

## Phenomenons of the medieval world

### 3. Byzantine and Frankish empires.

- A) The **Byzantine Empire** (or **Byzantium**) was the predominantly Greek-speaking **eastern Roman Empire** of the Middle Ages, centered around its capital of *Constantinople* (also known as New Rome), and ruled by emperors in direct succession to the ancient Roman emperors. It was called the **Roman Empire** and also **Romania** by its inhabitants and neighbours. The name Byzantine empire appeared in 16th century and then in 19th century became popular in the West, distinguishing it from ancient Roman Empire.

The Byzantine Empire existed for more than a thousand years (from approximately 306 AD to 1453 AD). During its existence, the Empire remained one of the most powerful **economic, cultural, and military forces** in Europe, despite setbacks and territorial losses, especially during the Roman–Persian and Byzantine–Arab Wars. Most of its remaining territory was lost in the Byzantine–Ottoman Wars, culminating in the Fall of Constantinople and its remaining territories to the **Muslim Ottoman Empire** in the fifteenth century.

Direct link to the ancient empire, and the existence of a state administration caused many differences in the development of culture, art, society and christian traditions on the East. First of all, its language. In the 7th century emperor *Heraclius* changed it from Latin to **Greek** (as majority of people spoke greek).

**Why did the Eastern Roman Empire survive the invasion of barbarian tribes?**

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Picture: The Empire at its greatest extent under **Justinian** in 550 AD



- B) Emperor Justinian I. in the 6th century decided to recover from territorial losses and reconquer western provinces. The center of them became **Ravenna**, Italian city, where the last emperors of the Western Roman Empire have lived. The short occupation of it (ca 100 years) have marked Ravenna with specific Byzantine architecture (eg. Basilica San Vitale). But not only **mosaics** and **basilicas** are well known. Emperor Justinian wanted to renew also the legacy of the ancient empire and issued in 529 AD a collection of laws, revision of Roman legal code, under the name *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, later known as **Justinian's Code**.



Justinian I depicted on one of the famous mosaics of the **Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna**. Under his rule, **Hagia Sophia**, church of **Holy Wisdom**, was built in Constantinople, and became a model of Byzantine architecture for centuries. But only after his death Byzantine Empire entered a period of Eastern Orthodox tradition.

- C) Another difference was, that the official head of the church was emperor. Emperor should not settle questions of doctrine, but should summon **general ecclesiastical councils for that purpose**. It became critical in 8th century together with a reign of empress **Irene of Athens**. The pope **Leo III** saw the emperor's place as vacant (free, empty) of the male successor, so he decided to crown **Frankish** king **Charlemagne** as Roman emperor. And that became a crucial moment for the unity of all Christians and new division between West and East, ending in the **Great Schism**.



D) **Frankish empire**, or the kingdom of Franks was the territory inhabited and ruled by the **Franks** from the 3rd to the 10th century. Under the nearly continuous campaigns of **Charles Martel, Pepin the Short, and Charlemagne**—father, son, grandson—the greatest expansion of the Frankish empire was secured by the early 9th century. The first rulers are obscure figures, appearing in the late Roman period in today's northern France. The most famous became eg. **Charles Martel**, who stopped invasion of Arabs from Iberian peninsula, at the battle of Poitiers in 732 or 737. Then king **Pepin** (germanic tribes elected their kings, and it survived in the **Holy Roman Empire** until its formal end in 1806) entered the alliance with pope, returned Ravenna (conquered by Lombards) to the pope, providing legal base for „papal state“. After his death (768) his son Charlemagne led several campaigns (some connected with christianization of pagan tribes like Saxons) against Saxons and Lombards.

Charles thus created a realm that reached from ....., in the southwest, over today's ....., ....., ..... and ..... (see the map below). In the hierarchy of the church, bishops and abbots looked to the patronage of the king's palace, where the sources of patronage and security lay. **Charles** had fully emerged as the leader of Western Christendom, and his patronage of monastic centres of learning gave rise to the "**Carolingian Renaissance**" of literate culture. Charles also created a large palace at **Aachen**, a series of roads, and a canal.

On **Christmas Day, 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charles as "Emperor of the Romans"** in Rome in a ceremony presented as a surprise (Charlemagne did not wish to be indebted to the bishop of Rome). Though Charlemagne, in deference to Byzantine outrage, preferred the title "Emperor, king of the Franks and Lombards", the ceremony formally **acknowledged** the Frankish Empire as the successor of the (Western) Roman one, thus triggering a series of disputes with the Byzantines around the Roman name. After an initial protest at the usurpation, in 812, the Byzantine Emperor Michael I Rhangabes acknowledged Charlemagne *as co-Emperor*. The coronation gave permanent legitimacy to Carolingian primacy among the Franks.



Charles the Great, by Albrecht Durer

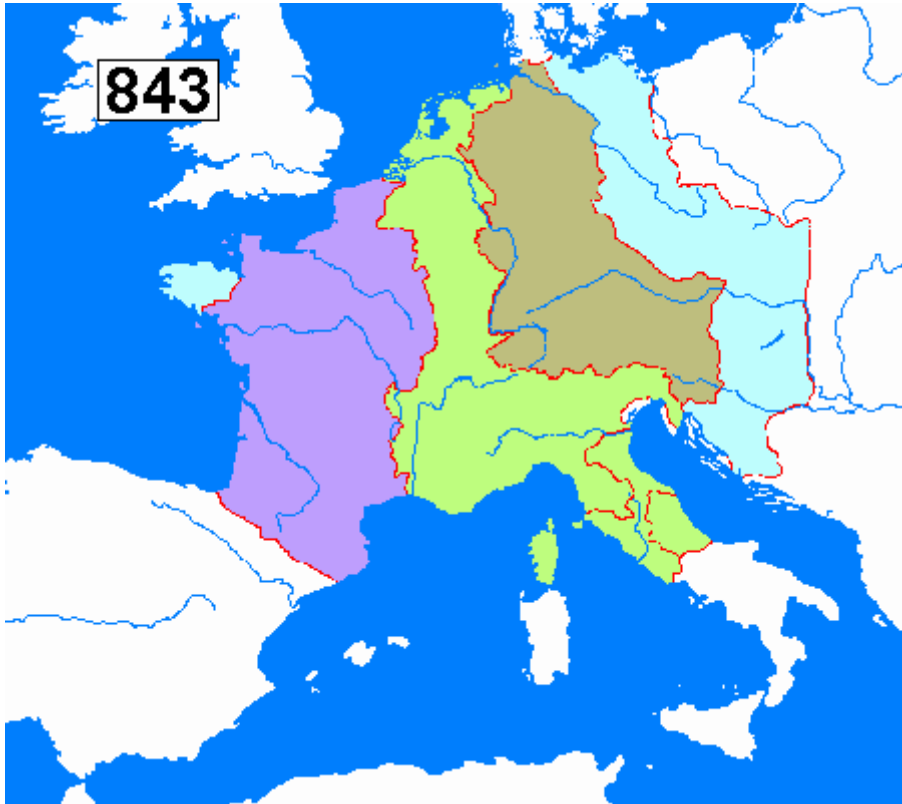


Roland pledges loyalty to Charlemagne, Chanson de geste.



Charlemagne's chapel in Aachen

E) After his death in 814, his work of christianization was almost done, he renewed the ancient culture and then established a missing link between Roman times and Middle Ages. But Frankish empire did not survive a long time. In the 843, his grand-sons, **Charles the Bald, Lothar and Louis the German**, made an agreement, known as **Treaty of Verdun**, in which they divided the empire among themselves. Charles became king of western Franks, Lothar became the king of the central Franks and the emperor and Louis became the king of eastern Franks. This division created a basis for the formation of the later nation states of France and Germany.



Look at the map and write in the missing names of the Charles's grand-sons in the appropriate succession.