

Byzantine and the impact of islam

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



Byzantine is a Roman empire or the empire of Greeks in the Middle East. The history of Byzantine is a continuous line from the latter centuries of Rome to the very beginning of the modern time. It's about the culture of the Greece and Rome that has a unique cultural history based on synthesis of Roman, European and Islamic elements when it suffered three crisis of external invasion, internal civil war and economy that later made the administrative center less important. (Bury, J. B. 1989).

The emperor of Byzantine Empire was Justinian who occupied territories by the Goths and the main occupants of the empire were Christians, but after the fall of Rome; Christians who were horribly persecuted by the Byzantines welcomed the Muslims conquerors with open arms just to tolerate their religion. (Barker, J. W. 1966) By the time Justinian resigned Byzantine was in a financial crisis. Later Heraclius succeeded him. When the throne was assumed, a forty-year old Arab named Muhammad swept the streets with messages of Islam across the entire empire.

At the end of his regime Muhammad's message came to pass and Muslims armies emerged and started making raids into Byzantine territory in Syria and began to conquer the Persian territories. (Bury, J. B. 1989) Because of the disaffected populations of Christians and Jews who had been persecuted earlier, the Muslim quickly conquered Byzantine territories in the ninth century. Their victory did not last long because of the Islamic government under Caliph deteriorated and Byzantines started to dominate the Asia Minor and by the tenth century they reconquered most of Syria and became more powerful and influential again.

The crusaders The Byzantines however sought help from the Europe against the Muslims conquerors. Europe decided to assist them despite their cultural differences as they shared a common religion with the Byzantines. In 1204 the crusaders attacked the city of Constantinople a goal that the Muslims had been trying to conquer for centuries and conquered the Muslims. In 1261 the Byzantine Empire ceased to be an empire and was known as a small kingdom that later in 1453, the Constantinople city was permanently conquered by the Ottoman Turks and was renamed Istanbul.

(Diehl, C. (1957) Byzantine Christianity Byzantine Christianity was a different religion from the Latin Christianity, what made it look different was the role of the emperor in matters regarding the faith. While for the Latin Christians the pope in matters of faith was almost solidified. Later the Byzantines inherited the roman idea and practiced a form of Christianity whereby theological authority was vested in the emperor. Through this theological authority it created a permanent breach in the world of Christianity between the west and the east.

The breach was to produce iconoclastic controversy that the worship of images and icons was a sign of pagan belief. Only Christ and God should be worshiped this was angulated by Leo the saurian who had turned the tide against the Muslim in 717. The collapse of the Byzantine empire in 1453 saw the Russians believe that they were inheritors of the Byzantine empire and later began the roman empire. (Amis, R1995).

Byzantium Empire and impact of Islam

The Byzantine Empire was able to survive for a period of time though not easily achieved through Heraculius some of the empires were kept together

despite confrontation on the three sides of empire, and was able to save the empire from the Muslim. (Diehl, C. (1957) His effort worked but his 200, 000 troops were killed and a lot of wealth lost during the war with the Persians. After the fight with the Persian he thought of rebuilding the empire but this was not to be as the empire was again attacked by another threat of Islam. The Muslims again got the opportunity to invade Persia and the Byzantine and this surprised both of them.

The Persia and the Byzantine Empire did not have strength to fight back the Muslims attacks and this paved way for Muslims to conquer the eastern provinces of the Byzantines. (Bury, J. B. 1989) The Muslims invasion in the empire weakened the internal division and many Christians wanted to keep their faith and always looked upon religious sects as heretics. Most of them who were persecuted to them life under Islam was good compared to Byzantines because Muslims did not look down upon other religion and this resulted to Muslims being welcomed to Byzantine Empire.

Finally when Heraculius died the Muslim got opportunity to conquer the eastern provinces of Byzantine Empire. In the 14th and 15th centuries Islam was already being accepted by the Albanians and later it was in quick acceptance by other nations. . (Diehl, C. (1957) After the death of Mohammed Islam spread very fast and outside Arabia its spread was aided by various political upheavals. The long series of wars between the Byzantine and Persian empires is always credited for this fast spread in the near east especially after the triumph of the Muslims.

The Byzantine Empire had the character of imposing Christianity on the population it conquered, for this reason the Syrians and the Egyptians

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resented and resisted the attempts made by the Byzantine Empire to impose Christianity on them. (Diehl, C 1957) Therefore when the Muslims came to these particular areas they were readily accepted to forestall any attempts that the Byzantine were trying to make, this led to the fall of Syria to the Arab armies to be followed soon by the fall of Iraq and Persia with Egypt falling in 640 AD with very little resistance.

With this conquest Islam soon spread to most territories of the Near East and Africa. (Diehl, C. 1957) In the Byzantine Empire there was fierce fanaticism that included interdenominational strife and religious persecution amongst the Christians themselves, compared with the practice and the doctrine of the Islamic faith that tolerated other religions it endeared itself to others. For example the Byzantines brutally attempted to suppress Christian sects who questioned the established Church.

Also there was oppression of the peasants who were heavily taxed. The Empire also suppressed non-orthodox Christian teachings. Opposition to Islam after the conquest was weakened by the fact that under the Muslims, taxes were not very heavy like before and the non-orthodox Christian sects could now operate comfortably. (Diehl, C 1957) The spread of Islam in the better part of Middle East was made possible by Arab victories over Byzantine armies. The Byzantines were the major enemies to be encountered by the Aryans from the Arabian Desert.

The encounter with the Byzantines was the first of many major battles between Muslims and Christians. It was Omar who acted as Caliph or head of the Moslem community in 634-44AD that initiated the fast expansion of the Arabs and Islam. Omar achieved the first great successes of Arab armies

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outside of the Arabian Peninsula when he conquered the Byzantine Empire ruled by the Emperor Heraclius. Omar's armies attacked Syria, seizing large areas. In 636AD at the Battle of Yarmuk the Byzantine Army were greatly humiliated by the Arabs when they defeated them.

This saw the Arabs entering Jerusalem and Damascus in 638. It was during these period that it is believed Christianity replaced Christianity in this particular area as a result of the weakness of the Byzantine Empire. Arab rulers imposed a personal tax on all non-Muslims, which encouraged many to convert to the Muslim Faith. In the new Caliphate there was no forced conversions but happened later. At first the Arabs did not consider converting anyone because of the taxes they collected which provided great incomes.

(Diehl, C 1957) Cultural and intellectual factor Islam as a religion does not recognize superstitions but is a simple and rational religion that emphasize on knowledge and learning. Through learning as the foremost priority to humankind the Islamic civilization spread through many countries. The Muslim never destroyed things in middle east as the Christians in Spain what they did was to defend what was positive and eventually embrace it.

Political and economic impact

Islam was seen as a religion without any political and economic principles. However Islam preached a new concept of human relations avoiding nationalism and class divisions. Islam main concern and interest was humankind's relations with God. Politically Islam perception was that the supreme power rests with God and equality before the law is a major principle

of the political system. (Diehl, C. (1957) In Balkan nations, emergence of Islam was very important compared to the Byzantines Empire.

Islam also emphasized on the economic aspect of life and this was clearly shown through justified ways of making profits, possession of property and not overspending and everybody must earn a living in an honest way. Islam came up with obligatory and voluntary laws that have played important roles in the economic system of Islam. Before Islam spread to Balkan nation and Byzantine Empire people who lived there had some kind of social chaos but Muslims brought a new approach to the social lives of the Balkans.

For example: Muslim women played a crucial part in the institution of family and were always considered equal in every aspect to her male counterpart. A woman is always the first to show kindness, love, and sincerity and educate. While for Christians, women are seen as devils instrument to harm or hurt people. (Diehl, C. (1957) When they conquered Byzantine Islam played a role in regulating the slavery and sanctioned better conditions for the slaves and even encouraged the prohibition of slavery.

Islam also brought together the Middle East and came up with a common language known as Arabic and a common religion known as Islam. After all this positive impact of Islam in Byzantine Empire some of the rules set up are not applicable in the 21st century. At one time there were most powerful, rich and advanced people and today they have created four empires, which include Umayyad, Abbasid, Mogul and Ottoman Empire. Their decline can be traced to about 1700 when the west caught up with the Ottoman the great Muslim empire and started misinterpreting the Koran.

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