronze statue of Justinian on horseback and dressed in a military costume was erected in the Augustaeum in Constantinople in

543. It is possible that rivalry with other, more established patrons from the Constantinopolitan aristocracy may have enforced Justinian's building activities in the capital.

Justinian also strengthened the borders of the empire through the construction of fortifications, and assured Constantinople of its water supply through construction of underground cisterns. During his reign a bridge over the river Sangarius was built, securing a major trade route. Furthermore, Justinian restored cities damaged by earthquake or war and built a new city near his place of birth called Justiniana Prima.

In Justinian's era, and partly under his patronage, Byzantine culture produced noteworthy historians, including Procopius and Agathias, and poets such as Paul the Silentiary and Romanus the Melodist flourished during his reign. On the other hand, centers of learning as the Platonic Academy in Athens and the famous law school of Beirut lost their importance during his reign. Another ancient institution, the Roman consulate, was abolished in 541. [i](#)

### **Economy and administration**

As was the case under Justinian's predecessors, the empire's economic health rested primarily on agriculture. In addition long-distance trade flourished, reaching as far north as Cornwall where tin was exchanged for Roman corn. Within the empire, convoys sailing from Alexandria provided Constantinople with corn, and Justinian made the traffic more efficient by building a large granary on the island of Tenedos for storage and further transport to Constantinople. Justinian also tried to find new routes for the eastern trade, which was suffering badly from the wars with the Persians. One important luxury product was silk, which was imported and then processed in the empire. In order to protect the manufacture of silk products, Justinian granted a monopoly to the imperial factories in 541. In order to bypass the Persian landroute, Justinian established friendly relations with the Abyssinians, whom he wanted to act as trade mediators by transporting Indian silk to the empire; the Abyssinians, however, were unable to compete with the Persian merchants in India. Then, in the early 550s, two monks succeeded in smuggling eggs of

silk worms from Central Asia back to Constantinople, and silk became an indigenous Byzantine product.

Under Justinian's rule, measures were taken to counter corruption in the provinces and to make tax collection more efficient. Greater administrative power was given to both the leaders of the prefectures and of the provinces, while power was taken away from the vicariates of the dioceses, of which a number were abolished. The overall trend was towards a simplification of administrative infrastructure. According to Brown, the increased professionalisation of tax collection did much to destroy the traditional structures of provincial life, as it weakened the autonomy of the town councils in the Greek towns.

Throughout Justinian's reign, the cities and villages of the East prospered, although Antioch was struck by two earthquakes (526, 528) and sacked and evacuated by the Persians (540). Justinian had the city rebuilt, but on a slightly smaller scale. Despite all these measures, the empire suffered several major setbacks in the course of the 6th century. The first one was the plague, which lasted from 541 to 543 and, by decimating the empire's population, probably created a scarcity of labour and a rising of wages. The lack of manpower also led to a significant increase in the number of "barbarians" in the Byzantine armies after the early 540s. The protracted war in Italy and the wars with the Persians themselves laid a heavy burden on the empire's resources, and Justinian was criticized for curtailing the government-run post service, which he limited to only one eastern route of military importance. Also under Justinian I, the army which had once numbered 645,000 men in Roman times, shrank to 150,000 men. [i](#)

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