

# Byzantium

Paris Art Studies - Byzantium to Istanbul

Historical and Artistic Chronology

Byzantium:

8th c BC &ndash; First colonization of Bosphorus by Greeks or Phoenicians.

7th c BC &ndash; Founding of Greek cities on Bosphorus: Chalcedon established on Asiatic side (680 BC) and Byzantium (660-658 BC) by Byzas from Megara on the European.

512 BC &ndash; Greek cities attached to Persian Empire by Darius.

478 BC &ndash; Conquered by Pausanias, Byzantium is joined to Athenian maritime empire.

411 BC &ndash; During the Peloponnesian wars Byzantium goes back and forth from Athenian to Spartan domination.

378 BC &ndash; Byzantium affirms its political and economic independence and controls both sides of the Bosphorus. Important trade in cereals and tuna fish.

340 BC &ndash; King Philip I of Macedonia lays siege to the city.

278 BC &ndash; Pays tribute to invading Gauls and is not harmed.

260 BC &ndash; Byzantium resists king of Syria Antiochos I with the help of Ptolemy II of Egypt. Expands its territory into Asia Minor.

220 BC &ndash; Threatened by Prussias of Rhodes and later Philip V of Macedonia , Byzantium seeks an alliance with Rome.

146 BC &ndash; Byzantium accepts Roman sovereignty and joins war against King Mithdrates in Asia Minor.

74 BC &ndash; Byzantium is attached to province of Bithynia.

In the Greek and early Roman periods the art and sculpture produced in Byzantium conforms to that of the rest of the Eastern Greek world. It is essentially provincial. Funerary stelae depicting reclining figures are popular.

Constantinople:

330 &ndash; The Roman Emperor Constantine I the Great moves the imperial capital to Byzantium from Rome and consecrates

his new capital which came to be known as the &ldquo;City of Constantine&rdquo; &ndash; Constantinople. The Emperor&rsquo;s religion, Christianity, becomes the dominant faith in the Empire. The city quadruples in size. Erection of Constantinian walls, enlargement of Hippodrome (founded by Septimus Severus), building of Great Palace, layout of Mese, principal arcaded thoroughfare, leading to the many fori. The city will be decorated by a profusion of sculptures and monuments brought in from Rome and Greece including the famous bronze horses now at St Mark&rsquo;s in Venice.

408 - 450 &ndash; Under Theodosius II the city doubles in size and reaches nearly half a million inhabitants. Erection of

Theodosian walls.

527 - 565 &ndash; The greatest church of Christianity, Hagia Sophia (&ldquo;Holy Wisdom&rdquo;) is built under Emperor Justinian.

674 - 678 &ndash; Constantinople is under siege by the Arabs who conquer Syria and Egypt.

680 - 681 &ndash; Bulgarians establish a Kingdom in the Balkan territories of the Empire.

717- 718 &ndash; Second Arab siege.

726 - 787 &ndash; First Iconoclastic period. The worship of holy images is forbidden by emperors and many are destroyed.

813 - 843 &ndash; Second Iconoclastic campaign ends with the re-establishment of icon worship. Advent of Macedonian imperial dynasty leads to a renaissance of Byzantine empire.

911 - 944 &ndash; Trade Treaties with Kiev Russia. Trade in furs, honey, wax and slaves.

969 &ndash; Re-conquest of Antioch in Syria.

1018 &ndash; Defeat of Bulgarians in the Balkans by Basil II and frontier re-established on the Danube.

1054 &ndash; Great Schism (separation) of the Christian church between its Western half, controlled by Roman Pope and its Eastern half under the Patriarch of Constantinople.

1071 &ndash; Byzantine army is defeated by Turks in Marzinket. Turks settle in Asia Minor.

1081 &ndash; Advent of dynasty of Comnenus.

1082 &ndash; Venetians establish trading post in Constantinople.

1204 &ndash; Sacking of Constantinople by Crusaders of 4th Crusade. Many of the city&rsquo;s treasures are exported to Western Europe. Establishment of the Latin Empire of the East.

1261 &ndash; Constantinople re-taken by Byzantines under Michael VIII Paleologus.

1326 - 1331 &ndash; Last byzantine cities in Asia Minor (Proussa, (Bursa) and Nicomedia (Izник)) conquered by Turks.

1369 &ndash; Ottomans conquer Adrianople in Thrace and begin their expansion into the Balkans.

1398 - 1402 &ndash; First siege of city by Ottoman Turks under Bayezid I.

1439 &ndash; Council of Florence - official reunion with Church of Rome much resented by Byzantine population.

1453 &ndash; Fall of the city to the Ottomans under Mehmed II &ldquo;the Conqueror&rdquo;. The city has barely 40 000 desperate inhabitants left and is invaded by fields and crumbling buildings.

Late Roman art is more abstract and less naturalistic than before. The images of emperors become abstract and hieratic. Carving is more &ldquo;primitive&rdquo;. Christian iconography begins to dominate after 6th century giving rise to a characteristic &ldquo;Byzantine&rdquo; style. Holy images (icons) are believed to have miraculous powers and are fervently worshiped until the iconoclastic crisis. During this crisis (in the 9th and 10th centuries) much of the art produced will be more decorative. Oriental (Persian) influence can be felt in the use of organic and sinuous forms, and fantastic beasts like griffins in decorative patterns. From the 9th century the new churches are more inward and intimate in scale than the late Roman constructions. Painting and the art of mosaic witness a last renaissance under the Paleologus dynasty in the 14th and 15th centuries though now much of the production is not in the capital itself but in the autonomous regions particularly in Greece.

Konstantinye (official Ottoman name) / Istanbul (popular name in Turkish from the Greek is tin polin (&ldquo;to the city&rdquo;):

1459 &ndash; Building of new palace for Sultan on former Byzantine acropolis, today&rsquo;s Topkapi palace. The Sultans&rsquo; military power is based on the forcible enrolment in the army of boys taken from the native Balkan (Christian) populations who remain unmarried and form the fearsome Janissary corps.

1463 &ndash; Construction of mosque of Mehmet II.

1493 &ndash; Founding of first (Jewish) printing press in the city.

1517 &ndash; Conquest of Egypt by Selim I and establishment of Caliphate in Constantinople.

1521-41 &ndash; Conquest of Belgrade, Buda and first siege of Vienna.

1550-57 &ndash; Construction of Sülemaniye, mosque of Soliman I the Magnificent. Introduction of coffee to the city.

1567 &ndash; Founding of first Armenian press.

1571 &ndash; Turkish navy is defeated by Spanish and Venetians in Lepanto.

1597-1665 &ndash; Construction of Yeni Valide, mosque of the Queen-Mother.

1609-16 &ndash; Construction of Ahmenide mosque by Sultan Ahmed (Blue Mosque).

1621&ndash; First Greek printing press.

1658 - 1703 &ndash; Internal troubles and economic crisis lead to the transfer of the court to Edirne (Adrianople).

1683 &ndash; Second siege of Vienna. Ottoman armies retreat signaling the end of the Turkish threat to Europe.

1718-30 &ndash; A period of cultural and artistic renaissance after the return of the court to the capital is called the &ldquo;Period of Tulips.&rdquo;

1729 &ndash; First Muslim printing press.

1749-55 &ndash; Construction of Nuorosmaniye mosque by Sultan Osman III.

1821-29 &ndash; Greek war of Independence.

1826 &ndash; Abolition of Janissary corps and their replacement by a regular army.

1839 &ndash; Promulgation of modern reforms of the sate (Tanzimat &ndash; &ldquo;reorganization&rdquo;).

1850 &ndash; French becomes official diplomatic language of Ottoman Empire.

1853-56 &ndash; Crimean War against Russia in alliance with France and Britain.

1876-77 &ndash; First Constitution, deposition of Abdulhamid I.

1877-78 &ndash; Defeat in war against Russia, autonomy of Bulgaria. Abolition of Constitution.

1889 &ndash; Completion of Sirkeci train station and founding of the Orient Express from Paris.

1908-09 &ndash; Young Turk Revolution, deposition of last authoritarian sultan Abdulhamid II.

1912-13 &ndash; Balkan Wars. Loss of last Balkan territories.

1914-18 &ndash; First World War. Turkey allied to Central Powers, is defeated.

1918-22 &ndash; Constantinople occupied by Allied powers.

1923 &ndash; Foundation of Turkish Republic by Kemal Atatürk, capital transferred to Ankara in Anatolia.

After the Ottoman conquest churches are converted to mosques including the greatest of all, Hagia Sophia, which will serve as the principal model for the building of the great Sultan's mosques of the next 3 centuries. The greatest Ottoman architect will be Sinan (1490-1588). The decorative arts flourish and furnish the court at Topkapi palace. Mameluke (Cairene) and Persian artists arrive in the capital. Calligraphy flourishes and ceramics are produced in Iznik. Marbled paper is another specialty of the capital. The rather flowery 18th century styles are often associated with the European Baroque or Rococo styles and are called "Ottoman Baroque". Porcelain is imported from China and fabrics from Venice. By the 19th century European influences become far more marked in Ottoman architecture and culture particularly after the period of modernization and reform known as the Tanzimat. The sultans abandon the old Topkapi palace for a new European-style palace on the Bosphorus, Dolmabahçe. Neoclassicism gives way to an eclectic Beaux-Arts and neo-Ottoman style by the turn of the 20th century with some influence also from Art Nouveau. More and more foreign painters and architects settle in Constantinople in the 19th century. The greatest of the early painters of the city and the Bosphorus is the Frenchman Antoine Ignace Melling who will publish in 1819 an album of 48 prints (the most accurate depictions of old Constantinople that exist): *Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople et des rives du Bosphore*. The first art exhibitions are organized in the 1870's and a School of Fine Arts is founded in 1883.

Life in the city revolves around the mosques, the religious foundations (vakıf), Coranic schools (madrassa) and the Soufi confraternities (tarikât) who establish dervishes' convents (tekke). The Greek, Armenian and Jewish populations have their own churches (which until the 1870's must be of modest proportions) monasteries and synagogues. A multi-religious, multi-cultural and multilingual city flourishes (with the exception of the 17th century) until the 20th century. In the 19th century an growing European diplomatic and business colony is established on the opposite side of the Golden Horn in Galata and Pera (Beyoğlu). Wooden summer villas (yalı) and later palaces are established from the 18th century beyond the city walls on both sides of the Bosphorus.