

#10 Byzantine Art

Text: Art Through the Ages

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Text: Art Past Art Present

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Byzantine Art – Context

- Constantinople** - founded in 330 CE by Constantine as center of the eastern Roman Empire
The "Byzantine Empire" ended when Constantinople "fell" in 1453 CE to the Ottoman Turks
- Theocracy** - the belief that the ruler (as head of state) is also the religious leader (head of the church / religion)
Emperor Justinian also head of Eastern Orthodox Church – the vicar of Christ on earth in competition to Pope in Rome. Eastern church splits with Western church in 1054
- Justinian** - c. 550 Emperor of Byzantine empire
 - invades Ravenna – comes under Justinian's control – Maximian is Justinian's designate
 - declares Christianity to be only lawful religion of his empire
- Mosaics** - main decorative element on the interiors of churches – best preserved examples in Ravenna
- iconic representations of complex theological ideas

Byzantine Art (Eastern Empire) Constantinople and Ravenna:

Chapter 12

Works of Architecture

<u>Hagia Sophia</u> , Constantinople	537 CE
architects: <u>Anthemius of Tralles</u> and <u>Isidorus of Miletus</u>	
<u>San Vitale</u> , Ravenna	550 CE
<u>Santa Apollinare in Classe</u> ,	550 CE
<u>St. Marks</u> , Venice	900 CE >

Two Dimensional Work:

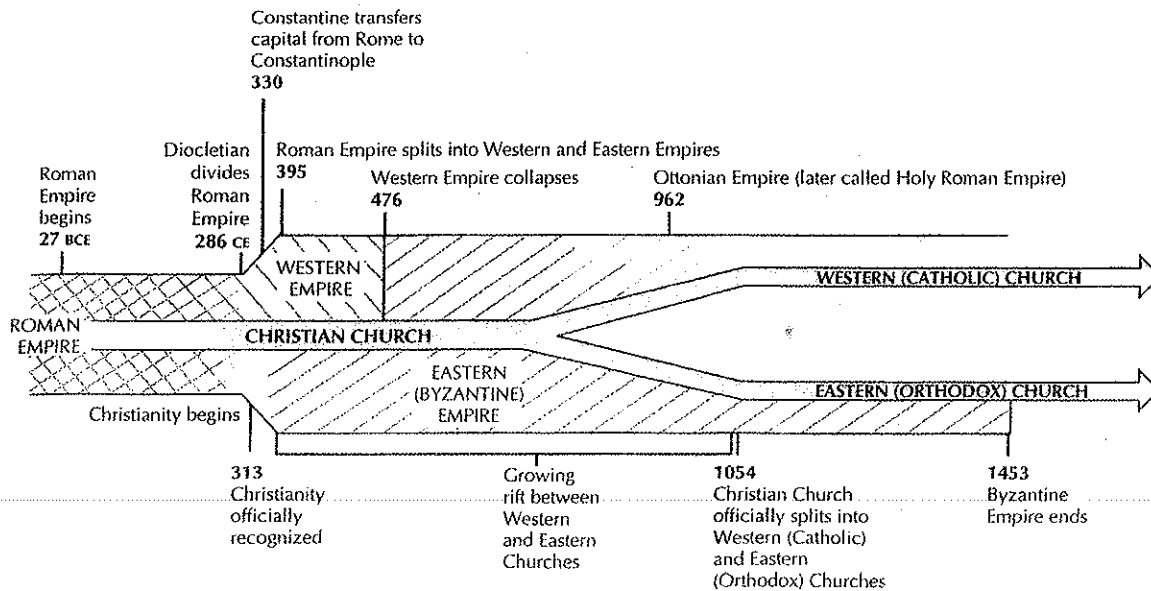
<u>St. Michael the Archangel</u> (ivory)	380 CE
<u>Virgin (Theotokos) and Child...</u> (encaustic on wood)	600 CE
<u>Paris Psalter</u> (Tempera on Vellum)	950 CE
<u>The Crucifixion</u> (mosaic) (Greek)	1100 CE
<u>The Lamentation</u> (wall painting)(Greece)	1100 CE
<u>Vladimir Virgin</u> (Icon – encaustic wood panel)	1100 CE

Vocabulary:

iconoclast / iconodules	aniconic	theocracy	orthodox
baldaccino	tesserae	encaustic	mandorla
			<u>Chi-Rho</u>

Architectural Terms / Techniques:

central plan	dome	squinch	conches	pendentive	lunette
basilica plan	curtain wall	buttress	nave	aisles	transept
	atrium	narthex	blind arcade	colonnade	clerestory
	crossing	arcade			



Byzantine Mosaics – *The Golden Age of Mosaics:*

Definition: The art or technique of creating picture or designs with *tesserae* (Latin for “cubes” or “dice”) set in a *mastic* or a plaster *grout*.

Technique: *tesserae* pieces can be set into wall, ceilings, floors, portable icons. *tesserae* pieces may be small pieces of colored glass, stones, marble pottery or any other hard imperishable material.

Roman mosaics: generally opaque marble tesserae used

Byzantine mosaics: generally more translucent glass used

mural mosaics are commonly made of opaque glass broken into small cubes and are set with their fracture sides exposed to reflect light and give the entire surface a sparkling brilliance.

History:

- earliest examples are from Sumerian art (c. 3000 BCE) (example: **Standard of Ur**)
- from Roman art *floor of the House of the Faun*: **Darius and Alexander in Battle**

Golden Age of Mosaics:

Byzantine and Early Christian mosaic from Ravenna, Constantinople, Venice and Rome during the 4th - 10th Centuries.

Examples of Mosaics from Byzantine Period:

- 1: *Decorative ceiling mosaics* from the annular vault of **Santa Constanza**
- 2: *Parting of Lot and Abraham* from the nave of **Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome**
- 3: *Christ as the Good Shepherd* from the **Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna**
- 4: *Triforium mosaics* from **Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna**
- 5: *Justinian and Attendants* and *Theodora and Attendants* for **San Vitale, Ravenna**
- 6: *Saint Apollinaris amid sheep* from apse mosaic of **Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna**
- 7: *Crucifixion* mosaic from the **Church of the Dormition, Daphni, Greece**
- 8: Mosaic from the interior of **Saint Mark's, Venice**

Byzantine Mosaics as Iconic Art: (icon = image symbolic of an idea)

- symbolic representation of a message
- conceptual experience of work of art – conceptual reality - primary purpose to convey an idea
- use of simplification and stylization but at the service of concept and less on appearance or rich visual experience
- simplification of presentation of this idea into an easily recognizable form
- move toward realism - but not exact representation of visual reality
- decorative elements secondary to central image or icon