

Byzantine empire vs china essay

[History](#), [Empires](#)



Immediately after the Classical Era of World History, the period that came along was the Postclassical Period. This period, within the year 500 CE and 1450 CE, was built up by “ third-wave civilizations”. In other words, it was built up by large empires characterized by constant patterns of change, trade, and considerable changes in technologies.

In 1492 CE these civilizations got global, meaning that the interactions among these different societies stopped being regional. Two empires who were very important during the Postclassical Period were the Byzantine Empire and China. Geographically these civilizations were far apart, but as they developed, they became two of the most influential empires of the time. Also, as they developed they showed patterns of change among themselves but which showed similarities as well as differences among the two. The Byzantine and Chinese Empire were similar in economic aspects as both were huge centers of trade and promoted new technologies such as banking for the sake of good trade. These two empires were different regarding changes in their religion as the Chinese Empire became a cosmopolitan society letting Buddhism penetrate their empire and the Byzantines continued through the thread of Christianity. Furthermore, these empires differed when looking the way of government each society implemented such as scholar bureaucracies in China and caesaropapism in the Byzantine Empire. Trade was basically the main characteristic of the Postclassical Period.

Because of this, even though in different ways, both the Chinese and Byzantine Empire were a huge influence in trade at the time. The Byzantine Empire, after the Roman Empire split into Islam, Byzantium, and Western

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Europe, maintained roads as they were before. Through these roads, the Byzantine Empire was linked to outside trade because due to its strategic location and its good and deep harbors, the Byzantine Empire became the empire that linked trade routes from Europe to Asia. What this meant was that the Byzantine Empire received goods and merchandise from all over Europe and Asia as they came back and forth. During the rule of Justinian (527-565 CE) this empire was expanded to the greatest size that it would ever reach. Because it was so big, Justinian assigned two capitals for the empire, and as this happened, there was transfer of goods and technologies through both capitals. Because the empire was so big and the amount of merchandise and money that was managed through the empire was so broad, Justinian implemented the use of banking, which changed completely the way people earned money, saved their money, and traded goods to get money from them to bank it. As this happened in the Byzantine Empire, China fell into a cultural exchange of goods, technologies, and ideas that came from the Silk Roads.

It was during the Tang and Song dynasties that this trade was at its peak. At the time, besides receiving goods from Europe and other neighbors through the complex routes of trading, the Chinese developed their own technologies for their own exportation. Among these technologies there was large metallurgical production, invention of gunpowder, naval technologies, rapid and cheap printing, and porcelain. These technologies enhanced even more trade for China and due to this, paper money was invented for the purpose of controlling trade; the same thing that occurred with the Byzantine Empire and banking.

Even though China invented more technologies than the Byzantine Empire, both became major trade hotspots in their own way and invented systems to control this trade; China invented paper money and invented amazing technologies still used today, and the Byzantine Empire became a key location for linking China and Europe as they used banking. It is said that during this period of World History trade was not only the exchange of goods and merchandise; there existed the trade of ideas and culture. This was the case for changes in Chinese religion. During the Han dynasty in the Classical Era, Confucianism arose becoming the center of Chinese culture. Even so, along with the Silk and Sea Roads during the Song and Tang dynasty, Buddhism and other cultures began to make their way through China, making China a cosmopolitan society. Even though Muslim communities settled, Mahayana Buddhism was the religion that was mainly adopted by Chinese people because Theravada Buddhism was very strict to be blended in.

Doubts about Confucianism after the fall of the Han arose, and this is why it was easier for Buddhism to settle. The way that Buddhism made its way into China was because Buddhists adapted the Mahayana Buddhism to similar principles of Confucianism, building up Chan Buddhism. It was clear that Buddhism had clearly settled when missionaries built temples and started to seek the conversion to Buddhism. On the other hand, Christianity had been the main religion of the Byzantine Empire until the fourth century; this was continuity with the west until the 11th century.

In 1054 CE something in the Byzantine Empire happened: the Great Schism. This is that Christianity split into Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodoxy. Some of the arguments for the Great Schism were: some iconoclastic controversy (the praise of idols), the nature of Christianity, different views on rights and power of leaders according religion, and Slavic conversions to Christianity. What this shows is that during the Postclassical Period what happened among these empires regarding religion is that while the Chinese Empire was influenced by outside cultures and religions, this way becoming a cosmopolitan society with different religions such as Buddhism, the Byzantine Empire was not influenced by ideas from other empires and did not adopt religions and customs from outsiders; its shift in religion relied on inner conflicts of the empire producing a split from the religion they had been carrying on for centuries. It was during the Postclassical Period that government was a constantly shifting and different aspect for each one of the Postclassical empires. The Byzantine Empire was one of the empires with an extraordinary and innovative form of government. This form of government relied on the principle that the Emperor was both the head of the state and a religious ruler.

The way of government the Byzantine Empire implemented was called caesaropapism. As the word says it, it was the way of government where the emperor was both the Caesar and the pope. On the other side, China maintained, during the Song and Tang dynasties, the belief of the Mandate of Heaven and maintained bureaucracies as a huge part of their social basis. The belief of the Mandate of Heaven was that the gods from heaven had chosen a specific emperor that would rule until the same gods decided that

he had stopped being a good ruler. Also, bureaucracies were mainly scholar bureaucracies made up by scholars who studied Confucianism; people who studied Confucianism were considered wiser and with more power than others. Among the scholar bureaucracies, the belief of Bureaucracy of Merit, which was that people got into the scholar bureaucracies based on their merit on Confucianism values, was very important in China at the time.

While the Byzantine Empire implemented a new political structure and way of government that linked the state with religion, China preserved the way of government they had preserved for centuries along with some values from Confucianism as it got stronger. The Chinese and Byzantine empires were two of the most influential empires at the time. Even though both experienced different things having the exchange of culture and ideas, an aspect that influenced in some cases religion, and different aspect on the way that emperors governed the empire, still these empires were huge centers of trade. Without these two empires, the success of trade in the Postclassical Period would not have been the same and as successful as it was.