300 - 600 CE

OUTLINE:

6.2 BYZANTIUM: THE DOME AS AN ACT OF FAITH
The Central Plan Church: Rome, the Holy Land, Thessalonika
Ravenna: the Byzantine Satellite in Italy
Byzantion/ Constantinople

6.3 GUPTA INDIA: ROCK-CUT ARCHITECTURE AND THE ART OF SUBTRACTION

Byzantine architecture: style evolved at Constantinople in the 5th cent. and still the style of the Eastern or Greek [Orthodox] Church. (Fletcher)

iconoclasm: the banning and/or destruction of images especially icons and religious art. (Stokstad)
pillage: to loot or plunder by force, especially in time of war. (wiktionary)
sack: The plunder and pillaging of a captured town or city. (wiktionary)

Note:
• Constantine’s patronage in Trier, Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch, and his new capital of Constantinople established models for three major church types still in use: the aisleless basilica, the central-plan memorial church, the pavilion-like baptistery. (OUP)
• 380: Theodosius-I issued an edict establishing Christianity as a state religion. In 395 he enacted a ban against worship of the old gods.
• 404: Alaric and the Visigoths threatened to overrun Italy; Emperor Honorius moved the capital from Milan to Ravenna.
• 410: Alaric sacked Rome, and in 476 Ravenna “fell” to Germanic king Odoacer, later overthrown to Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, who made his capital at Ravenna in 493. Ravenna “fell” to Justinian in 539. (Gardner)
• Work tied by patronage or tradition to Constantinople is termed Byzantine. One characteristic of much Byzantine architecture is a clear preference for domes on churches, as the Byzantines, like the Romans saw the dome as symbolic of the heavenly sphere (Moffett)

Early Byzantine period ends in 726 with the onset of Iconoclasm. The Middle Byzantine period begins when veneration of icons is reinstated with the Empress Theodora in 843 and continues until the Crusaders take Constantinople in 1204. The Late Byzantine coincides with the retaking of Constantinople in 1261 and continues to its fall in 1453. (Stokstad) With iconoclasm many craftsmen left for Italy. When painted figures were again allowed, sculpture remained excluded. (Fletcher)

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• 529: Justinian closes the Academy in Athens. Pagan temples are torn down. Avars and Bulgars move into Balkans, and Lombards into the Italian peninsula. Trade was developing up the Volga; other trade was interrupted by the advances of Islamic armies. (Wiley)

• Byzantine art pervaded all of the Eastern Roman Empire as well as Greece, Serbia, Russia, Asia Minor and North Africa, as well as west to Venice and Ravenna. (Fletcher)

• As Orthodox Christianity has conserved its doctrine and ritual its architecture has become stereotyped in form. Iconography of Byzantine churches: Invariably pictures were arranged in a special order, the bust of Christ usually occupied the dome and the four Evangelists were set in the pendentives, the Virgin and Child were customarily located in the apse, while all round the walls were representations of the saints and incidents in
The division between the Early Christian and Byzantine eras is generally made at the reign of Justinian (527-65): a convenient marker to differentiate developments in the "east" and "west" of the empire. (Moffett)

Justinian, among other things, brought the Byzantine empire (briefly) to its greatest extent, not as great as had Trajan the Roman empire in 117.

- The division of the empire – there wasn’t one capital but actually six as along with Constantinople, Antioch, Nicomedia (near Constantinople), Milan, Trier, Cologne all of which were now refurbished as imperial residences. (Wiley)
Libya is not in Anatolia!!!
Title: Constantine the Great, from the Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine, Rome

Date: 325-326 CE  
Museum: Palazzo dei Conservatori, Capitoline Museums (Musei Capitolini) Rome  
Medium: Marble (but originally had bronze on a wood frame)  
Size: height of head 8'6" (2.6 m); ht. of statue if complete: approx. 40’ or 12 m.

Notes:

• The Byzantine empire begins in the 4th century with Constantine-I vanquishing his rivals to be the sole Roman Emperor (after the period when Rome had emperors in both “east” and “west” – the terms “east” and “west” are probably relics from this period.

• Constantine adopts a policy of toleration for Christianity, and later emperors rather than be tolerant, stamp out the pagan pantheist religions, and adopt Christianity as a state religion. Armenia had as well, and this is a relatively new concept, though not entirely new. The populace follows Orthodox Christianity and is highly involved in arcane theological disputes.

• Constantine moves the capitol of the empire to the town of Byzantion, which he renames as Constantinople (after guess who) and the city is officially consecrated in 330 AD.

• Rome of antiquity gradually morphs into what we now call Byzantium, though the Byzantines would have called themselves Romans, and later would identify as well as Greek. They began speaking Latin, but within a couple of centuries mainly spoke Greek. Unlike the ancient Romans, they increasingly identify as Christian. The populace is relatively literate and the ancient Greek philosophers and tragedians continue to be read.

• As Roman emperor he was Pontifex Maximus. The title was used until Gratian. (https://www.biblicaleyclopedia.com/P/pontifex-maximus.html

• The arts show a continuing, though waning influence of the Greeks and Romans of antiquity. Their own writing as well as their art are dominated by conventions, rather than originality.

• Twice the emperors enforce a period of iconoclasm. This may show an influence from the increasingly successful Arab and Islamic world.

• Constantinople is attacked and sieged several times over the centuries, only twice successfully.

• In 1204 the “Latin” crusaders take over the city but only hold it for 57 years. In 1453 the Ottomans siege the city and succeed because of the use of the biggest cannons of the day, and a surprise movement of ships.

• The Ottomans hold the city as the seat of their empire until WWI, when the nation of Turkey is established.

• For many scholars the transfer of power to Constantinople and the recognition of Christianity mark the beginning of the Middle Ages. (Gardner)
**Central Plan**: ground plan that is symmetrical in all directions (rather than an axial plan)

**Note:**
- The rectangular basilican church design was long the favorite of the Western Christian world. But Early Christian architects also adopted another classical architectural type: the central plan building in which parts are of equal or almost equal dimensions around the center. Roman central-plan buildings are generally polygonal or round domed structures. In the west, builders generally used the central plan for structures adjacent to the main basilicas, such as mausolea, baptisteries and private chapels rather than for churches as in the East. (Gardner)
- Byzantine architecture shows a clear preference for domes on both basilican and centrally planned churches. (Moffett)
CENTRAL PLAN CHURCHES

A-San Lorenzo Maggiore, Milan, 380's (in prior lecture)

B-Apostoleion/ The Church of the Holy Apostles, Constantinople, 330’s, no longer extant

C-San Vitale, Ravenna, 526

Title: Central Plan churches
Architect: Roman / Roman Byzantine
Date: see legend  Source: OUP
Medium: floor plans  Size: n/a

Note:
• generally equidistant on all axes from the crossing (though that’s not always the case).
centering: the wooden scaffold or form required to support a masonry vault or arch while under construction. (Moffett)
cross-in-square: another name for a quincunx plan. (Moffett)

**Greek cross:** cross with four arms of equal length often used in the plan of Byzantine churches

**quincunx:** the composition of a church using four domes placed around a larger central dome

Note:
- Like the Romans, the Byzantines saw the dome as symbolic of the heavenly sphere. (Moffett)
- Brickwork rather than concrete became characteristic of the Byzantines. Brickwork would be laid and interior slabs of marble would be added, attached with bronze clips – a separation of components. [Exterior] brickwork lends itself to decorative patterns. Domes had been traditional in the east, and became the prevailing motif of Byzantine architecture. Domes were now placed over square compartments by means of pendentives, whereas in Roman architecture domes were only used over circular or polygonal structures. Some domes were, it was believed, built without temporary support or ‘centering’ by the use of large flat bricks, [perhaps laid parallel to the dome radii]. (Fletcher)
- The cross in square or quincunx plan has nine bays with the central one domed and diminutive domes over the corners. Other sections are barrel vaulted. (Moffett)
Quincunx-Dome Greek Cross (Stokstad)

In the later period the domes would be hoisted on a drum, a feature which was still further developed in western Renaissance architecture by the addition of an external peristyle. Another characteristic feature of Byzantine churches was that the forms of the vaults and domes were [often] visible externally, undisguised by a timber roof. (Fletcher)
Title: Church of Santa Costanza, (outside of) Rome

Architect: sponsored by Costantia/ Costanza, daughter of Constantine-I

Date: 337-351, converted to a church, 1256

Source: Pearson Medium: plan and section

Size: interior of dome 40’ dia.

*ambulatory*: a processional passageway around a shrine or flanking the apse of a Christian church

*annular vaulted*: a curving vault set in a ring shaped pattern

*rotunda*: a round hall or building, usually topped with a dome.

Note:
- A centralized plan that is essentially an ambulatory.
- Constantine’s daughter sponsored a burial rotunda in Rome in 340, which became the church of Santa Costanza. It remains one of the best preserved works of the period. (OUP)
- Central plan Roman buildings with vertical (rather than longitudinal) axes served as models for Christian tombs, churches dedicated to martyrs and baptisteries. (Stokstad)
- Sta. Costanza has antecedents in the domed temples and mausolea of the Romans but its dome resting on 12 pairs of columns is new. The dome springs from a circular space, as in the Pantheon. (Gardner)
- It’s as if a basilican plan has been rotated around a central axis, and a section cut would look like that of a basilica. The dome rises above twelve clerestory windows. (between 12 pairs of columns - if that wouldn’t warm an architect’s heart…) The stairs descend to a crypt. (Moffett)
SANTA COSTANZA, ROME

Title: Church of Santa Costanza, Rome
Artist: Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778)
Date: 1835-9 (later…)
Source: Le antichità Romane, t. II, tav. XXII; wikipedia
Medium: etching
Size: n/a

Note:
- The predecessors were the tholos tombs of the Mycenaeans as well as domed Roman structures like the Pantheon. 
  Like Early Christian basilicas, Santa Costanza has a severe brick exterior. (Gardner)
- Not evident in this image, but the clerestory windows have a double set of voussoirs. (Moffett)
Title: Santa Costanza, Rome

Architect:
Roman Byzantine, sponsored by Costanza, daughter of Constantine-I

Date: 337-351

Source: Pearson

Medium:
Interior (view through ambulatory into rotunda), marble columns

Size: n/a

Note:
• Paired columns with composite capitals and richly molded entablature blocks support the arcade and dome. (Stokstad)
• This is the earliest instance of a dome resting on a colonnade. (Gardner)
SANTA COSTANZA, ROME

**Title:** Church of Santa Costanza. Ambulatory with harvesting mosaic. Niche at left with mosaic of Christ, Rome

**Architect:** Roman Byzantine, sponsored by Costanza, daughter of Constantine-I

**Date:** 337-351 CE  
**Source:** Canali Photobank, Capriolo (BS)

**Medium:** n/a  
**Size:** n/a

**Note:** the decoration on the ceiling

- Originally the interior was entirely sheathed in mosaics and veneers of fine marble; mosaics still surviving in the vault recall syncretic images in the catacombs. (Stokstad)
- The ambulatory is a ring-like barrel vaulted corridor, separated from the central domed cylinder by the columns. (Gardner)

 mosaic surface decoration formed by small cubes of glass or stone (tesserae) set in mortar or plaster
**Title: Harvesting of Grapes, Church of Santa Costanza, Rome**

**Architect:** Roman Byzantine, sponsored by Costanza, daughter of Constantine-I

**Date:** c. 350

**Source:** n/a

**Medium:** Mosaic in ambulatory vault, detail

**Size:** n/a

**putti:** naked cherubs, derived from pagan art (Stokstad)

**Note:**

- A bust portrait of Constantina at the crest of the vault is surrounded by a tangle of grapevines filled with putti, who vie with the birds to harvest the grapes. The technique and style are Roman, the subject traditional associated with Bacchus/Dionysos. The meaning here is new – in a Christian context, the wine refers to the Eucharist and the trampling of grapes becomes an image of death and resurrection. (Stokstad)

- It’s interior was once richly adorned with mosaics, although most are lost. Old and New Testament themes appeared side by side and subjects common in Roman funerary art, although they lent themselves to a Christian interpretation. (Gardner)
Title: Church / Basilica of the Nativity, Bethlehem

**Architect/ Date:** 325–326 commissioned by Constantine the Great a short time after his mother Helena's visit to Jerusalem and Bethlehem, on the site that was traditionally considered to be the birthplace of Jesus. Original basilica likely built 330–333, dedicated 339. 6th century, possibly 529: destroyed by fire during the Samaritan revolts. A new basilica was built a number of years later by Justinian. He added a porch or narthex, and replaced the octagonal sanctuary with a cruciform transept complete with three apses, but largely preserved the original character of the building, with an atrium and a basilica consisting of a nave with four side aisles.

**Source:** [http://www.mappery.com/Bethlehem-Tourist-Map](http://www.mappery.com/Bethlehem-Tourist-Map); wikipedia

**Medium:** map; drawing **Size:** n/a

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**Note:**
- This drawing (right) doesn’t make a whole lot of sense, as we see the side of the basilica as well as the dome head on.
- The church is surrounded by a high wall. It has 7th and 11th century mosaics. (Fletcher)
Church/Basilica of the Nativity, Bethlehem

**Architect/ Date:** originally commissioned by Constantine the Great a short time after his mother Helena's visit to Jerusalem and Bethlehem in 325–326, on the site that was traditionally considered to be the birthplace of Jesus. That original basilica was likely built between 330–333, and was dedicated 339. It was destroyed by fire during the Samaritan revolts of the 6th cent. possibly 529. A new basilica was built a number of years later by Justinian. He added a porch or narthex, and replaced the octagonal sanctuary with a cruciform transept complete with three apses, but largely preserved the original character of the building, with an atrium and a basilica consisting of a nave with four side aisles.

**Source:** [https://isis2.cc.oberlin.edu/images/Art335/335-061.JPG](https://isis2.cc.oberlin.edu/images/Art335/335-061.JPG); [http://architecturalmoleskine.blogspot.com/2010/12/](http://architecturalmoleskine.blogspot.com/2010/12/)

**Medium:** plan; reconstruction drawing

**Size:** see scales; columns are 5.8 m./19’ h.

**Constantine’s version** with an octagonal apse

**Justinian’s version** with triform apse and a narthex

**Note:** the two drawings are reconstructed differently.

- **Church of the Nativity, or Basilica of the Nativity** is a basilica located in Bethlehem in the West Bank. The grotto it contains holds a prominent religious significance to Christians of various denominations as the birthplace of Jesus. The grotto is the oldest site continuously used as a place of worship in Christianity, and the basilica is the oldest major church in the Holy Land. (wikipedia)

- This innovative building combines the form of a double aisle basilica with an atrium forecourt and an octagonal rotunda over the site of Jesus’s birth. It accommodates the functions of worship while providing circulation space required by pilgrims. (Moffett)
JERUSALEM, THE MADABA MAP

**Title:** Madaba map of Jerusalem, church of Saint George in Madaba, Jordan  
**Architect:** Roman Byzantine  
**Date:** c. 540-572  
**Source:** wikipedia  
**Medium:** mosaic floor, detail  
**Size:** n/a  
**Note:**
- The mosaic map of Madaba is the oldest known geographic floor mosaic in art history.  
- The mosaic clearly shows a number of significant structures in the Old City of Jerusalem: the Damascus Gate, the Lions' Gate, the Golden Gate, the Zion Gate, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the New Church of the Theotokos, the Tower of David and the Cardo Maximus. The recognizable depiction of the urban topography makes the mosaic a key source on Byzantine Jerusalem. (wikipedia)

- After seeing a vision of a cross in the sky in 312, Constantine the Great converted to Christianity, signed the Edict of Milan legalizing the religion, and sent his mother Helena to Jerusalem to look for Christ's tomb. With the help of Bishop of Caesarea Eusebius and Bishop of Jerusalem Macarius, three crosses were found near a tomb, leading the Romans to believe that they had found Calvary. Constantine ordered in about 326 that the temple to Jupiter/Venus be replaced by a church. After the temple was torn down and its ruins removed, the soil was removed from the cave, revealing a rock-cut tomb that Helena and Macarius identified as the burial site of Jesus around which a shrine was constructed. (wikipedia)
**Title:** Madaba map of Jerusalem, church of Saint George in Madaba, Jordan

**Architect:** Roman Byzantine

**Date:** c. 540-572


**Medium:** mosaic floor, detail

**Size:** n/a

**cardo:** the principal north-south street in a Roman city

**Note:**
- it looks like the cardo is colonnaded.

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**Holy City Jerusalem**

1 - Damascus Gate
2 - Cardo Maximus – see note
3 - Palace of the Patriarch
4 - Church of Holy Sepulchre
5 - Baptistry of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre
6 - Jaffa Gate
7 - Tower of David
8 - Church of Mount Zion
9 - Nea Theotokos Church
10 - Temple Area
11 - St. Stephen's Gate
12 - Church of the Sheep Pool
13 - Palace of the empress Eudocia
14 - Holy City Jerusalem
15 - Lot of Benjamin
Title: Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem

Architect: designers of Constantine’s Hagia Sophia (not the later one by Justinian)

Date: begun 326, photo 1905

Source: wikipedia; http://ontheworldmap.com/israel/city/jerusalem/jerusalem-old-city-map.html

Medium: aerial view, map  Size: dome 20 m./ 64’ dia.

Note:
• large dome is supported by the twelve columns and piers in the plan
• The church contains, according to traditions dating back to at least the 4th cent., the two holiest sites in Christianity: the site where Jesus was crucified, at a place known as Calvary or Golgotha, and Jesus’s empty tomb, where he was buried and resurrected. (wikipedia)

pier: a solid masonry support, often rectangular or square in plan.

sepulcher/ sepulchre: from Middle English sepulcre and Old French sepulcre, from Latin sepulcrum (“grave, burial place”); a burial chamber (wiktionary)
Title: Reconstruction, Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem,

Date: Dedicated in 326 CE by Helena of Constantinople, mother of Emperor Constantine I, destroyed 1009, under Fatimid caliph Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, (an impetus to the crusades) rebuilt from mid-11th century, small chapels on the site 1149, The Rotunda and the Aedicule's exterior were rebuilt in 1809–1810 by architect Komminos of Mytilene in the Ottoman Baroque style, current dome built 1870

Museum: Museo Storico del Capitolino di San Pietro, Rome

Note: as it appeared c. 350 (after Conant)

- This building was destroyed by a fire in May of 614 A.D when the Sassanid Empire, under Khosrau II,[12] invaded Jerusalem and captured the True Cross. In 630, the Emperor Heraclius rebuilt the church after recapturing the city. After Jerusalem came under Arab rule, it remained a Christian church, with the early Muslim rulers protecting the city's Christian sites.
Title: Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem

Architect: designers of Constantine’s Hagia Sophia (not the later one by Justinian)

Date: begun 326

Source: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/32397/32397-h/holy_sepulchre.html

Medium: plan

Size: dome 20 m./ 64’ dia.

**iconostasis:** a screen in Byzantine churches that divides the nave from the chancel and that is used as a support for devotional images or icons. (Moffett)

Note: plan doesn’t distinguish between columns and piers under large dome.

**LEGEND:**
1-entrance
2-stone of Unction
3-where Jesus was nailed to the cross
4-Mount Calvary
5-chapel of the sacrifice of Isaac
6,11,19,20,22,23,24-chapel
7,8,9-stairs
10-place where three crosses were found
12-prison of Jesus
13,14-Greek (center) and Latin (left) Choirs
15-where Mary Magdalene stood
16-where Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene
17-pillar of flagellation
18-rooms of the Latin Convent (lower left)
21-sepulchre (in lowest apse)/ burial chamber
25-where Mary and John stood during the crucifixion
26-steps in aedicule
27-anteroom in aedicule
28-iconostasis or screen (before Greek altar (13))