

Emperor justinian thesis

War



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At the time of the reign of the Emperor Justinian, the once mighty Byzantine Empire was experiencing a period of decline and weakness. It was Justinian who as Emperor worked successfully to reenergize and rebuild the empire. Justinian's efforts and plans laid out a new version of the Empire that allowed it to continue in existence and relevance for many centuries to come. This effort required military, political, legal and social changes. This paper will look at how he accomplished this.

Born in 483 AD in a town called Tauresium (in what would later be known as the Balkans) Justinian (whose full Roman name was Flavius Petrus Sabbatius Justinianus) was related to the ruling family. His uncle was the recently retired Emperor Justin who had handed over the governments of the Byzantine empire to his wife Lupicina. Eventually Justinian himself rose in the service of the government and had a major hand in governing long before he actually became the official emperor. His studious nature and hard work led him to becoming a consul in the year 521 AD. He was married in 523 AD to Theodora. Soon after, in 527 AD, he was promoted to command of the Byzantine military. Later that year, the Emperor Justin passed away, and Justinian was appointed the new Emperor of the Byzantine Empire (Sheppard, 20).

Justinian immediately went to work trying to secure the borders of the tottering Byzantine Empire, with the goal of ultimately expanding it back to its ancient borders. To accomplish this, it was necessary for Justinian's and the Byzantine Empire to recapture the western half of the old Roman provinces. However, before he could accomplish this highly ambitious objective, Justinian had to end the relentless and never ending conflict that the Byzantines had faced for decades with their eastern neighbors in the

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Persian Empire.

The Persian Empire and the Byzantine Empire and been rivals for many years and had engaged in armed conflict with each other often. Prior to the Persian conflict with the Byzantines, the Romans and the 400s had both faced and onslaught from a various outsiders, which minimized their own conflict as they concentrated on other matters. However, by the beginning of the 6th century the old Roman Empire was gone and had been replaced by the Byzantines in the East. Both Empires once again found themselves at war. Justinian led the Byzantines to war against the Persians from 502-505 and then again from 527-532. This second conflict came to an end when the Byzantines managed to fight the Persians to a stalemate and a treaty was signed ending the war.

Once Justinian had finally ended the power struggle in the East with the Persians, he could at last turn his attention to the old Western provinces. He appointed General Belisarius to take an army into the West to reconquer this areas. He started with the provinces in North Africa. In 535 the forces of Belisarius crushed to Vandals in North Africa. The Vandal King Gelimer was captured and sent in chains as a prisoner back to Constantinople. After this, the Byzantine army captured the island of Sicily. They followed this up by landing on the Italian mainland and by 536 Belisaius and his army had entered the city of Rome itself (Hildinger, 37).

At about this same time, the old Roman enemy the Ostrogoths had once again returned to attack Rome. They laid siege to the city of the Rome and the Byzantines had to with stand this siege until they were at last relieved by the reinforcements Justinian sent. However, although the siege was lifted, the war between the Byzantines and the Ostrogoths continued. It ended in <https://assignbuster.com/emperor-justinian-thesis/>

552 when the Ostrogoths were defeated by the Byzantine's army at the major battle of Mons Lactarius.

Following this victory in Italy, the Byzantines recognized that that also had a new opportunity in Spain. A civil war had broken out between the Visigoths and the current king Agilia for the throne. The Visigoths requested the aid of the Byzantines in their struggle against Agilia. Under the command of General Liberius the Byzantines seized control over the southern Roman provinces in Spain. When the civil war ended, the Visigoths asked the Romans to yield these captured provinces and leave, but they refused and stayed. These victories by the Byzantines had allowed Justinian to reassemble much of the old Roman Empire. The revived Byzantine Empire stretched from Gibraltar in the west across the Mediterranean to Africa in the south and Mesopotamia in the east. The Empire was the most powerful political power from Europe to the Middle East.

Justinian had many other major accomplishments other than just the reconquest of the old Roman Empire, one of the most significant of which was his reform of the Byzantine legal code. Prior to this, the laws of the Byzantines were based on the old Theodosian code of centuries before. This code was very confusing and badly in need of updating for the times. Justinian decided to make a major change. He began the process by creating a commission of lawyers whose job it was to reorganize, review and rewrite the old laws to make them more efficient. The result was the Code of Justinian.

One of the most important sections of the Code of Justinian was the Institutes. The Institutes begins with an explanation of purpose and goals of the new code. As laid out in the institute's, a fundamental tenets of these

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laws are to be honest, cause no one injury and to give to every man that which is owed to him. The code divides the field of law into two halves, private law and public law. Private law relates to matters involving the individual citizenry, while public law focuses on matters that concern the Byzantine State. There are three origins for the private law that the Byzantines created. Some of it was based on Roman civil law, some on the general laws of nations and some on abstract ideas about law and rights strong from nature (Madden, 758).

A number of significant reforms were included in the new Code of Justinian. For example, official classes were abolished and all the people of the empire made into one class under the law. This meant that the legal barriers preventing people from the lower classes from holding important public offices or marrying people from higher classes were discarded. In addition, the ancient restrictions on the number of slaves that owners could free were removed, and parents could no longer sell their own children into slavery. Also, the current legal tradition of the family inheriting the estate if someone dies intestate (without a will) began at this time.

Another area where Justinian's made efforts to consolidate the Empire was with regard to religion. Despite the fact that the Constantine the Great had made Christianity official religion of the Roman Empire long before, there was still considerable contention regarding religious matters within the Byzantine Empire. Part of this stemmed from the schisms within the church itself, such as the disagreements between the Church Of Rome and the Eastern Church. With the help of Consul Anastasius, Justinian was able for time to heal this division between east and west. In addition, Justinian imposed new bands and restrictions on individuals who failed to embrace the

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new states. Non Christians were forbidden to hold public office, and Christians who converted back to paganism could be put to death. Jewish synagogues were also destroyed.

Justinian's goal had been to reestablish the Byzantine Empire as a major power on a scale (and including the territories of) the old Roman Empire. In addition, he wanted to achieve a measure of stability for the Byzantine's that they have not enjoyed for many years. Through the use of clever military and political stratagems, careful social restructuring and revamping of the existing laws to fit the new times, Justinian was able to achieve all of this.

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