Byzantium, Justinian, & the Rise of Islam

How to Improve Memory, 1630

"Late Suppers, the too much use of Tobacco, meates that ingender grosse humors, too much woman, too much surfetting and costly fulnesse; all bad for Memory, ill for the purse, and worse for the health..."

William Basse, *A Helpe to Memory and Discourse* (1630)
What we’re doing today

- Look at: The Byzantine Empire & the Rise of Islam
- Your Timeline
- Continue the Discussion of from ‘Rome’ to ‘Europe’
  - Byzantine Empire
  - Rise of Islam
- What is ‘Europe’?
From Rome to ‘Europe’ c.400-c.700AD

- The Empire: Romans + “barbarians”
- Pagan and Christian traditions
  - Pagan: both classical and barbarian
- Germanic “barbarian” “take over” western Empire by 700
- Mediterranean world divides into three zones by c. 700:
  - Western (Latin) Europe
    - Germanic, Celtic, Gothic; Latin language, Roman law; Latin Christianity
  - Byzantium (Eastern Roman Empire)
    - Greek (and Slavic, and Armenian); Greek Christianity
  - The world of Islam
    - Arabic language, Islamic institutions; Greek philosophy and science
- Jewish minorities within all three areas
The New World Order... by 750AD
The Timeline – 500-750

The Byzantine Empire

- Eastern (Roman) Empire
- Emperors recognize the urban, economic, and cultural strength of the east, in the face of ‘barbarian’ invasions in the west
- “Empire of the Romans” (heirs to Rome)
  - a.k.a. “Empire of the Greeks” to Westerners
- Ongoing Wars with Persians (600-627), Bulgars, Slavs (E, N)
- Christian centre (theological controversies)
- Law, diplomacy, bureaucracy, corruption
- Preservation of Greek & Latin texts; from scroll to codex
  - Library of Alexandria (falls c. 640)
The Byzantine Empire

- 330 Constantinople founded (new Rome)
- 527-65 Justinian I (the Great)
  - Corpus Juris Civilis (Civil Law Corpus)
  - regains territories in west, briefly
- 610-41 Heraclius (Greek replaces Latin)
- 1054 Eastern & Western Christian Churches split (Great Schism)
- 1204: 4th Crusade sacks Constantinople
- 1453 Fall of Constantinople to Ottomans
Christianization

- Constantine uses Christianity to...
  - Reinforce his power – culturally and institutionally
  - Christians chosen for key bureaucratic offices
  - Eusebius ‘Oration in Praise of Constantine’ – Emperor as Divine Christian Ruler, ‘steward’ for Christ
  - Builds churches with Imperial funds – Rome, Antioch
  - Mother Helen goes to Jerusalem 327, finds piece of ‘True Cross’
    Holy Sepulchre & Pilgrimage; rebuilding of Jerusalem

- Church becomes ‘Roman’ Institution
  - Large Administration; 1/3-1/2 of Army
  - Bishops not just church, but oversee cities and take on judicial roles
  - Church is Imperial ‘domain’ – Emperor takes title ‘Thirteenth Apostle’, supreme authority over religion

- In 391 Theodosius I makes Christianity the official religion
Christian Beliefs - Councils

- 4th/5th centuries ‘age’ of Christian Councils
  - Constantine finds Christians disagree too much; orders them to sort it out
- Set out to define Christian belief – and doctrine
  - Nature of Christ, role of bishops & emperor, regulation of Christianity within Empire
  - Conflict with the Bishop of Rome, Successor of Peter the Apostle
- Council of Nicaea 325 – ‘Nicene Creed’
  - Ecumenical ‘universal’ statement of belief
- Council of Constantinople - 391
- Council of Chalcedon – 451
  - Nature of Christ – hypostasis – ‘Man’ & ‘God’
  - ‘Oriental’ churches disagree; Copts disagree
Byzantium -> Constantinople = ‘New Rome’

- Constantinople founded 324-330 by Constantine the Great
- On the Bosporus peninsula between Europe and Asia
- Ideal defence; ideal for trade and economics (east<->west)
- A ‘New Rome’ purged of pagan past, Christian Capital
Justinian

- Great Emperor (r. 527-565)
- Reconquers much of Italy, part of North Africa, and Southern Spain
- Wife, Theodora, powerful, and respected
- Deep interest in law and religion – seeks unity amidst instability
- Emperor as ‘living law’
- Rebuilds Hagia Sophia ‘Holy Wisdom’ in Constantinople as symbol of imperial Christianity after destruction of original in Nika Riots 532
  - Nika Riots – 532 – burning of Constantinople over hanging & imprisonment of factions of chariot racers... 30,000 killed
- Persecutes Christian dissidents and non-Christians. Closes Plato’s Academy in 530 in Athens
- Compiles Corpus Iuris Civilis (Corpus of Civil Law) ‘Justinian Code’, which forms the basis of jurisprudence in Byzantine Empire then on, greatly shapes Christian ‘canon’ law, and eventually European law.
- Plague of Justinian - 540-541 – First european pandemic?
  - 5,000 die; long lasting effects for Byzantine and Persian Empires – weakens population
Justinian

- At Ravenna (in modern day Italy)
Territory Gained by Justinian
Hagia Sophia – Holy Wisdom
A ‘beleaguered’ Empire

- Loss of territory after Justinian almost breaks Empire under Maurice (r. 582-602) and Phocas (r. 602-610)
  - Loss of Egypt, Palestine, Syria and parts of Asia Minor to Persians
  - Lombard Invasion of Italy 568-572
- Heraclius (r. 610-641) attempts to restore territory, but lacks economic capital to pay soldiers
  - Encroachment from Slavs, Avars, Bulgars in the Balkans
  - Reorganization of army into Themes (regiments) – civic and economic jurisdictions, gives reliable source of income to army
- Constantinople
  - Imperial city – baths, bazaars, palaces, and hundreds of churches
  - Economic hub of empire
The Rise of Islam

- 622 – Mohammed leads followers from Mecca to Medina in the Hijrah
- Islam spreads rapidly from 622 onwards
- By 750 stretches from Kandahar & Indus River (east) to Pyrenees (West)
Islamic expansion

- 632: death of Muhammad (c. 570-632)
- 639-42: Caliph Umar conquers Syria, Egypt
- 654: North Africa under caliph Uthman
- 677: Reach walls of Constantinople
- 711: Arab invasion of Spain
  - al-Andalus (Caliphate of Cordoba) ... 1492
- 732: Battle of Poitiers (or Tours) – Charles Martel
- 827: Invasion of Southern Italy & Sicily
  - Pressure on Byzantine Empire
Islam

- Mohammed purifies Ka’ba of pagan trappings, rededicates it to Allah, uses the Black Stone sent by God to show Adam and Eve where to build their first altar. Black Stone found by Abraham who builds Ka’ba – thus the holiest place on earth
- Tawhid – Oneness of God (counter to Christianity’s Trinity)
- Qu’ran – revealed to Mohammed as God’s Prophet
  - Written by God; no human authorship – transmitted to the Prophet, and transcribed
- Hadith – sayings of the Prophet
- Five Pillars – mentioned in Qu’ran, but also listed in Hadith
  - Daily Confession of Faith, Daily Prayer, Tithes for the Poor, Pilgrimage to Mecca, Fasting during Ramadan
- Ban on religious images results in highly geometric art forms and calligraphy.
- Schism within Islam – Sunnis and Shi’a
  - Struggles over Caliphate following Umar’s death in 644. Ends with murder of Ali in 661
  - Sunnis – Leadership is selection by community
  - Shi’a – Leadership is hereditary to Prophet’s descendants – appointment of Imams
The Caliphate

- **Caliph** – Abu Bakr, Mohammed’s father in law
  - ‘Khalifah al-rasul Allah’ – deputy of the Prophet of God
  - Abu Bakr d. 624, succeeded by Umar (r.634-644)

- **Umayyad Dynasty (661-750)**
  - Build Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and Great Mosque in Damascus
  - Power hungry, disaffected population, prejudiced against non-Arabs

- **Abbasids**
  - Open up Islam to non-Arabs ‘Malawi’; Persians rise to prominence in government
  - New officials – the Viziers – governors of districts

- **Dhimmi & Ummah**
  - Ummah – the Islamic Community
  - Dhimmi – people of ‘the book’ – Jews & Christians, Sabians, Sammarians, Zoroastrians – Pay a ‘poll tax’; limitations on legal rights; no new buildings; no conversion of Muslims
From Nomadic to Urban Culture?

- Arab & Muslim elite arrives with new religion and new language – affects urban culture. Different ideas of community and division between public & private life, affect urban cultures.

- Existing Cities - Not rupture so much as transformation – public spaces already in decline reused in existing cities. Mosques built both in commercial areas, and in prominent areas:
  - Mecca & Medina - Holy cities of Islam
  - Jerusalem – The Dome of the Rock
  - Cordoba – paved streets with lights; libraries; 6-figure population by 1000AD

- Planned Cities - New, commissioned, to reflect Islamic power & values:
  - Baghdad - Multicultural capital – centre of trade routes, centre of intellectual & legal culture
  - Cairo - Fatimid Capital – regiments acquire areas for control & prayer (Themes?!)
Al-Andalus – Islamic Europe

- Islamic conquest of the Iberian Peninsula (modern Spain & Portugal)
- Development of ‘Moor’ culture – large cities, stable, educated. Mix of Christians, Jews, and Muslim elites
- Major Centres:
  - Cordoba, Granada
Al-Hambra
Islam and Classical Culture

- Intellectual culture = Arab + Greek + Persian +...
  - Centres of learning – Baghdad, Cordoba,...
- Golden Age of Islamic Thought and Culture
  - 7-10\textsuperscript{th} centuries
- Al-Kindi (d.870)
  - Optics & vision; Metaphysics
- Avicenna (Ibn-Sina)
  - Khorasan (modern Iran)
  - Translates Greek, Latin, Persian Texts
  - known for \textit{Canon of Medicine}
- Averroes (Ibn-Rushd)
  - b. 1126 (Cordoba) d. 1198 (Marrakesh – Morrocco)
  - “The Commentator” on Aristotle
Byzantium & Islam – 8 Century-Long Pressure Cooker

- Conflict between Islam - Caliphate & Byzantine Empire from the start
- Islam ‘swallows’ ½ of Empire in first years
  - Sieges of Constantinople – 677, 717.... Onwards
- Pressure on Anatolia / Asia Minor
  - Important economic area – farming & landholding class
- Mediterranean Trade
  - Piracy, sea battles
- Eastern Trade
  - Cuts off trade routes with east? New routes?
- Religion
  - Christians view Muslims as false prophet and heresy
  - Many Jews and Christians under Muslim rule – Empire identifies with them
From Rome to ‘Europe’ = The “Dark” Ages?

- ‘Dark’ Ages for western Europe – but elsewhere?
  - Conflict between kingdoms after loss of political centralization

- Arabs call the period between the death of Jesus and the birth of Mohammed the age of ignorance or Al-Jahiliyya
  - Spread of Islam brings stability

- But in Byzantium things continue – though weakened, this period is in many ways a Golden Age?
What is ‘Europe’?

- A Political Entity?
- A Continent?
- A Place?
- A "Civilization"?
- A Woman?
- A Myth?
Who is ‘Europe’?

- Europa is abducted by Zeus – as a white bull
Europeans?

“Such is the condition of the Scythians. The other people of Europe differ from one another both in stature and in shape, because of the changes of the seasons, which are violent and frequent... It is for this reason, I think, that the physique of Europeans varies more than that of Asiatics, and their stature differs very widely in each city... The same reasoning applies also to character. In such a climate arise wildness, unsociability and spirit. For the frequent shocks to the mind impart wildness, destroying tameness and gentleness. For this reason, I think, the inhabitants of Europe are also more courageous than those of Asia. For uniformity engenders slackness, while variation fosters endurance in both body and soul; rest and slackness are food for cowardice, endurance and exertion for bravery. Wherefore the inhabitants of Europe are more warlike, and also because of their institutions, not being under kings as are Asians...."

Where is ‘Europe’?

T-O Map
Orbis Terrarum
Where is ‘Europe’?
Where is 'Europe'?
Why? Europe as an idea

‘Star Mantle’ of Henry II (r.1002-1024)
Cathedral treasury, Bamberg, Germany. The inscription on the hem hails Henry as "Europae Cesar" ("Emperor of Europe").
‘Europe’?

Henri Pirenne, *Muhammad & Charlemagne* (1937)

- “Without Muhammad, no Charlemagne”
  - Arab conquests of Mediterranean breaks up the Mediterranean world, cuts long-distance trade; NW Europe becomes backward and agrarian, allowing for Frankish empire to emerge
  - Fighting Moors, Saracens creates European identity
  - Arab threat forces Byzantium to focus on its eastern frontiers and breaks contact with Western Europe


- Europe = an idea invented in response to perceived threat from Muslim world (Medieval/Renaissance: 8th-16th c.)
  - Christian
  - "Latin"
  - "western" but also "northern"

- Europe = an idea of "civilization" (Enlightenment: 18th c)
  - secular
  - individual entrepreneurship
  - liberty
  - balance of power
  - "civilized manners”

Europe defined as much by ‘othering’ as by self-definition – it **NEEDS** other groups to help articulate its own sense of identity
European History?

Is a history of ‘Europe’ even possible? Will it always be a construct? Imposed on ‘top’ of a diverse cultural and social context?

- Comparative from above – how do states and institutions form?
- Comparative from below – how do people live?
- Do Europeans have a shared ‘experience’?
- Some Myths or Stories Europe tells about itself include:
  1. Europe is the rightful heir of Greece and Rome.
     renaissance(s) - stands on the "shoulders of giants"?
  2. Europe is Christendom.
     reformation(s) - what is de-formed?
  3. Stability or resistance?
     revolution(s)- "turning about" or "overturning"?
The Timeline – 500-750

Take Away

- From Rome to ‘Europe’ a process, not a rupture
- See the rise of three fairly distinctive areas out of the Empire
  - The Byzantine Empire, which views itself as ‘Roman’ (despite speaking Greek!)
  - Islamic world after 632AD, engages with Classical inheritance in new ways
  - ‘Europe’ – an idea of a place? Peoples? ‘Roman’ as well?
- European History as the study of ‘Europeans’ – and their internal interactions, and interactions with others

Terms

- Constantinople
- Themes
- Hagia Sophia
- Justinian
- Al-Jahiliyya
- Caliph
- Cordoba
- Dhimmi
- T-O Map