Chapter 9

Civilization in Eastern Europe: Byzantium and Orthodox Europe

I. Introduction

A. Two major civilizations

1. Byzantine – Orthodox Christianity

a. Maintained high level of political, economic, cultural life

b. Leaders saw selves as Roman Emperors

c. Empire lasted for 1000 years until Turkish invaders

d. Constantinople – most opulent, important city in Europe

e. Spread civilization to previously uncivilized areas

i. Russia, Balkans

ii. Russia inherits empire from Byzantine

2. West – Catholicism

B. Similarities

1. Both influenced by Islam

2. Both civilizations spread northward

3. Polytheism gave way to monotheism

a. Some syncretism – old religious beliefs maintained

4. Northern areas struggled for political definition

5. New trading activities – N. South

6. Looked back to Greco-Roman past – borrowed

C. Differences

1. Different, sometimes hostile versions of Christianity

2. Little mutual contact

a. Trade didn’t go east/west

3. East more advanced politically, culturally, economically

II. The Byzantine Empire

1. Origins of the Empire
   1. 4th century CE – eastern capital Constantinople - Constantine
      1. elegant buildings
      2. Christian churches
      3. Greek becomes used language – Latin looked at as inferior
      4. High levels of commerce
      5. Recruited armies from barbarians
      6. Emperor kept separate
2. Justinian’s Achievements
   1. 533 – a “moron” tried to reconquer western territory
   2. Successes
      1. Rebuilding Constantinople – architecture – Hagia Sophia
      2. Codification of Roman Law
3. reduced confusion

ii. organized empire

iii. spread Roman legal principles

c. W/ general Belisarius – conquered N. Africa

3. Failures

a. Unable to take/hold Italian empire

b. Westward expansion weakened his empire

1. Persian forces attacked from East

2. New tax pressure

C. Arab Pressure and the Empire’s Defenses

1. New focus after Justinian – defending boundaries

a. Withstood invasions of Arab Muslims in 7th century

1. Greek fire devastated Arab ships

2. Even though victory, but…

1. constant threat on borders

2. new economic burdens

3. less power for farmers > greater power to aristocratic generals

2. Slavic kingdoms – Bulgaria – pushed on empire

a. Marriages and military success helped unite regions

b. 1014 – Bulgaroktonos – defeated Bulgaria

1. Became most powerful monarch on earth

2. Capital city had awesome buildings, entertainment

D. Byzantine Society and Politics

1. Similar to early China

a. ordained by God – head of church and state

b. passed religious and secular laws

c. Elaborate court rituals

1. Kept separate

2. Immobilized rulers, prevented innovativeness

2. …but, women held imperial throne

a. Theodora – daughter or emperor, but refused to marry heir, sister did

1. Forced to live in monastery

2. Claimed control in 70

a. Checked power of unruly nobles

b. Limited bureaucratic corruption

c. Severely retaliated against political enemies

3. Maintaining order

a. Bureaucrats

1. Trained in Greek classics, philosophy and sciences

2. Recruited from all social classes

b. Officials close to emperor – eunuchs

c. Provincial leaders appointed from center

d. Spies everywhere

e. Military organization

1. Recruit and offer land

2. Military leaders could gain regional powr

f. Economically – hands on

1. Controlled food prices/regulated trade

2. Prices kept artificially low for urban rich

3. Trade – silk production, luxury goods – only China’s could compete

a. But merchants didn’t gain a lot of prestige, power

4. Cultural life

a. Relatively conservative – little innovation

b. Art and architecture

1. adapted Roman domed buildings

2. religious mosaics

3. icon painting

a. blue and gold backgrounds + richly dressed figures

b. brilliance of heaven

c. led to iconoclast movement – should they be destroyed

E. The Split Between East and West

1. Different focus

a. East economic orientation, link to Asia more than Europe

2. Disagreement

a. papal attempts to interfere over icons

b. Charlemagne claims to be Roman emperor

c. Rituals in Latin, not Greek

d. pope as first bishop

e. religious art

f. celibacy for priests

3. 1054 Schism – split between Roman Church and Eastern Orthodox

F. The Empire’s Decline

1. Invasion – 11th century – Seljuk Turks

a. Cut off source of tax revenue

b. Cut off food supplying territory

2. Creation of independent Slavic kingdoms

3. During Crusades – Italian merchant cities – Venice – gained trading advantages

4. 1453 – Turkish sultan brought army w/ artillery

5. Importance

a. Anchored vital corner of Mediterranean

b. Key trading contacts

c. Maintained classical learning

d. Spread Christian learning

III. The Spread of Civilization in Eastern Europe

1. Introduction
   1. Contacts with Russia due to missionary activity and trade routes
   2. Regional kingdoms formed
   3. Brought to an end by Mongol invasions
   4. Missionaries
      1. Cyril and Methodius – created written script for language
      2. Slavic alphabet – Cyrillic
      3. \*\*\*Difference – religion allowed to have vernacular/local languages – not Latin
2. The East Central Borderlands
   1. Balkans – area of competition between east and western political models
   2. Moderately active trade and industry
   3. Influx of Jews
      1. barred from agriculture
      2. resented by Christian majority
      3. forced to take commerce jobs
      4. emphasis on education and literacy
      5. able to govern selves
      6. developed distinguished culture
3. The Emergence of Kievan Rus’
   1. Byzantine influence formative period for Russian civilization, but nothing yet
   2. Early culture in this region
      1. Animist
      2. Strong family tribes/villages
      3. folk music, oral legend
      4. Maintained animist religion – gods of sun, thunder, wind and fire
   3. Scandinavian traders set up trade stop at Kiev
      1. monarchy emerged
      2. Rurik, Denmark native, became first monarch
      3. Russia – Greek word for “red” – hair color of Norse traders
      4. Vladimir I – 980-1015 – converted to Christianity, and on behalf of people
4. Constantine/Theodisius all in one
5. Forced conversions
6. Chose Orthodox instead of Roman Catholicism
   1. reject influence of pope
   2. not accept a religion that forbade alcohol
   3. splendor of Orthodox religious ceremonies
7. Became largest state in Europe – though decentralized
   1. Created formal law codes
8. Institutions and Culture in Kievan Rus’
   1. Kievan Rus could not replicate Byzantine
      1. bureaucracy
      2. elaborate educational system
   2. Borrowed from Byzantine
      1. devotion to power of God/saints
      2. ceremonies and luxury
      3. ornate churches
      4. monogamy replaced polygamy
      5. almsgiving – obligation to poor
      6. Russian literature
9. mixture of religious and royal events

ii. tone of God being wrathful due to wickedness and then saving the day

* + 1. art – icons, illuminated manuscripts
    2. religious art rivaled by local music, street performers, theater
    3. social structure

i.fairly free farmers

ii.boyars – aristocrats – less political power

1. Kievan Decline
   1. Rival princes set up regional governments
   2. Rapid decline of Byzantium

a. relied on prosperity/manufacturing of southern neighbor

3. 1237-1241 Mongol Invasion

a. Tatars control – two centuries

1. literature languished

2. trade lapsed

3. north-south commerce never returned

4. left day to day control to locals

4. When Constantinople falls in 1453, Russia claims throne of east European leadership

a. “third, new Rome”

F. The End of an Era in Eastern Europe

1. After Turks, Mongols – Eastern Europe fell on hard times

a. East and West on different trajectories

1. Western Europe free from outside control

2. West continued focus on political, economic, cultural advancement

2. Christianity remained

3. Church-state relations remained

4. Pride in artistic culture remained

IV. Global Connections

1. Byzantine Empire key – Constantinople key trading city
2. Russia became dependent on Constantinople

C. With coming of Mongols – led to unusual isolation