

III. HELLENISTIC PERIOD

1.2 Characteristics of the Hellenistic World (pp. 127-129)

a) Economics

The collapse of the Persian Empire and the spread of Hellenism in the East were followed by significant changes in the economic sector, which subsequently affected the structure of the Hellenistic kingdoms. The Hellenistic world, Greeks and non-Greeks, operated within a single economic system. The main economic elements relating to the Greek city-states and the Persian Empire were merged through the use of a common monetary system, a common fiscal policy and a common method of transactions. The kings owned all the land and most of the production. The rich agricultural production and the exchange of produced goods between the kingdoms opened new horizons in trade. To facilitate transactions, Greek currencies were used and Persian ones were withdrawn. At the same time, banks were created and checks were used.

b) Society

Those who engaged in trade and banking, as well as those who exercised power as royal officials, formed a privileged class, a bourgeois class that consisted mainly of Greeks and a few Hellenized natives. The majority of the natives were workers and small farmers who gathered in the big cities to seek a better fortune. Within this system of economic relations, the development of slavery was favored. Where the labor of free citizens was not sufficient, slaves were used. The dependent labor of a slave nature that prevailed in the East, although not abandoned, was no longer sufficient to cover the needs of the rich living of the rulers and the upper classes. These needs were covered mainly by the use of slaves.

c) Political system

The system of government in the Hellenistic kingdoms was absolute monarchy.

The rulers concentrated all powers in their person and ruled with an elite of Greeks and a few natives who belonged to higher economic classes and had been Hellenized². The prestige of the rulers was increased by the worship attributed to them by their subjects. In this system of absolute monarchy, the citizen had no role to play, he was only interested in his own personal interests. The center of gravity shifted from metropolitan Greece to the great cities of the East (Alexandria, Antioch, Pergamum and others), which became the administrative, economic and cultural centers of the Hellenistic world. The Greek region was governed according to the models of the Macedonian kingdom. Some city-states (Athens, Sparta, Rhodes, Delos and others), however, maintained their autonomy, often obeying the wishes of the

kings. Other regions of the Greek region, in order to maintain their autonomy, organized themselves into federations, as happened with the Aetolians and the inhabitants of Achaia.

2.1 Hellenistic Intellectual Centers (pp. 140-142)

The cities founded by Alexander and his successors in Anatolia quickly developed into urban centers. Some developed into large economic and cultural centers. They were founded with an organized urban system, surrounded by walls, and had palaces, markets, gymnasiums*, palaestrae*, stadiums, theaters, libraries and sacred spaces adorned with architectural monuments, such as temples, colonnades, and large altars. The most important megacities that developed into intellectual centers were Alexandria, Antioch, and Pergamon.

Alexandria

It was founded by Alexander (331 BC) and quickly developed into an economic and cultural center. It was inhabited by Greeks, Egyptians and Jews. Its development was mainly due to the large port, known from the small island of Pharos, which was located at its entrance and protected it. On the small island, one of the seven wonders was built, a tower with a lamp on its top to facilitate the entry of ships into the port. Among the buildings that decorated it, the Museum and the Library stood out¹. The Museum was a building complex dedicated to the Muses, where intellectual people gathered. It included a botanical garden, a zoo and spaces for astronomical studies. The Library was staffed by **grammarians**, people with philological education, who were engaged in recording and commenting on the texts of ancient authors. The easy supply of writing material, from the processing of the papyrus plant, contributed to the large production of manuscripts. Estimates put the number of manuscripts in the Library at half a million.

Antioch

Founded by Seleucus (300 BC), the king of Syria, on the Orontes River. It was divided into four settlements, which is why it was also called Tetrapolis. Each settlement was surrounded by a wall and the entire city was also enclosed by a single wall. It was adorned with splendid buildings and statues. Its first inhabitants were Macedonians, Athenians, Cretans and Cypriots; later, others from various Asian nations came, gradually transforming it into a multicultural center.

Pergamon

It was the capital of the Attalid state in Asia Minor. It became a major center when Philetaerus, treasurer of Lysimachus, king of Thrace, defected and sought the help of Seleucus. Later, his successors, especially Attalus I, extended their power to Asia

Minor and became independent from the Seleucids. The city of Pergamon was built on a fortified acropolis and was structured in three colonnades. It was famous for its Library, which contained approximately two hundred thousand manuscripts. The lack of papyrus led the Pergamenes to discover a new writing material, parchment, which comes from the processing of goat embryos. The Pergamenes are credited with the idea of creating a Museum, a building that had the same function as modern museums. Pergamon, however, became better known for the famous Altar of Zeus. It was a large-scale architectural work built in memory of the repulsion of the Gauls by the Pergamenes.

2.2 Language (pp. 142-143)

The universality of Hellenistic culture is evident from the use of the Greek language not only among Greeks but also among the Hellenized natives. The form of the Greek language that emerged and spread during the Hellenistic period is known as **Common Greek** or simply **Common**. Its formation is due to the fusion of Greek dialects – based on the Attic dialect – in the East, where Greeks converged and where there was a need to communicate easily with each other and with the natives. Naturally, the simplest dialectal peculiarities prevailed and thus a unified linguistic system of written and oral communication was formed. “Koine” (“Kini” meaning “Common”) was used in everyday communication by the people but also by writers of the time. It was the instrument for spreading the teachings of Christianity. The Bible is written in this language.

IV. HELLENISM OF THE WEST. CIVILIZATIONS OF THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND ROME

3. The peoples of the Italian peninsula and the formation of the Roman state (8th-3rd century BC)

3.3 The founding of Rome and its organization (pp.170-172)

Roman tradition attributes the founding of Rome to Romulus[1], a descendant of Aeneas, who came to Italy from Troy after its fire and destruction by the Greeks. Its founding is placed in 753 BC. However, archaeological research reveals that on the site where Rome was founded, there were small settlements from the 10th to the 8th century BC. It is very likely that its creation was due to the Etruscans, who, after occupying Latium in the 7th century BC, then proceeded to settle the inhabitants of the surrounding areas, as had happened in Athens². During the same period, important works were carried out, such as the drainage of the marshes of the area, the central sewer, the market in the city center, the large hippodrome and the temple of Zeus on the Capitoline Hill, one of the seven hills that constituted the natural fortification of Rome. However, at the end of the 6th century BC, the inhabitants of the area revolted and expelled the Etruscans from their area. From then on, the Romans began to organize systematically, dominate Latium and deal effectively with the inhabitants of the neighboring areas.

Tradition states that from the founding of Rome until the end of the 6th century BC, six kings ruled, some of whom seem to have been Etruscans. During the reign, which lasted until 509 BC, Rome had the following social and political organization:

Social structure.

Roman society during the reign was made up of three classes: **the patricians, the clients, and the plebeians.**

Patricians were Romans who belonged to the old great families. These families, with their immediate members and branches, constituted the Roman gentes. All members of a gentes were called patricians, because they descended from the same father, whom they recognized as their leader.

Clients were those who lived near the patricians as subjects and accepted their protection. This was probably the pre-Italian inhabitants, namely the Ligurians. Gradually they came into contact with the patricians and merged into a single class.

Plebeians were all the younger inhabitants of Rome and the surrounding areas. When the Romans conquered a city, they forced its inhabitants to move closer to Rome. Many, moreover, had come to Rome on their own in search of a better fortune. They had no ties to the patricians and the clients; that is why they were

called a multitude (plebeians). Plebeians had no political rights and were not allowed to marry women from the patrician class.

The political organization.

During the period of the kingdom, the head of state was the king, who was at the same time a religious leader, leader of the army and supreme judge. The royal jurisdictions were controlled by two bodies: the senate and the people's assembly. The senate, which consisted of one hundred and later three hundred members, was formed by the leaders of the Roman tribes. The senate, together with the king, convened the people's assembly and ratified its decisions. The senate was the guardian of the customs and traditions of Rome⁴. The assembly was the gathering of all the patricians and clients. This assembly was also called fraternal, because the patricians gathered in sections – the fraternities, as they were called. It ratified or rejected the king's decisions "by voice". It decided on peace or war and elected the king.

3.4 The formation of the Roman state – Res publica (pp. 172-174)

The period of the kingdom ended in 509 BC after a revolt of the patricians. The change of state coincided with the removal of the Etruscans. The new regime that the Romans established called a **democracy (Res publica)**; in reality, however, it was an aristocratic regime, since the patricians now held power.

For about two centuries, Rome was shaken internally by social struggles until the equality of the patricians with the plebeians. At the same time, it initiated a policy of conquest abroad. By the end of the 3rd century BC dominated the Italian peninsula and faced the Carthaginians victoriously in the western Mediterranean.

Social struggles. The plebeians struggled for about two centuries to acquire political rights. At the beginning of the 5th century BC, they managed to establish a new power, represented by the **mayors**. These rulers, who were elected for a year, had as their main task the protection of the plebeians from the arbitrariness of the patricians. They were considered sacred and inviolable persons. They had the right to refuse the passage of a law when it offended the interests of the plebeians (veto)*. In the middle of the 5th century BC, the plebeians, through their struggles, succeeded for the first time in recording customary law (**Dodecadeltus**), thus preventing the arbitrary judicial decisions of the patricians⁵. In a short time, the law that did not allow marriages between the two classes was abolished.

After fierce struggles of about a century, they managed to acquire political equality.

In the 4th century BC, they were granted the right to be elected to the office of consul and later, at the end of the same century, the right to be elected to the office of "great high priest".

Political organization.

During the period of democracy, the Roman state (Res publica) was organized with the following powers: **the rulers, the senate and the churches.**

The rulers of the Roman state were many. They represented the executive power of the state. The most important were: the two **consuls**, who were elected for one year initially, concentrated all the powers that the king had previously. They had a magnificent appearance and were followed by twelve scepters. When the state was in a critical situation, then for six months all the powers were granted to an elected ruler by the consuls who was called a **dictator**.

An office of great importance was the office of the **honorees**. There were two of them and they were elected for eighteen months. Their tasks were: 1) honoring the citizens, that is, ranking them according to their assets, 2) compiling the list of senators, that is, determining which of the rulers had the right to enter the senate, 3) preparing the state budget and 4) supervising morals, that is, they had the authority to deprive any citizen who displayed immoral behavior of his political rights. There were also other rulers, such as mayors, praetors, treasurers, and proconsuls, with lesser positions.

The senate represented the historical continuity of the Roman state. It consisted of lifelong members (three hundred in number), who had previously served as supreme rulers. It was a body with legislative and executive power and great power throughout the republic. However, it also played an important role during imperial times. It had jurisdiction over economic, religious and foreign policy matters. Its decisions, the senate dogmas, had the force of law.

Three churches gradually functioned in the Roman state. The **phratry**, which was the assembly of the patricians, lost its power during the republican period; it was maintained only out of respect for tradition. The **lochitia** was the assembly of all the citizens who had enlisted, patricians and plebeians. Its decisions were taken by companies. It elected the consuls, the honorifics and the praetors. The **tribal assembly** was initially the assembly of the plebeians, but after the equality of classes, all the Romans formed it. They gathered by tribes, that is, according to their place of residence. Its jurisdiction was the passing of laws and the election of the lower rulers.

V. THE GREAT CONQUESTS

2.2 Reform efforts (pp. 195-197)

Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus.

Tiberius Gracchus, when elected mayor (133 BC), proposed the passage of the agrarian law, according to which no citizen was allowed to own more than 500 plethra* of land. (*plethro: a unit of measurement of area, equal to 2.3 acres, but also a unit of length, equal to 100 feet.) If he owned more land up to that time, then he could keep an additional 250 plethra for each of his two sons. However, in no case was it allowed for the total land ownership to exceed 1000 plethra.

This law provided for the redistribution of public land to the landless. Any land that would be returned by the application of the law would be redistributed in 30 plethra increments to each citizen who did not own land.

Apart from the agrarian law, his proposal for the disposal of the treasures of the king of Pergamum, Attalus III, who, as is known, bequeathed his state to the Roman people upon his death (133 BC), should also be considered bold. Tiberius proposed that the treasure of Pergamum be given to the landless, so that they could buy tools and cultivate the lands they would acquire.

However, the reaction of the senators and the purchase of the people's consciences led to the failure of Tiberius' plans. He himself was assassinated. Although they did not dare to repeal his law, they did not implement it.

Gaius Gracchus was elected mayor ten years after his brother's first election (123 BC). His reforms were inspired by the work of Tiberius. At the same time, however, he also sought to limit the action of the Senate.

He implemented the agrarian law and passed a series of new measures that improved the position of the landless. He founded colonies in the conquered regions of Italy and settled the landless. He established the distribution of grain for the poor of Rome. He reduced the years of military service and increased the military salary.

In order to limit the arbitrariness of the senators, he proceeded to establish courts of horsemen, which tried cases of abuse by the senators and by another law he prevented them from choosing the senatorial provinces.

However, the senators managed to deal with him in the same way that they had neutralized his brother, that is, they turned a part of the people against him. When Gaius wanted to move openly against the senate, organizing a rebellion, he failed. His followers were killed and he himself, in order to avoid dishonor, ordered one of his slaves to kill him.

The reform effort of the Gracchi aimed at controlling social inequality, restoring a large part of the landowners and weakening the senators. However, the situation created by the great conquests did not favor changes. The Gracchi project essentially failed. It created favorable conditions for a few who benefited from the Gracchi's measures and subsequently formed a new, quite dynamic social group.

VI. THE ROMAN EMPIRE (1st century BC-3rd century AD)

1. The period of prosperity (27 BC-193 AD)

1.1 The Age of Augustus (27 BC-14 AD) (p. 208-211)

The strengthening of central power. After the naval battle at Actium, the Roman world, tired of the continuous civil wars, looked forward to the prevalence of peace and order. Octavian, a man of political acumen, understood the messages of the time and **organized the state on a new base**. Only the strengthening of central power could bring peace and security to the Roman world. However, he did not want to disturb the democratic feelings of the Romans. He did not accept the office of dictator, but allowed the senate and the people to offer him all the other offices, which until then could only be obtained by the vote of the people. Thus, the most important offices of the Roman state were concentrated in his person, such as consul, anti-consul, mayor, emperor, that is, the supreme military leader, the first citizen of the state (princeps) and the “greatest high priest” (pontifex maximus), that is, the supreme religious ruler. However, since it was not possible for him to exercise all these powers alone, he created an **advisory body, the imperial council**, which helped him in the exercise of power. He avoided authoritarian methods and followed a compromise tactic in the distribution of power.

- He himself maintained high supervision of the administration of the state, foreign policy, and military matters.
- He assigned the management of individual matters to public men from the ranks of the senators and the equestrians. He set strict conditions under which someone could enter the two privileged classes. Such conditions were moral integrity, the fulfillment of military service, and large property.
- He shared the administration of the provinces with the senate. He himself appointed the military commanders of the border provinces as well as of all those that presented problems, while the senate appointed the proconsuls, who were in charge of the administration of the remaining provinces.
- He ensured that executive power was exercised through administrative officials who served as professional employees, thus creating an imperial civil service.

- With a series of measures he contributed to the revival of agriculture and tried to restore the old strict morals.
- Finally, he took care of the beautification of Rome by constructing buildings that further illuminated his work.
- Octavian concentrated almost all the powers in his person, as had happened with kings in the past. When he once pretended to want to leave power and resign from his offices, the senate begged him to remain and proclaimed him **Augustus**, thus giving him the title of venerable and recognizing his divine qualities.

With these changes, the democratic regime was essentially abolished, without creating the slightest reaction.

The regime and military reforms.

Augustus gradually concentrated all power in his person, establishing a form of monarchical regime. This form of regime was called the Principatus (Principate) from the title of the first citizen (*princeps*). The new monarch's support turned out to be the army itself, which in earlier times had been involved in civil conflicts. Augustus was aware of his role as a guardian of the borders, but he foresaw that the first citizen and the imperial institution needed military protection. For this reason, he ensured that the greater part of the army was stationed on the most dangerous borders, such as the Euphrates, the Danube, and the Rhine, in permanent military bases. In Rome, where the seat of power was, he maintained nine military units, numbering a thousand soldiers each. These constituted the personal guard of the **praetorium**, where the general's headquarters had previously been. The **praetorians** were loyal to the emperor, but gradually they acquired great power and became dangerous to the state, since they had the ability to raise and lower emperors according to their wishes.

The army during the time of Augustus remained faithful to its duties. Its numerical strength, however, was barely sufficient to guard the borders, which were about four thousand kilometers long.

The new political system that Augustus formed gave the right to the first citizen (**princeps**) to act as king. However, other forces were also involved in the exercise of power, such as the senate or the army. Many times they intervened drastically in the administration of the empire, when the emperor was not distinguished by his abilities.

The **Principatus regime** was essentially a **duality of powers with the first citizen and the senate as its operating agents**. However, the responsibilities of these two political agents were not clearly defined, a fact that created friction.

Moreover, the issue of succession was not institutionalized. Hereditary succession was contrary to the democratic tradition, according to which powers were acquired by the vote of the people. At first, out of respect for the person of the emperor, the successor was designated by him while he was alive, or by one of his relatives when he died. The role of the senate was also decisive here. The ratification of the election of the emperor by the senate was essential.

It becomes clear that the imperial institution in the Roman state differed from the corresponding institution of the Hellenistic monarchies and much more from that of the Eastern peoples.

1.2 The Successors of Augustus (14-193 AD) (pp. 214-216)

The Roman state from the death of Augustus (14 AD) until the end of the 2nd century AD was ruled by three dynasties of emperors. The criteria by which we distinguish them are: the kinship ties between the emperors and the region of their origin.

- The emperors of the first dynasty, the called **Julio-Claudian** (14-68 AD), were connected by blood ties or by adoption to Augustus and originated from Rome.
- In the second, **the Flavian dynasty** (69-96 AD), its founder Vespasian and his successors came from Italian cities, which is why they are called "**bourgeois**".
- In the third, **the Antonine dynasty** (96-192 AD), the emperors came from the provinces and contributed greatly to their development. The Roman state was then led to the highest point of its prosperity.

Administration and law.

The method of administration that Octavian inaugurated was also implemented by the other emperors until the end of the 2nd century AD with greater centralization. The anti-democratic tendencies that the senate manifested quickly weakened in the face of the strong administration of the first emperors after Octavian.

However, Rome's leading role in the administrative sector over the conquered regions gradually diminished. This was due, firstly, to the change in the composition of the senate with the entry of officials from the provinces and, secondly, to the granting of the right of Roman citizenship to many of the inhabitants of provincial cities.

The **provincial emperors** and the army also worked in this direction. The Roman administration in the provinces was accepted by the native populations. This was facilitated by the establishment of colonies and the settlement of Roman soldiers in areas that were in a semi-barbaric state. Many of the Roman colonies and Roman

camps developed into densely populated centers with the settlement of natives who had acquired **the right to Roman citizenship**. The emperors had granted this right to a large number of provincial residents. **The acquisition of this right would be generalized later, at the beginning of the 3rd century AD, with the edict of Caracalla (212 AD), when all free residents of the empire would be recognized as Roman citizens.**

With the exception of the areas where Greek culture had spread during the Hellenistic period, in the remaining empire's possessions, and especially in the West, the inhabitants were influenced by Roman culture and Latinized.

The Roman state, especially in the 2nd century AD, created conditions of comfort and prosperity for a large part of its subjects. This was due to the organization of the empire, its strong defense system, and the extensive road network, which facilitated the movement of the army and the transport of goods.

The Romans, with their conquests, kept certain peoples outside their borders and at the same time stopped wars. The conflicts between units of the Roman army for the dominance of an emperor were mainly limited to the Italian peninsula, which did not disturb the peace of the provinces.

Thus, **peace (Pax Romana) and prosperity** prevailed in the Roman world for a long time. The greatest contribution of the Roman spirit to its subjects and subsequently to the entire civilized world was legislation, Roman law. The **legislation (Dodecadeltus)** was initially incomplete and intended only for the city-state of Rome; however, it was gradually supplemented and expanded to meet the needs of the conquered peoples. In the formation of this important work, the Romans took into account the customs and habits of their subjects as well as the philosophical ideas of the Greeks. Later, Roman jurisprudence would also be influenced by Christian ethics.

The Dodecadeltus was supplemented and in many points modified along the way by senate resolutions, praetors' decrees and emperors' decisions. Roman law became complex and its interpretation required special intellectuals, called **jurists**. Such jurists had already existed since the period of the republic. The best-known were active in the Antonine era, such as Salvius Julianus and Gaius, while others later, in the 4th century AD.

2. The crisis of the empire in the 3rd century AD (p. 228) (summary)

From the beginning and throughout the 3rd century AD, the Roman Empire suffered continuous deterioration that would lead to its decline and, at the same time, to the end of the ancient world. Various factors contributed to the decline of the empire, both internally and externally.

Internally, the imperial office was undergoing a crisis directly linked to the role of the army. Entire provinces became independent and revolutions disrupted the order and security of the "Roman peace". An intense crisis was observed in the economic sector, as people abandoned trade and industry and returned to farming. The economic crisis had as its immediate consequence the social crisis.

Abroad, new enemies threaten and often violate the borders. The fear that the indestructible greatness of Rome caused has now disappeared.

VII. LATE ANTIQUITY (4th-6th centuries AD)

1.1 Diocletian and the Reorganization of the Empire (pp. 236-238)

Administrative Changes.

When Diocletian became emperor (284 AD), he wanted to bring order to the Roman state. Because it had been proven that one ruler was not sufficient for the needs of the administration of the empire, Diocletian, although an autocrat, decided to proceed with bold administrative changes by sharing power. The change in the administrative system mainly responded to the need for direct intervention by the army and better guarding of the borders.

Diocletian ruled the eastern part of the empire and gave the administration of the west to a soldier devoted to him, **Maximian**. These **two emperors**, who took the title of **Augustus**, then ceded the administration of part of the territories they ruled to **two co-rulers: Diocletian to Galerius and Maximian to Constantius Chlorus**. The two co-rulers bore the title of **Caesar**. Thus, power was divided into **four different centers**. In the East, Augustus was Diocletian, based in Nicomedia in Bithynia, and Caesar Galerius, based in Sirmium, in present-day Serbia. At the same time, in the West, Augustus was Maximian, based in Milan in Italy, and Caesar Constantius Chlorus, based in the Treviri in Gaul.

This system was called the **Tetrarchy** and succeeded in preserving the integrity of the empire for the time being. Rome was theoretically the capital of the empire and remained the seat of the senate.

The change in the form of the regime.

Diocletian changed the character of the monarchy. The whole state was divided into small provinces, the administration of which was undertaken by officials appointed by the emperor himself. The army of each region had its own commanders, different from those of the provinces. In this way, political power was removed from the army.

The gradual concentration of powers in the person of the emperor was ratified by the adoption by Diocletian of the protocol of the court of the Sassanid kings of Persia. The emperor became inaccessible to his subjects, in his appearances he wore the diadem and the purple* and imposed prostration. Finally, he was surrounded by the sanctity attributed to him by the address "Zeus" and the requirement to be worshipped as a god.

The concentration of all powers in one person essentially changed the political system of Augustus. That is, he **transformed the Hegemony (Principatus) into an Absolute Monarchy (Dominatus)**. The first citizen of the state (princeps) now became an absolute monarch (dominus).

1.2 Constantine the Great: Christianization and the strengthening of the Roman East (pp. 238-241)

The creation of the Christian Roman state.

The Tetrarchy system did not provide a solution to the problems of the empire; on the contrary, it strengthened the rivalries and promoted the ambitions of the co-rulers. For twenty years after Diocletian withdrew from power (305 AD) until the complete dominance of Constantine, their successors and co-rulers exterminated each other. Through the conflicts, Constantine emerged. He succeeded his father Constantius Chlorus as Caesar of the western provinces of the empire.

Three important events sealed the period leading up to his rise to power:

- He defeated his rival in the West, Maxentius, at Mulvia, near Rome (312 AD).
- As Augustus and sole ruler in the West, he came to an understanding with the Augustus of the East, Licinius. The two Augusti decided in Milan not to appoint Caesars and to cooperate together in the administration of the empire (313 AD).
- He defeated near Adrianople and shortly afterwards killed Licinius' only rival (324 AD).

Constantine, when he became **sole ruler**, gave a more authoritarian character to the regime than Diocletian. The emperor was inaccessible to his subjects and the senate, surrounded by **palace officials** and the **palace council**, which functioned in an advisory capacity and only when the emperor wanted it. The senate, moreover, which was moved to Constantinople, remained an honorary body without power, which accompanied the emperor at receptions.

Constantine's position on the issue of imperial worship was decisive. The emperor was no longer the god for his subjects but the chosen one of God who ruled with divine grace. Although Constantine retained until the end of his life – as it happened with his immediate successors – the pagan title of “Great High Priest”, nevertheless, with a series of actions he demonstrated his support for Christianity. The policy he implemented reveals his decision to strengthen the empire with Christianity. **The Edict of Milan** played a decisive role in the history of the relations between the state and the new religion. **By a joint decision of Constantine and Licinius, absolute freedom in choosing a religion was established for the inhabitants of the empire.** **The Edict of Milan**, also known as **the Edict of Freedom of Religion**, was initially **signed in Milan in February 313 AD** and was valid for the inhabitants of the western part. A few months later, the same decision was accepted for the inhabitants of the eastern part, in Nicomedia in Bithynia. With this edict, there was no longer any distinction between Christian and non-Christian subjects of the empire.

The issuance of the Edict of Milan is linked to the issue of the Christianization of the empire and much more to the problem of Constantine's attitude towards Christianity.

It is a fact that Constantine promoted and favored Christianity through a series of actions. After his victory over Maxentius at the Mulvian Bridge, it seems that he had consciously accepted the new religion. He adopted the Christogram (☩) as a symbol, which he placed on the shields of his soldiers and on the imperial flag. He protected Christianity from heresies by establishing the institution of Ecumenical Councils. He and his mother contributed to the construction of churches and finally, shortly before his death, he was baptized a Christian.

However, the religious choices of Constantine the Great and his "conversion" to Christianity have preoccupied historians and have been the subject of scholarly controversy.

The founding of Constantinople.

Constantine the Great, in order to achieve his political aspirations, the strengthening of the absolute monarchy and the Christianization of the empire, wanted to transfer the center of decision-making to the East.

New Rome, as the new capital was initially called, was built in Byzantium, the ancient colony founded by the Megarians in the mid-7th century BC, with the Byzantines as its settlers. The **inauguration** of New Rome, which soon became widely known by the name "**Constantinople**", took place on **May 11, 330**. From that time on, the history of the Roman Empire of the East, that is, the Byzantine Empire, began essentially and formally. Its fate was completely identified with the fate of the new capital. In the course of eleven centuries of history, the independence of Constantinople alone determined the existence of the empire.

The decision to transfer the capital by Constantine the Great arose as an administrative necessity to deal with the problems mainly created by the barbarian raids. The old capital was not only a pole of attraction for the peoples of the West, but was also identified with the ancient world and the ancient Roman tradition. On the contrary, the new capital, in addition to its privileged position, which ensured better defense and economic development for the empire, was located close to the regions of the East, which were mostly inhabited by Greeks and Christians.

With the transfer of the capital, the center of gravity of the empire moved from the Latin cultural space to the Greek one. Thus, the empire progressively acquired a **Greek character**. The empire that began to take shape with Constantinople as its center was based on **three elements: the Roman political tradition, the Christian faith, and the Greek cultural heritage**.

1.4 The Hellenization of the Eastern Roman Empire (p.248 – extract)

Before his death, **Theodosius the Great** once again **divided the empire into two parts** which he gave his two sons. He gave the eastern part to Arcadius, who was also the firstborn, and the western part to Honorius. **This division, which was final (395 AD)**, had great significance for the future course of the empire.

The western part suffered a deluge of barbarian invasions in a few years and **finally collapsed (476 AD)**. On the contrary, **the eastern part** emerged victorious and continued its historical course. **The final division of the state (395 AD) constitutes for some historians the conventional boundary for the beginning of Byzantine history.**

While in the western part the invasion of the Germanic tribes brought the end of the Roman world, in the eastern part it did not mean the end of Hellenism. It is certain that after the death of Theodosius the Great, there was also a momentary danger of the Germanization of the state in the East. However, this danger was averted by the effective resistance put forward by Greek scholars and politicians. This anti-German – anti-Gothic – movement was so strong that there was talk of the creation of a national party that instigated the anti-Gothic struggle. **Thus, the eastern part survived after the barbarian invasions and evolved into its Byzantine form, based on Hellenism.**

2. The era of Justinian (6th century AD)

2.2 The Greek-Christian world (pp. 258-260)

While in his foreign policy Justinian was inspired by the vision of the old Roman world, in his internal organization he implemented innovative ideas that contributed to the **formation of the Byzantine character of the state.**

Justinian's internal policy aimed at the cohesion of a community of peoples, whose connecting elements were the Greek cultural tradition and the Christian faith. **The Roman world with this policy evolved into a Greek-Christian world.**

The main points of Justinian's internal policy were the following:

- **The absolute monarchy was strengthened.** The **Nika Revolt (532 AD)** provided the occasion for the formation of a strong central authority. The suppression of this rebellion was linked to the theoretical foundation of the monarchy by Justinian. According to it, the emperor was the chosen one of God, who had been given the privilege of ruling for the good of his subjects as a sign of trust.
- **One religion and one dogma were imposed.** Justinian dealt harshly with the remnants of ancient religions. For this reason, he closed the Neoplatonic

school of Athens (529 AD) and confiscated its property. At the same time, he exterminated religious minorities. He treated the Jews with leniency only, which is why their religion was preserved. Missionary work was carried out for the Christianization of pagan neighboring peoples, in the Caucasus, Nubia (now Sudan), the Sahara and the Danube. Finally, he built the Hagia Sophia, the pride of Christian architecture.

- **A systematic codification of the Law was carried out.** Justinian's legislative work is the most important aspect of his domestic policy. The main part of the legislative work was written in Latin; the new laws, however, were issued in the Greek language so that they would be understandable by the people. The codification of the laws of Justinian's time became known in the 16th century as the *Corpus juris civilis* (civil law) and formed the basis of the modern legislation of European states.
- **A new administrative system was established that prevented the feudalism of the empire.** With a series of new legislative decrees (*Neares*), he granted political power to the military commanders of the regions that were most exposed to enemy attacks. This administrative innovation was the basis of a new administrative system, which would later be expanded and applied throughout the empire. This measure aimed, among other things, at combating the growth of large landholdings. With individual decrees, he tried to hit the “powerful”, that is, the large landowners of the time. In this way, the growth of large landholdings was limited and a situation similar to that observed in the Western medieval world was prevented.