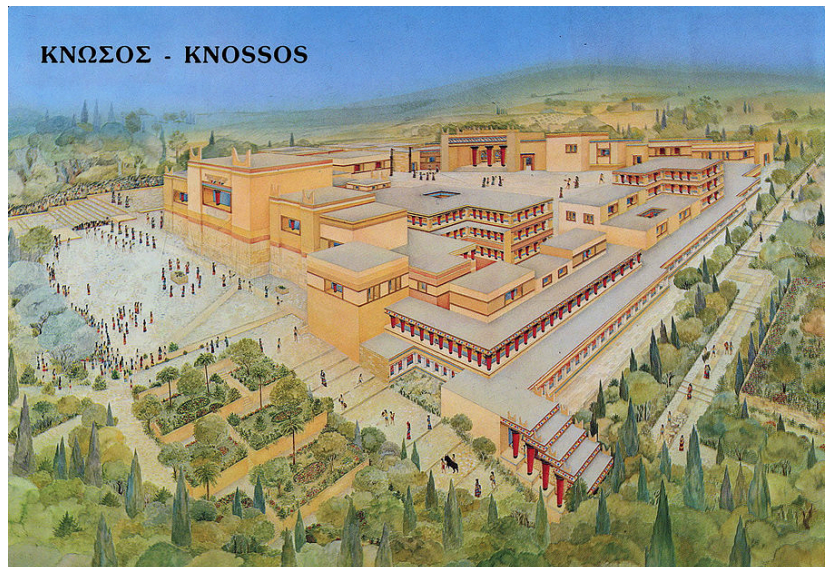




**Greece.** New (2023) excavations in Attica (now Peloponnesus) reveal 700,000-year-old human-made stone tools. Also found were 450,000-year-old skeletons of hippo and elephant, butchered by man using stone cutting tools.

**Minoan civilization-** Fast-forward to 1500 BCE, when Crete was the first, and one of the most prosperous and intriguing civilizations in Europe. Minoans had an extensive fleet of ships that traded food, wine, pottery and textiles with Egypt, Anatolia, Syria, Greece, Cyprus, etc. Knossos was a 150,000 sq ft building complex with indoor plumbing, underground cisterns, and sewers.

Minoan society separated men from women in art illustration, clothing, and societal duties. While historians and archaeologists have long been skeptical of an outright matriarchy, the predominance of female over male figures in authoritative roles seems to indicate that Minoan society was matriarchal, and among the most well-supported examples known.



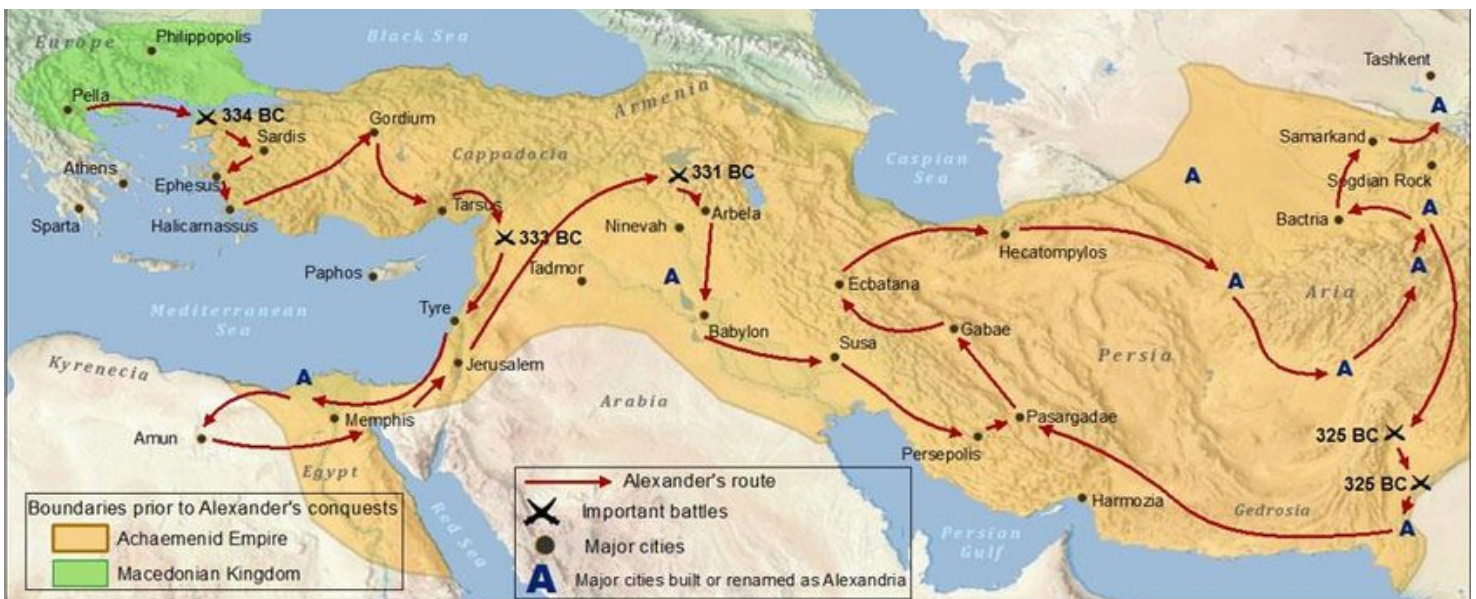
**Greek maritime trade.** Crete set the pattern for Greek development through sea trade. By 500 BCE Greeks had set up colonies in the Black and Mediterranean seas, leading to a dominance of maritime trade, and making city-states such as Athens, Corinth, & Sparta,





rich and powerful. This set the stage for Ancient Greece's "Golden Age", 510 BCE – 323 AD - the age of Plato, Socrates, Pericles, Aristotle, and Alexander that needs no further comments from me. But "Greece" was an idea more than a country; a collection of rival city-states, often vastly different in governance, uniting only to face a common enemy, often switching allegiances. Most of their settlements were set up as satellites of a mother city, so trade was narrowly focused and inefficient.

Below is a map of **Alexander's conquests**, which set the stage for the Greco-Roman empire that followed. [Britannica](#) states "*His career led to the moving of the great centres of civilization eastward and initiated the new age of the Greek territorial monarchies; it spread Hellenism in a vast colonizing wave throughout the Middle East and created, if not politically at least economically and culturally, a single world stretching from Gibraltar to*



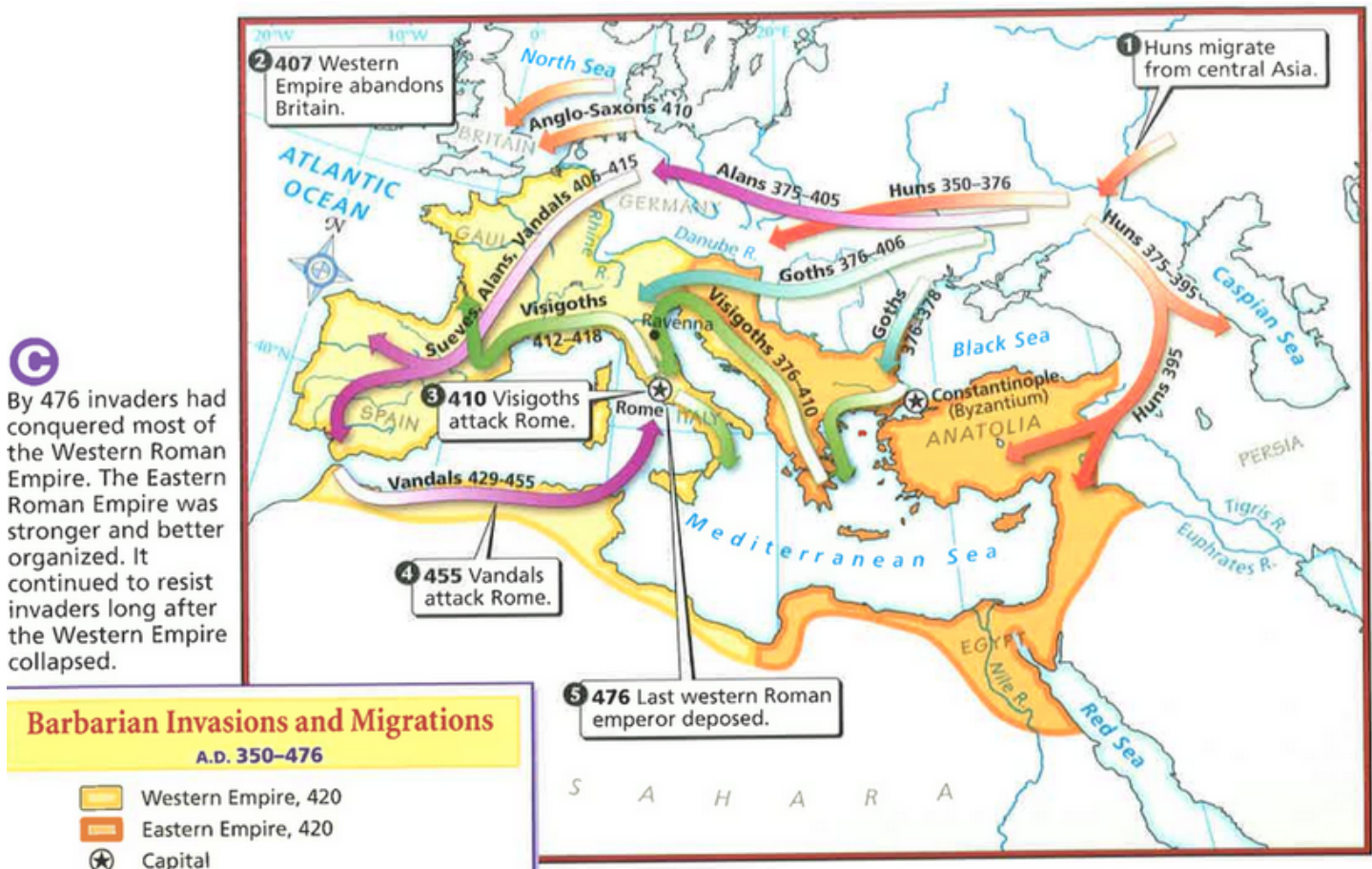
the Punjab, open to trade and social intercourse and with a considerable overlay of common civilization and the Greek [koinē](#) as a lingua franca. It is not untrue to say that the Roman Empire, the spread of Christianity as a world religion, and the long centuries of Byzantium were all in some degree the fruits of Alexander's achievement." Alexander died suddenly in 323 BCE, aged 33. He left no plans for his succession.

**ROME.** Greece proper reverted to its old ways – city-states fighting among themselves, and Alexander's empire gradually disintegrated. Meanwhile, Rome was getting stronger. It took about 100 years for Rome to pick away at all the little city-states and by 146 BCE Rome had full control of Greece.

**Romans vs Greeks.** Although the Romans ruled the Greeks, they also copied and admired their subjects. Wealthy Romans sent their children to Athens for an education, much as Americans sent their kids to Oxbridge. Rome was a centralized state that gradually expanded to become an empire, based on a well-trained military, an excellent road system, and efficient trade network. Everything was for the benefit of Rome. While the freewheeling Greeks innovated in ideas – democracy, philosophy and science, the more conservative Romans innovated in infrastructure – aqueducts, better roads, more efficient trade, the invention of concrete for more durable structures.

## Decline and splitting of the Roman Empire

Rome continued expanding until it controlled the entire coastline of the Mediterranean Sea, all of Spain, England, and France, Germanic lands west of the Rhine and south of the Danube, and even Romania until 275 AD. Then "Barbarians" – invaders from the East and North, began expanding into the Roman Empire, overwhelming defenses, especially in the West. In 285 the Emperor Diocletian decided to split the Empire in two, West and East.





# ROME AND BYZANTIUM

His successor, Constantine choose the Greek town of **Byzantium** to be his capitol in the East, renaming it after himself – **Constantinople**. Its strategic location between East and West, easily defended, helped it last for 1100 years, twice as long as Rome. Though officially called the Eastern Roman Empire, later scholars refer to it as the Byzantine Empire, after the town's original name, Byzantium.

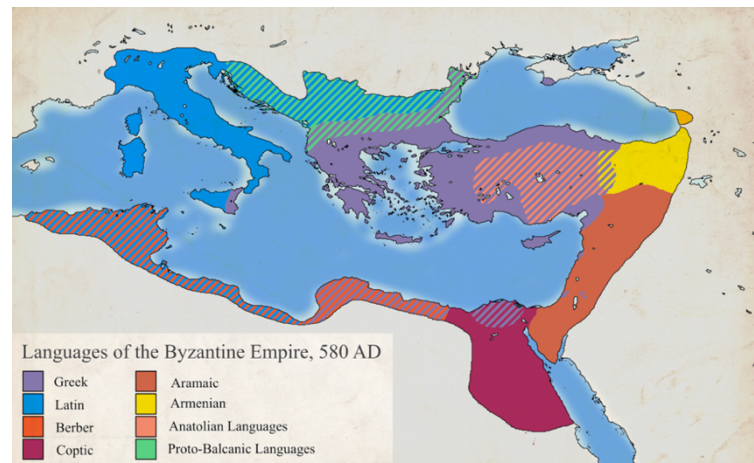


Though the citizens of Constantinople considered themselves Romans, most of them spoke Greek, and by 620 Greek was the official language. In 380, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

## The Glories of Constantinople.

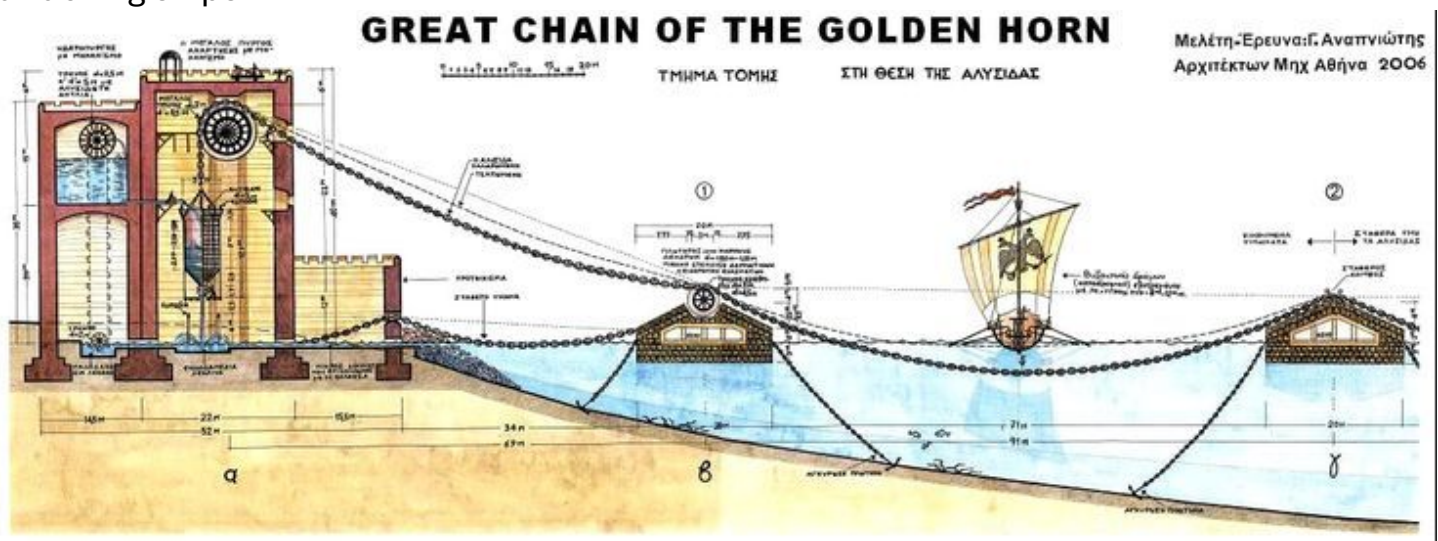
Constantine's choice of capital had profound effects upon the ancient

Greek and Roman worlds. It displaced the power centre of the Roman Empire, moving it eastward, and achieved the first lasting unification of Greece. Culturally, Constantinople fostered a fusion of custom, art, and architecture from the eastern regions of the empire with the Classical forms of Roman antiquity. The religion was Christian, the organization Roman, and the language and outlook Greek. The concept of the divine right of kings, rulers who were Defenders of the Faith—as opposed to the king as divine himself—evolved there. The *solidus* gold coin of Constantine retained its value and served as a monetary standard for more than a thousand years. In 537 Justinian built Hagia Sophia, (the largest cathedral in the world for nearly 1000 years) a model for many churches (and mosques).



As the centuries passed, Constantinople, seat of empire, was to become as important as the empire itself; in the end, although the territories had virtually shrunk away, the capital endured. Constantine's massive city walls contained imperial buildings, such as the Hippodrome, (a chariot-racing arena that could seat 80,000), a huge palace, legislative halls, several imposing churches, and streets decorated with multitudes of statues taken from rival cities. In addition to other attractions of the capital, free bread and citizenship were bestowed on those settlers who would fill the empty reaches beyond the old walls. There was, furthermore, a welcome for Christians, a tolerance of other beliefs, and benevolence toward Jews.

The Byzantines had a substance known as Greek Fire that could be shot from cannons, burn under water, and terrorized Arab navies. It is still unknown what the compound consisted of, as it was a state secret that creators took to their graves. Constantinople was also protected by a great chain that could be pulled across the Golden Horn to trap attacking ships.



During the 9th and 10th centuries, it's estimated that Constantinople had as many as 800,000 residents. London had roughly only 40,000 residents at the time. Paris, 20,000. Rome, the same. The great Library of Constantinople was the last of the historic Great Libraries, surviving until 1204. Many of the residents of the city fled west, eventually settling in Italy and sharing knowledge that sparked the Renaissance.

The Christian Church was a single entity under Roman rule, though with many disagreements about the nature of Jesus (man or God?), the role of temporal leaders (who's stronger king/emperor or pope/patriarch?) and many other issues debated at various conferences, but seldom settled. Finally, in 1054 the Great Schism separated the authorities in Rome (Catholics) from authorities in Constantinople (Orthodox) into two distinct faiths – each believing they were the True followers of Christ's teachings, and the others were heretics.

In 1203 the armies of the Fourth Crusade, appeared before Constantinople—ostensibly to restore the legitimate Byzantine emperor, Isaac II. On April 13, 1204, the Crusaders burst into the city to sack it (authorized by the Pope). After a general massacre, the pillage went on for years, fatally weakening the Byzantine Empire's wealth and power. The Crusader Knights installed one of themselves, Baldwin of Flanders, as emperor, and the Venetians—

prime instigators of the Crusade—took control of the church. While the Latins divided the rest of the realm among themselves, the Byzantines entrenched themselves across the Bosphorus at Nicaea (now İznik) and at Epirus (now northwestern Greece). The period of Latin rule (1204 to 1261) was the most disastrous in the history of Constantinople. Even the bronze statues were melted down for coin; everything of value was taken. Sacred relics were torn from the sanctuaries and dispatched to religious establishments in western Europe.

Later the city fell to the Ottoman Turks (in 1453), though the Greek Orthodox church decided to keep its headquarters in Constantinople, hoping Turkish control was only temporary. To the Greeks, the fall of Constantinople was Catastrophe; they blame the West for its destruction, and Greeks to this day refuse to call the city Istanbul, the name given to it by the conquering Turks. Greeks still refer to Western Europeans as Franks, their name for the armies that destroyed their beloved city.

Once the Turks controlled Constantinople, there was no force strong enough to stop their gaining control of the whole Balkan Peninsula. By 1683 they were at the gates of Vienna, but they got no further.

Gradually, Western armies and rebels pushed back the Ottomans, until in 1821 it was time for the Greeks to take back their land. After several battles and changes of fortune, the Greeks finally won back some of their former lands, with the aid of Britain, France and Russia, forming a small kingdom in 1832, with Otto of Bavaria as King of Greece.

Otto decided to make his new capital Athens, which at that time was a small city inhabited mostly by Albanian-speaking rebels. Being a Westerner, Otto's vision of Greece was to restore the former glory of Ancient Greece, Aristotle's Greece, whom the Greeks themselves had largely forgotten. He set in motion Greece's appreciation for its legacy, and a mission to recapture its former territory, which became known as the Great Idea.

In 1912-20 an alliance of Balkan states backed by Western Allies managed to carve up more former Ottoman territory, and a Greek army landed in Ionia, poised to recapture more territory in Anatolia. Just when the Great Idea looked to be fulfilled, Mustapha Kemal roused the demoralized Turks, drove out the Western invaders and established Turkey's modern borders. In the process he drove the Greek army out of Ionia, and set fire to Smyrna, killing over 100,000 Greeks and Armenians. Over a million Greeks in Anatolia were then exchanged for nearly a million Moslems in Europe. For the Greeks, the Great Idea became The Great Catastrophe.

