

# Civilization in Eastern Europe: Byzantium and Orthodox Europe

## The Byzantine Empire

- Constantine built **Constantinople** as his capital in the 4th century, and the city became the capital of the Byzantine Empire when the Roman Empire split. Complex administration around a remote emperor, who was surrounded by elaborate ceremonies, increasingly defined the empire's political style. Eventually Greek became the empire's official language.
- **Justinian's** positive contributions to the Byzantine Empire lay in rebuilding Constantinople, including the remarkable **Hagia Sophia**, and **systematizing the Roman legal code**. His 6th-century military gains (made with the help of his general, **Belisarius**) were accomplished at great cost.
- Justinian's successors were able to hold off **Arab invaders** from the east ("Greek fire" was instrumental in this process), but **the empire's size and strength was greatly reduced**. The empire also successfully defeated challenges from **Bulgaria**.
- The Byzantine political system had remarkable similarities to the earlier patterns in China. The emperor was held to be **ordained by God, head of church as well as state**. Women could (and did) serve as emperor. An **elaborate bureaucracy** organized the empire militarily, socially, and economically, while cultural life blended Hellenism and Orthodox Christianity.
- In 1054 longstanding disagreements came to a head, and **the church split into two traditions**: one Western (or Roman Catholic), and one Eastern (or Orthodox).
- The Byzantine Empire entered a **long period of decline** following the church schism. It was able to survive by careful diplomacy until **Turks overran Constantinople in 1453**.

## The Spread of Civilization in Eastern Europe

- Christian missionaries like **Cyril** and **Methodius** helped bring Orthodoxy northward into Russia and the Balkans, and created a new alphabet, **Cyrillic**.
- Roman Catholicism also competed for converts in eastern Europe. **Jews**, who valued education and literacy, migrated into the region in large numbers, gaining strength in local commerce.

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- **Kievan Rus'**, which began along the trade route between Scandinavia and Constantinople, gained influence and power after **Vladimir** converted to Orthodox Christianity around 1000. The state soon developed its own **Russian Orthodox Church**, and **Yaroslav** issued a unifying code of laws.
  - Russian culture **borrowed much from Byzantium**, though the bureaucracy and education system were not as developed. **Boyars**, the Russian nobility, were less powerful than their western counterparts.
  - Mongol invasions (the **Tartars**), aided by rival princes and the fall of the Byzantine Empire, ended this period of Russian history.
  - This cut the region off from western contacts, stifling economic, political, and cultural sophistication.