

= Byzantine Greeks =

The Byzantine Greeks or Byzantines were the medieval Greek or Hellenised citizens of the Byzantine Empire ( Eastern Roman Empire ) , centered mainly in Constantinople , the southern Balkans , the Greek islands , Asia Minor ( modern Turkey ) , Cyprus and the large urban centres of the Levant and northern Egypt . Throughout the Middle Ages , the Byzantine Greeks self @-@ identified as Rhōmaîoi ( Greek : ??????? pronounced [ ro?mei ] , " Romans " ) and Graikoi ( ??????? , " Greeks " ) , but are referred to as " Byzantines " and " Byzantine Greeks " in modern historiography . The terms " Byzantine Empire " and " Byzantine Greeks " were first coined in the English language by British historian George Finlay .

The social structure of the Byzantine Greeks was primarily supported by a rural , agrarian base that consisted of the peasantry , and a small fraction of the poor . These peasants lived within three kinds of settlements : the chorion or village , the agridion or hamlet , and the proasteion or estate . Many civil disturbances that occurred during the time of the Byzantine Empire were attributed to political factions within the Empire rather than to this large popular base . Soldiers among the Byzantine Greeks were at first conscripted amongst the rural peasants and trained on an annual basis . As the Byzantine Empire entered the 11th century , more of the soldiers within the army were either professional men @-@ at @-@ arms or mercenaries .

Until the twelfth century , education within the Byzantine Greek population was more advanced than in the West , particularly at primary school level , resulting in comparatively high literacy rates . Success came easily to Byzantine Greek merchants , who enjoyed a very strong position in international trade . Despite the challenges posed by rival Italian merchants , they held their own throughout the latter half of the Byzantine Empire 's existence . The clergy also held a special place , not only having more freedom than their Western counterparts , but also maintaining a patriarch in Constantinople who was considered the equal of the pope . This position of strength had built up over time , for at the beginning of the Byzantine Empire , under Emperor Constantine the Great ( reigned 306 ? 337 ) , only a small part , about 10 % , of the population was Christian .

The language of the Byzantine Greeks since the age of Constantine had been Greek , although Latin was the language of the administration . From the reign of Emperor Heraclius ( reigned 610 ? 641 ) , Greek was the predominant language amongst the populace and also replaced Latin in administration . At first the Byzantine Empire had a multi @-@ ethnic character , but following the loss of the non @-@ Greek speaking provinces it came to be dominated by the Byzantine Greeks . Over time , the relationship between them and the West , particularly with Latin Europe , deteriorated .

Relations were further damaged by a schism between the Catholic West and Orthodox East that led to the Byzantine Greeks being labeled as heretics in the West . Throughout the later centuries of the Byzantine Empire and particularly following the coronation of Charlemagne ( reigned as king of the Franks 768 ? 814 ) in Rome in 800 , the Byzantine Greeks were not considered by Western Europeans as heirs of the Roman Empire , but rather as part of an Eastern kingdom made up of Greek peoples . However , the Byzantine Empire could claim to be the Roman Empire , continuing the unbroken line of succession of the Roman emperors .

= Terminology =

During most of the Middle Ages , the Byzantine Greeks identified themselves as Rhōmaîoi ( ??????? , " Romans " , meaning citizens of the Roman Empire ) , a term which in the Greek language had become synonymous with Christian Greeks . They also identified themselves as Graikoi ( ??????? , " Greeks " ) ; the ethnonym was used habitually for self @-@ referential purposes except in official Byzantine political correspondence prior to the Fourth Crusade of 1204 . The ancient name Hellene was in popular use synonymous to " pagan " and was revived as an ethnonym in the Middle Byzantine period ( 11th century ) .

While in the West the term " Roman " acquired a new meaning in connection with the Catholic Church and the Bishop of Rome , the Greek form " Romaioi " remained attached to the Greeks of

the Eastern Roman Empire . These people called themselves Romaioi ( Romans ) in their language , and the term " Byzantines " or " Byzantine Greeks " is an exonym applied by later historians like Hieronymus Wolf . However , the use of the term " Byzantine Greeks " for the Romaioi is not entirely uncontroversial .

Most historians agree that the defining features of their civilization were : 1 ) Greek language , culture , literature , and science , 2 ) Roman law and tradition , 3 ) Christian faith . The term " Byzantine " has been adopted by Western scholarship on the assumption that anything Roman is essentially " Western " , and also by modern Greek scholarship for nationalistic reasons of identification with ancient Greece . In modern times , the Greek people still use the ethnonyms " Romaioi " ( or rather " Romioi " ) and " Graikoi " to refer to themselves . In addition , the Eastern Roman Empire was in language and civilization a Greek society .

Byzantinist August Heisenberg ( 1869 ? 1930 ) defined the Byzantine Empire as " the Christianised Roman empire of the Greek nation " . Byzantium was primarily known as the Empire of the Greeks by foreigners due to the predominance of Greek linguistic , cultural , and demographic elements .

= = Historic perspective = =

Byzantine Greeks , forming the majority of the Byzantine Empire proper at the height of its power , gradually came under the dominance of foreign powers with the decline of the Empire during the Middle Ages . Mostly coming under Arab Muslim rule , Byzantine Greeks either fled their former lands or subdued to the new Muslim rulers , receiving the status of Dhimmi . Over the centuries surviving Christian societies of former Byzantine Greeks evolved into Antiochian Greeks , Melchites or merged into the societies of Arab Christians , existing to this day .

On the other hand , other Byzantines converted to Islam and underwent Turkification over time , mainly those in Anatolia .

= = Society = =

While social mobility was not unknown in Byzantium the order of society was thought of as more enduring , with the average man regarding the court of Heaven to be the archetype of the imperial court in Constantinople . This society included various classes of people that were neither exclusive nor immutable . The most characteristic were the poor , the peasants , the soldiers , the teachers , entrepreneurs , and clergy .

= = = The poor = = =

According to a text dated to AD 533 , a man was termed " poor " if he did not have 50 gold coins ( aurei ) , which was a modest though not negligible sum . The Byzantines were heirs to the Greek concepts of charity for the sake of the polis ; nevertheless it was the Christian concepts attested in the Bible that animated their giving habits , and specifically the examples of Basil of Caesarea ( who is the Greek equivalent of Santa Claus ) , Gregory of Nyssa , and John Chrysostom . The number of the poor fluctuated in the many centuries of Byzantium 's existence , but they provided a constant supply of muscle power for the building projects and rural work . Their numbers apparently increased in the late fourth and early fifth centuries as barbarian raids and a desire to avoid taxation pushed rural populations into cities .

Since Homeric times , there were several categories of poverty : the ptochos ( Greek : ?????? , " passive poor " ) was lower than the penes ( Greek : ????? , " active poor " ) . They formed the majority of the infamous Constantinopolitan mob whose function was similar to the mob of the First Rome . However , while there are instances of riots attributed to the poor , the majority of civil disturbances were specifically attributable to the various factions of the Hippodrome like the Greens and Blues . The poor made up a non @-@ negligible percentage of the population , but they influenced the Christian society of Byzantium to create a large network of hospitals ( Greek : ??????? , iatreia ) and almshouses , and a religious and social model largely justified by the

existence of the poor and born out of the Christian transformation of classical society .

### = = = Peasantry = = =

There are no reliable figures as to the numbers of the peasantry , yet it is widely assumed that the vast majority of Byzantines lived in rural and agrarian areas . In the Taktika of Emperor Leo VI the Wise ( r . 886 ? 912 ) , the two professions defined as the backbone of the state are the peasantry ( Greek : γεωργικη , ge?rgik? ) and the soldiers ( Greek : στρατιωτικη , strati?tik? ) . The reason for this was that besides producing most of the Empire 's food the peasants also produced most of its taxes .

Peasants lived mostly in villages , whose name changed slowly from the classical kome ( Greek : κομη ) to the modern chorio ( Greek : χωριον ) . While agriculture and herding were the dominant occupations of villagers they were not the only ones . There are records for the small town of Lampsakos , situated on the eastern shore of the Hellespont , which out of 173 households classifies 113 as peasant and 60 as urban , which indicate other kinds of ancillary activities .

The Treatise on Taxation , preserved in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice , distinguishes between three types of rural settlements , the chorion ( Greek : χωριον ) or village , the agridion ( Greek : αgridιον ) or hamlet , and the proasteion ( Greek : προαστειον ) or estate . According to a 14th @-@ century survey of the village of Aphetos , donated to the monastery of Chilandar , the average size of a landholding is only 3 @.@ 5 modioi ( 0 @.@ 08 ha ) . Taxes placed on rural populations included the kapnikon ( Greek : καπνικον ) or hearth tax , the synone ( Greek : συνονη ) or cash payment frequently affiliated with the kapnikon , the ennomion ( Greek : εννομιον ) or pasture tax , and the aerikon ( Greek : αερικον , meaning " of the air " ) which depended on the village 's population and ranged between 4 and 20 gold coins annually .

Their diet consisted of mainly grains and beans and in fishing communities fish was usually substituted for meat . Bread , wine , and olives were important staples of Byzantine diet with soldiers on campaign eating double @-@ baked and dried bread called paximadion ( Greek : παξιμαδιον ) . As in antiquity and modern times , the most common cultivations in the choraphia ( Greek : χοραφια ) were olive groves and vineyards . While Liutprand of Cremona , a visitor from Italy , found Greek wine irritating as it was often flavoured with resin ( retsina ) most other Westerners admired Greek wines , Cretan in particular being famous .

While both hunting and fishing were common , the peasants mostly hunted to protect their herds and crops . Apiculture , the keeping of bees , was as highly developed in Byzantium as it had been in Ancient Greece . Aside from agriculture , the peasants also laboured in the crafts , fiscal inventories mentioning smiths ( Greek : χαλκευς , chalkeus ) , tailors ( Greek : ραπτης , rhaps ) , and cobblers ( Greek : τζανγκιος , tzangarios ) .

### = = = Soldiers = = =

During the Byzantine millennium , hardly a year passed without a military campaign . Soldiers were a normal part of everyday life , much more so than in modern Western societies . While it is difficult to draw a distinction between Roman and Byzantine soldiers from an organizational aspect , it is easier to do so in terms of their social profile . The military handbooks known as the Taktika continued a Hellenistic and Roman tradition , and contain a wealth of information about the appearance , customs , habits , and life of the soldiers .

As with the peasantry , many soldiers performed ancillary activities , like medics and technicians . Selection for military duty was annual with yearly call @-@ ups and great stock was placed on military exercises , during the winter months , which formed a large part of a soldier 's life .

Until the 11th century , the majority of the conscripts were from rural areas , while the conscription of craftsmen and merchants is still an open question . From then on , professional recruiting replaced conscription , and the increasing use of mercenaries in the army was ruinous for the treasury . From the 10th century onwards , there were laws connecting land ownership and military service . While the state never allotted land for obligatory service , soldiers could and did use their

pay to buy landed estates , and taxes would be decreased or waived in some cases . What the state did allocate to soldiers , however , from the 12th century onwards , were the tax revenues from some estates called pronoiar ( Greek : ??????? ) . As in antiquity , the basic food of the soldier remained the dried biscuit bread , though its name had changed from boukelaton ( Greek : ??????? ) to paximadion .

= = = Teachers = = =

Byzantine education was the product of an ancient Greek educational tradition that stretched back to the 5th century BC . It comprised a tripartite system of education that , taking shape during the Hellenistic era , was maintained , with inevitable changes , up until the fall of Constantinople . The stages of education were the elementary school , where pupils ranged from six to ten years , secondary school , where pupils ranged from ten to sixteen , and higher education .

Elementary education was widely available throughout most of the Byzantine Empire 's existence , in towns and occasionally in the countryside . This , in turn , ensured that literacy was much more widespread than in Western Europe , at least until the twelfth century . Secondary education was confined to the larger cities while higher education was the exclusive provenance of Constantinople .

Though not a society of modern mass literacy , Byzantine society was a profoundly literate one . Based on information from an extensive array of Byzantine documents from different periods ( i.e. homilies , Ecloga , etc . ) , Robert Browning concluded that functional literacy ( reading and writing ) , access to elementary education and even book ownership ( for those who could afford books ) were widespread in Byzantium ( i.e. cities , monasteries , countryside , etc . ) . Nikolaos Oikonomides , focusing on 13th @-@ century Byzantine literacy in Western Asia Minor , states that Byzantine society had " a completely literate church , an almost completely literate aristocracy , some literate horsemen , rare literate peasants and almost completely illiterate women . " Ioannis Stouraitis estimates that the percentage of the Empire 's population with some degree of literacy was at most 15 ? 20 % based primarily on the mention of illiterate Byzantine tourmarchai in the *Tactica* of Emperor Leo VI the Wise ( r . 886 ? 912 ) .

In Byzantium , the elementary school teacher occupied a low social position and taught mainly from simple fairy tale books ( Aesop 's Fables were often used ) . However , the grammarian and rhetorician , teachers responsible for the following two phases of education , were more respected . These used classical Greek texts like Homer 's *Iliad* or *Odyssey* and much of their time was taken with detailed word @-@ for @-@ word explication . Books were rare and very expensive and likely only possessed by teachers who dictated passages to students .

= = = Women = = =

Women have tended to be overlooked in Byzantine studies as Byzantine society left few records about them . Women were disadvantaged in some aspects of their legal status and in their access to education , and limited in their freedom of movement . The life of a Byzantine Greek woman could be divided into three phases : girlhood , motherhood , and widowhood .

Childhood was brief and perilous , even more so for girls than boys . Parents would celebrate the birth of a boy twice as much and there is some evidence of female infanticide ( i.e. roadside abandonment and suffocation ) , though it was contrary to both civil and canon law . Educational opportunities for girls were few : they did not attend regular schools but were taught in groups at home by tutors . With few exceptions , education was limited to literacy and the Bible ; a famous exception is the Princess Anna Comnena , whose *Alexiad* displays a great depth of erudition . The majority of a young girl 's daily life would be spent in household and agrarian chores , preparing herself for marriage .

For most girls , childhood came to an end with the onset of puberty , which was followed shortly after by betrothal and marriage . Although marriage arranged by the family was the norm , romantic love was not unknown . Most women bore many children but few survived infancy , and grief for the

loss of a loved one was an inalienable part of life . The main form of birth control was abstinence , and while there is evidence of contraception it seems to have been mainly used by prostitutes .

Due to prevailing norms of modesty , women would wear clothing that covered the whole of their body except their hands . While women among the poor sometimes wore sleeveless tunics , most women were obliged to cover even their hair with the long maphorion ( Greek : ????????? ) veil . Women of means , however , spared no expense in adorning their clothes with exquisite jewelry and fine silk fabrics . Divorces were hard to obtain even though there were laws permitting them . Husbands would often beat their wives , though the reverse was not unknown , as in Theodore Prodromos 's description of a battered husband in the Ptochoprodromos poems .

Although female life expectancy in Byzantium was lower than that of men , due to death in childbirth , wars and the fact that men married younger , female widowhood was still fairly common . Still , some women were able to circumvent societal strictures and work as traders , artisans , abbots , entertainers , and scholars .

= = = Entrepreneurs = = =

The traditional image of Byzantine Greek merchants as unenterprising benefactors of state aid is beginning to change for that of mobile , pro @-@ active agents . The merchant class , particularly that of Constantinople , became a force of its own that could , at times , even threaten the Emperor as it did in the eleventh and twelfth centuries . This was achieved through efficient use of credit and other monetary innovations . Merchants invested surplus funds in financial products called chreokoinonia ( Greek : ????????????? ) , the equivalent and perhaps ancestor of the later Italian commenda .

Eventually , the purchasing power of Byzantine merchants became such that it could influence prices in markets as far afield as Cairo and Alexandria . In reflection of their success , emperors gave merchants the right to become members of the Senate , that is to integrate themselves with the ruling elite . This had an end by the end of the eleventh century when political machinations allowed the landed aristocracy to secure the throne for a century and more . Following that phase , however , the enterprising merchants bounced back and wielded real clout during the time of the Third Crusade .

The reason Byzantine Greek merchants have often been neglected in historiography is not that they were any less able than their ancient or modern Greek colleagues in matters of trade . It rather originated with the way history was written in Byzantium , which was often under the patronage of their competitors , the court , and land aristocracy . The fact that they were eventually surpassed by their Italian rivals is attributable to the privileges sought and acquired by the Crusader States within the Levant and the dominant maritime violence of the Italians .

= = = Clergy = = =

Unlike in Western Europe where priests were clearly demarcated from the laymen , the clergy of the Eastern Roman Empire remained in close contact with the rest of society . Readers and subdeacons were drawn from the laity and expected to be at least twenty years of age while priests and bishops had to be at least 30 . Unlike the Latin church , the Byzantine church allowed married priests and deacons , as long as they were married before ordination . Bishops , however , were required to be unmarried .

While the religious hierarchy mirrored the Empire 's administrative divisions , the clergy were more ubiquitous than the emperor 's servants . The issue of caesaropapism , while usually associated with the Byzantine Empire , is now understood to be an oversimplification of actual conditions in the Empire . By the fifth century , the Patriarch of Constantinople was recognized as first among equals of the four eastern Patriarchs and as of equal status with the Pope in Rome .

The ecclesiastical provinces were called eparchies and were headed by archbishops or metropolitans who supervised their subordinate bishops or episkopoi . For most people , however , it was their parish priest or papas ( from the Greek word for " father " ) that was the most recognizable

face of the clergy .

= = Culture = =

= = = Language = = =

Linguistically , Byzantine or medieval Greek is situated between the Hellenistic ( Koine ) and modern phases of the language . Since as early as the Hellenistic era , Greek had been the lingua franca of the educated elites of the Eastern Mediterranean , spoken natively in the southern Balkans , the Greek islands , Asia Minor , and the ancient and Hellenistic Greek colonies of Southern Italy , the Black Sea , Western Asia and North Africa . At the beginning of the Byzantine millennium , the koine ( Greek : ????? ) remained the basis for spoken Greek and Christian writings , while Attic Greek was the language of the philosophers and orators .

As Christianity became the dominant religion , Attic began to be used in Christian writings in addition to and often interspersed with koine Greek . Nonetheless , from the 6th at least until the 12th century , Attic remained entrenched in the educational system ; while further changes to the spoken language can be postulated for the early and middle Byzantine periods .

The population of the Byzantine Empire , at least in its early stages , had a variety of mother tongues including Greek . These included Latin , Aramaic , Coptic , and Caucasian languages , while Cyril Mango also cites evidence for bilingualism in the south and southeast . These influences , as well as an influx of people of Arabic , Celtic , Germanic , Turkic , and Slavic backgrounds , supplied medieval Greek with many loanwords that have survived in the modern Greek language . From the 11th century onward , there was also a steady rise in the literary use of the vernacular .

Following the Fourth Crusade , there was increased contact with the West ; and the lingua franca of commerce became Italian . In the areas of the Crusader kingdoms a classical education ( Greek : ??????? , paideia ) ceased to be a sine qua non of social status , leading to the rise of the vernacular . From this era many beautiful works in the vernacular , often written by people deeply steeped in classical education , are attested . A famous example is the four Ptochoprodromic poems attributed to Theodoros Prodromos . From the 13th to the 15th centuries , the last centuries of the Empire , there arose several works , including laments , fables , romances , and chronicles , written outside Constantinople , which until then had been the seat of most literature , in an idiom termed by scholars as " Byzantine Koine " .

However , the diglossia of the Greek @-@ speaking world , which had already started in ancient Greece , continued under Ottoman rule and persisted in the modern Greek state until 1976 , although Koine Greek remains the official language of the Greek Orthodox Church . As shown in the poems of Ptochoprodromos , an early stage of modern Greek had already been shaped by the 12th century and possibly earlier . Vernacular Greek continued to be known as " Romaic " until the 20th century .

= = = Religion = = =

At the time of Constantine the Great ( r . 306 ? 337 ) , barely 10 % of the Roman Empire 's population were Christians , with most of them being urban population and generally found in the eastern part of the Roman Empire . The majority of people still honoured the old gods in the public Roman way of religio . As Christianity became a complete philosophical system , whose theory and apologetics were heavily indebted to the Classic word , this changed . In addition , Constantine , as Pontifex Maximus , was responsible for the correct cultus or veneratio of the deity which was in accordance with former Roman practice . The move from the old religion to the new entailed some elements of continuity as well as break with the past , though the artistic heritage of paganism was literally broken by Christian zeal .

Christianity led to the development of a few phenomena characteristic of Byzantium . Namely , the intimate connection between Church and State , a legacy of Roman cultus . Also , the creation of a

Christian philosophy that guided Byzantine Greeks in their everyday lives . And finally , the dichotomy between the Christian ideals of the Bible and classical Greek paideia which could not be left out , however , since so much of Christian scholarship and philosophy depended on it . These shaped Byzantine Greek character and the perceptions of themselves and others .

Christians at the time of Constantine 's conversion made up only 10 % of the population . This would rise to 50 % by the end of the fourth century and 90 % by the end of the fifth century . Emperor Justinian I ( r . 527 ? 565 ) then brutally mopped up the rest of the pagans , highly literate academics on one end of the scale and illiterate peasants on the other . A conversion so rapid seems to have been rather the result of expediency than of conviction .

The survival of the Empire in the East assured an active role of the emperor in the affairs of the Church . The Byzantine state inherited from pagan times the administrative and financial routine of organising religious affairs , and this routine was applied to the Christian Church . Following the pattern set by Eusebius of Caesarea , the Byzantines viewed the emperor as a representative or messenger of Christ , responsible particularly for the propagation of Christianity among pagans , and for the " externals " of the religion , such as administration and finances . The imperial role in the affairs of the Church never developed into a fixed , legally defined system , however .

With the decline of Rome , and internal dissension in the other Eastern patriarchates , the church of Constantinople became , between the 6th and 11th centuries , the richest and most influential centre of Christendom . Even when the Byzantine Empire was reduced to only a shadow of its former self , the Church , as an institution , exercised so much influence both inside and outside the imperial frontiers as never before . As George Ostrogorsky points out :

" The Patriarchate of Constantinople remained the center of the Orthodox world , with subordinate metropolitan sees and archbishoprics in the territory of Asia Minor and the Balkans , now lost to Byzantium , as well as in Caucasus , Russia and Lithuania . The Church remained the most stable element in the Byzantine Empire . "

In terms of religion , Byzantine Greek Macedonia is also significant as being the home of Saints Cyril and Methodius , two Greek brothers from Thessaloniki ( Salonika ) who were sent on state @-@ sponsored missions to proselytize among the Slavs of the Balkans and east @-@ central Europe . This involved Cyril and Methodius having to translate the Christian Bible into the Slavs ' own language , for which they invented an alphabet that became known as Old Church Slavonic . In the process , this cemented the Greek brothers ' status as the pioneers of Slavic literature and those who first introduced Byzantine civilization and Orthodox Christianity to the hitherto illiterate and pagan Slavs .

= = Identity = =

= = = Self @-@ perception = = =

Within the Byzantine Empire , a Greek or Hellenised citizen was generally called a *Rhōmaïos* ( ??????? ) , which was first of all defined in opposition to a foreigner , *ethnikós* ( Greek : ??????? ) . The Byzantine Greeks were , and perceived themselves as , the descendants of their classical Greek forebears , the political heirs of imperial Rome , and followers of the Apostles . Thus , their sense of " Romanity " was different from that of their contemporaries in the West . " Romaic " was the name of the vulgar Greek language , as opposed to " Hellenic " which was its literary or doctrinal form . " Greek " ( ??????? ) had become synonymous with " Roman " ( ??????? ) and " Christian " ( ????????? ) to mean a Christian Greek citizen of the [ Eastern ] Roman Empire . There was always an element of indifference or neglect of everything non @-@ Greek , which was therefore " barbarian " .

= = = Official discourse = = =

In official discourse , " all inhabitants of the empire were subjects of the emperor , and therefore

Claims of association with Hellenism continued and increased throughout the Palaiologan dynasty . The scholar , teacher , and translator , John Argyropoulos , addressed Emperor John VIII Palaiologos ( r . 1425 ? 1448 ) as " Sun King of Hellas " and urged the last Byzantine emperor , Constantine XI Palaiologos ( r . 1449 ? 1453 ) , to proclaim himself " King of the Hellenes " . During the same period , the neo @-@ platonic philosopher George Gemistos Plethon boasted " We are Hellenes by race and culture , " and proposed a reborn Byzantine Empire following a utopian Hellenic system of government centered in Mystras . According to the historian George Sphrantzes , on the eve of the Fall of Constantinople , the last Byzantine emperor urged his soldiers to remember that they were the descendants of Greeks and Romans .



= = = Western perception = = =

In the eyes of the West , after the coronation of Charlemagne , the Byzantines were not acknowledged as the inheritors of the Roman Empire . Byzantium was rather perceived to be a corrupted continuation of ancient Greece , and was often derided as the " Empire of the Greeks " or " Kingdom of Greece " . Such denials of Byzantium 's Roman heritage and ecumenical rights would instigate the first resentments between Greeks and " Latins " ( for the Latin liturgical rite ) or " Franks " ( for Charlemagne 's ethnicity ) , as they were called by the Greeks .

Popular Western opinion is reflected in the *Translatio militiae* , whose anonymous Latin author states that the Greeks had lost their courage and their learning , and therefore did not join in the war against the infidels . In another passage , the ancient Greeks are praised for their military skill and their learning , by which means the author draws a contrast with contemporary Byzantine Greeks , who were generally viewed as a non @-@ warlike and schismatic people . While this reputation seems strange to modern eyes given the unceasing military operations of the Byzantines and their eight century struggle against Islam and Islamic states , it reflects the realpolitik sophistication of the Byzantines , who employed diplomacy and trade as well as armed force in foreign policy , and the high @-@ level of their culture in contrast to the zeal of the Crusaders and the ignorance and superstition of the medieval West . As historian Steven Runciman has put it :

" Ever since our rough crusading forefathers first saw Constantinople and met , to their contemptuous disgust , a society where everyone read and wrote , ate food with forks and preferred diplomacy to war , it has been fashionable to pass the Byzantines by with scorn and to use their name as synonymous with decadence " .

A turning point in how both sides viewed each other is probably the massacre of Latins in Constantinople in 1182 . The massacre followed the deposition of Maria of Antioch , a Norman @-@ Frankish ( therefore " Latin " ) princess who was ruling as regent to her infant son Emperor Alexios II Komnenos . Maria was deeply unpopular due to the heavy @-@ handed favoritism that had been shown the Italian merchants during the regency and popular celebrations of her downfall by the citizenry of Constantinople quickly turned to rioting and massacre . The event and the horrific reports of survivors inflamed religious tensions in the West , leading to the retaliatory sacking of Thessalonica , the empire 's second largest city , by William II of Sicily . An example of Western opinion at the time is the writings of William of Tyre , who described the " Greek nation " as " a brood of vipers , like a serpent in the bosom or a mouse in the wardrobe evilly requite their guests " .

= = = Modern scholarship = = =

In modern Byzantine scholarship , there are currently three main schools of thought on medieval Eastern Roman identity : one that treats it as the medieval manifestation of a perennial Greek national identity , one that considers " Romanity " the mode of self @-@ identification of the subjects of a multi @-@ ethnic empire and a third , recently promulgated by Anthony Kaldellis , that argues that Eastern Roman identity was a pre @-@ modern national identity .

= = = Ethnic , religious and political formations = = =