

Regions of Early Byzantium

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The Eastern Mediterranean of the Late Antique (Early Byzantine) time is characterized by a rather pronounced increase in regional differences and the revitalization of local cultural and ethno-religious traditions. In itself, this phenomenon is associated with the Christianization, which led to the departure from the strict Roman military and administrative standard, characterized by the appearance of alphabets of local languages and the emergence of local literature.

The Eastern Mediterranean from the time of Hellenism had several nodal centers, which in the Roman period underwent only a small adjustment.

The main cultural center and the first metropolis of the ancient world was Egyptian Alexandria. With all the difference between Egypt itself and Alexandria, it should be recognized that this region was the center of knowledge, as philosophical and rhetorical schools worked there. Alexandria was an important church center, especially in the 4th – 5th centuries, which had a decisive influence on the events of the era of religious disputes. Egypt was the birthplace of monasticism, which allowed it to occupy a special niche among other provinces of the empire. However, over time, an important factor led to the growing gap between Egypt and the rest of the empire. This factor was the Monophysite religion of the majority of the population and the growth of Coptic "nationalism". As a result, in the 6th – early 7th centuries Egypt (with the exception of Alexandria) has already largely departed from general imperial affairs.

Another important area of the empire was Syria with Antioch as the capital. The Syrian ethnocultural element was also revived during Christianization. However, its development was complicated by the fact that the percentage of "Syrianism" grew eastward and went beyond the political

borders of the empire in the east. In addition, the Syrians were not confessionally uniform. They were divided into three churches, which were in a difficult relationship. The region was conquered by the Arabs by the 640s.

A separate region, small but important, was Palestine, whose special role was determined by the emerging cult of the Holy Places (Holy Land) led by Jerusalem. Ethnographically, a difficult situation was observed here as well: Christians, Gentiles, Jews, Samaritans lived in the strip together. The region became an important area of monasticism and the main center of pilgrimage. The region befell the fate of Syria during the Arab Islamic conquest.

Constantinople as the capital city of the empire did not rise overnight. In some respects, it was never able to surpass Alexandria and some other cities. The region around it was also small. But the proximity to imperial power made the capital an increasingly important city, as well as a church center.

The Greece of the late antique period to a large extent preserved the old traditions of philosophical education, which were most evident in the Athenian school. Along with this, there was an ancient Christian tradition, which prevailed during the 6th century. In the same century, the region began to experience the destructive raids of the Avars and Slavs, who gradually began to settle in the land and occupy certain areas of the country.

In the late ancient times, the Balkans had to experience some Hellenization, the spread of Greek at the expense of Latin. Despite the wide construction program of Justinian, the Danube border was unable to provide security, and the North Balkan provinces were the first to experience the horrors of the Avar and Slavic raids, which culminated in the settlement of the Bulgarians in Thrace in the former half of the 7th century.

Asia Minor was the largest region consisting of a number of separate areas. The most integrated into the late antique world was the west, where the largest cities existed and pagan tradition was preserved well into the 7th century. Asia Minor as a whole did not experience external intrusions and to a large extent preserved the traditions of continuous life in cities and rural settlements. The east of the region, Cappadocia, became the pillar of the Christian tradition in the 4th century.

The Cyprus of the late ancient times was not exposed to external threats. The main event of its history was the adoption of Christianity. Since the 5th century, the Church of Cyprus was among the first in the Eastern Mediterranean to achieve autocephaly.

Armenia, until the end of the 4th century, was part of the empire (western regions). In the 6th century it was all conquered by Byzantium. However, the integration of Armenia into the empire was not promoted by its natural geographical features and the princely system that came from here. In addition, Christianity in pre-Chalcedonian form adopted in 301 became, over time, a cause of departure from Byzantium, while maintaining

a great cultural community with. In the 7th century, Armenia was conquered by the Arabs.

Africa in the Early Byzantine world was a special region. It was recaptured by Justinian in the early 6th century after the centennial rule of the Vandals. The region was one of the western Latin provinces. Then it fell into the political orbit of Constantinople. Being on the outskirts, the region early acquired peculiar features of the administrative structure; exarchate existed there during the 7th century. The area was later conquered by the Arabs in the late 7th century.

Italy was reconquered by Justinian in the 6th century as a result of the fierce Gothic War. The power of the empire was restored for a short time. This was more of a symbolic meaning than a long-term prospect, though. Since the late 6th century, the empire retained only some territories in Italy (Ravenna).

Spain became part of Byzantium under Justinian with its southeastern provinces. This was the farthest region of the empire, which did not have a serious impact on its development and cultural condition.

On the whole, despite the deepening of regional and ethno-cultural differences, the Eastern Mediterranean (Byzantium) retained not only cultural, but also political unity almost until the middle of the 7th century.

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