

SACRED SPACES (I)

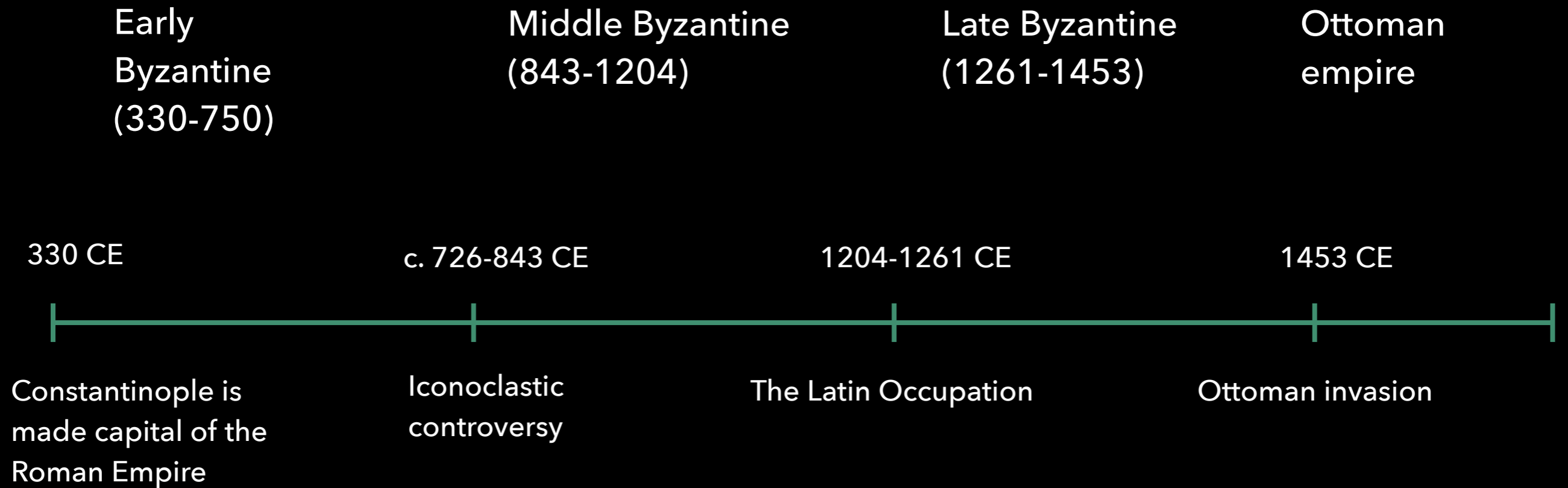
BYZANTINE ART AND ARCHITECTURE

What is a sacred space?

- ▶ Choose an example of a site you would consider a "sacred space"
- ▶ Write a few lines describing the site (visually, historically, geographically etc.)
- ▶ What characteristics of the site make it "sacred"?



TIMELINE OF BYZANTINE ART



THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

“Byzantine art” refers to the art of the Eastern Roman Empire, centred in Constantinople. It is a period characterised architecturally by churches with **simple exterior architecture** and **lavish interior** filled with detailed mosaics.





Colossus of Constantine
white marble, brick, wood, gilded bronze
c. 312-315 AD
Musei Capitolini, Rome

From Roman to Christian Imagery

- ▶ During the Imperial Roman period, Roman religion was inspired by Greek mythology. At this time, Christianity is seen as a political threat
- ▶ Legend has it that Constantine converted to Christianity because of a vision. Described by the historian Eusebius, "he saw with his own eyes in the heavens a trophy of the cross arising from the light of the sun, carrying the message, *In Hoc Signo Vincas* (In this sign, you shall conquer)."
- ▶ 7th century BCE: City of Byzantium (present day Istanbul) founded as Greek colony
- ▶ 326: Emperor Constantine selects Byzantium as his Empire's new capital, rebuilds the city over six years
- ▶ 330: Constantine names the city "Constantinople"
- ▶ 337: Constantine dies, proclaiming on his deathbed that Christianity was to become the official religion of the Empire

“There was no clear-cut line between Early Christian and Byzantine art. East Roman and West Roman - or, as some scholars prefer to call them, Eastern and Western Christian - traits are difficult to separate before the sixth century.” -Horst Woldemar Janson and Anthony F. Janson

Catacomb: An underground cemetery with recesses for tombs, constructed by the ancient Romans



Roman Catacombs



Detail of a mural painting from a Roman Catacomb

Early Byzantine Period (330–750)

- ▶ Extends from the founding of the capital to the 700s
- ▶ Byzantium's educated elite used Roman law, and Greek and Roman culture, to maintain a highly organized government centered on the court and its great cities
- ▶ Flowered especially during the reign of Justinian (527-565) as he started a project of developing the cities of Constantinople and Ravenna in Italy

Early Byzantine
(330-750)



Hagia Sophia
Istanbul
532-37

Early Byzantine
(330-750)



Hagia Sophia
(interior)

Early Byzantine
(330-750)



Mosaic: patterns or pictures made by embedding small pieces (tesserae) of stone or glass in cement on surfaces such as walls and floors.



Mosaics on the interior of Hagia Sophia



Church of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy



Church of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy

Early Byzantine
(330-750)



Key features of Byzantine mosaics:

- Emphasis on richness of colour and decoration
- Abstracted figures as symbolic representations
- Flat compositions- no naturalism or illusion of depth

Interior of the Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy

Early Byzantine
(330-750)



Emperor Justinian and His Attendants,
Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy
c. 547

Gold background: spiritual realm



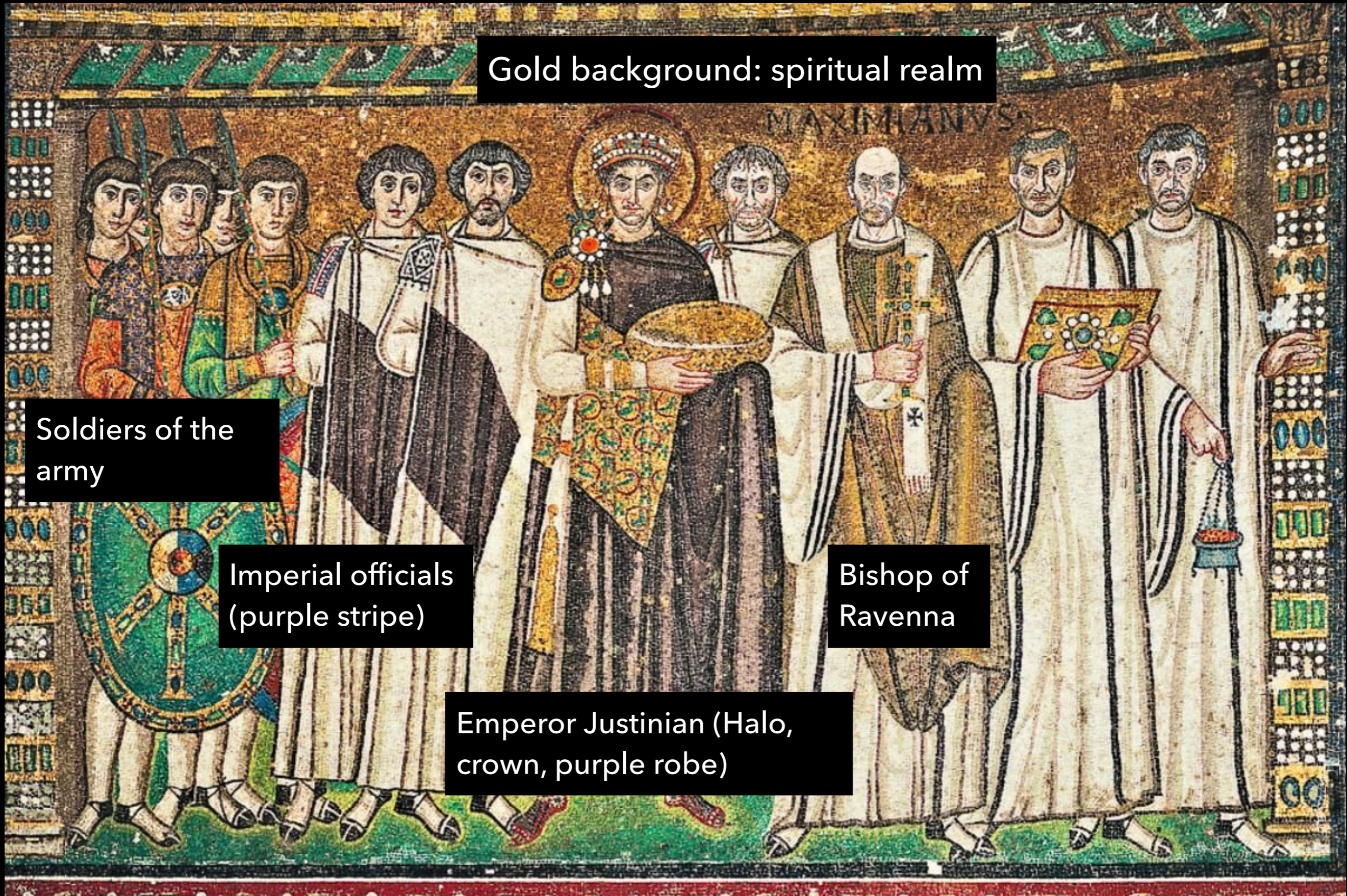
Gold background: spiritual realm

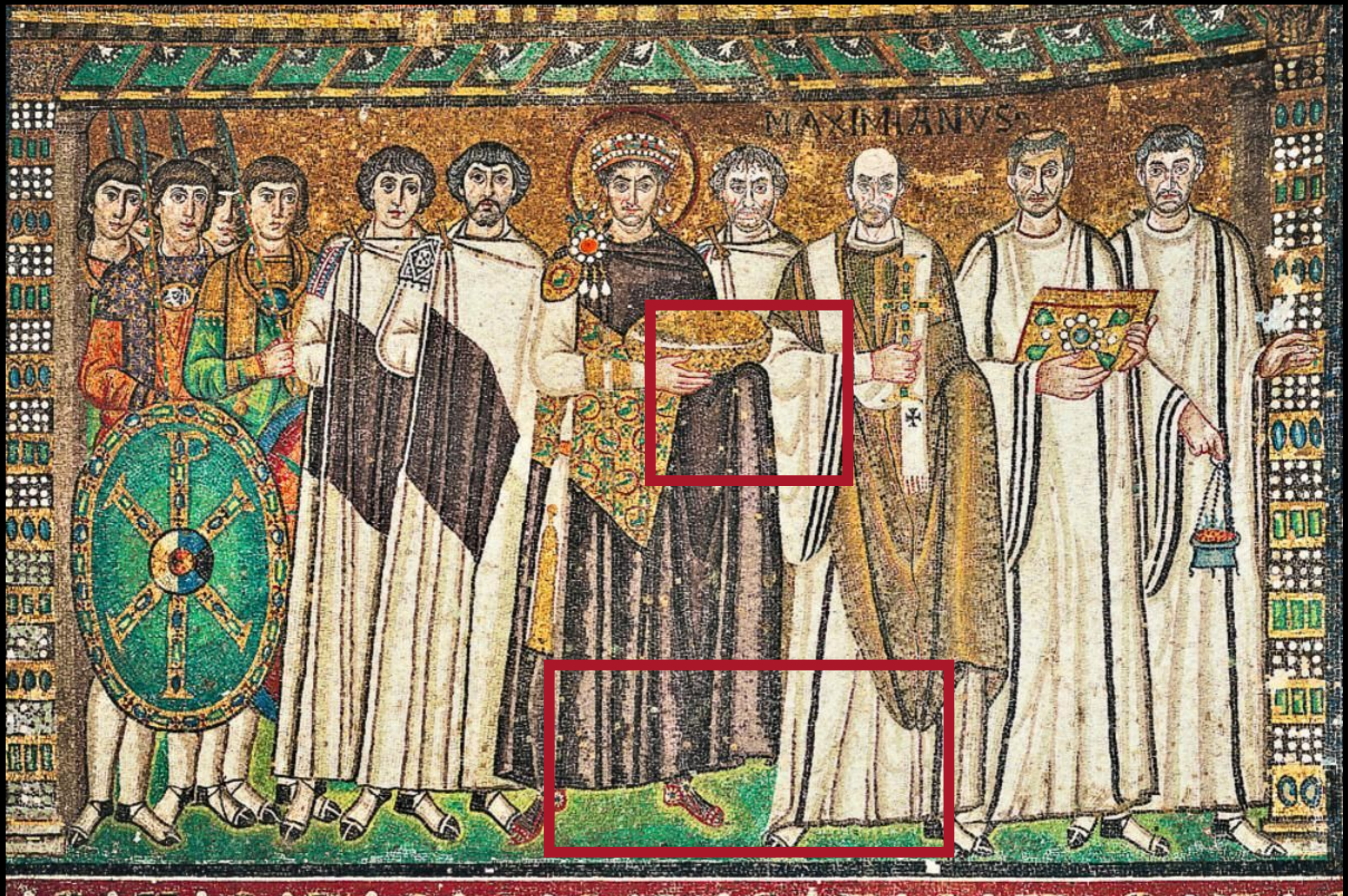
Soldiers of the
army

Imperial officials
(purple stripe)

Emperor Justinian (Halo,
crown, purple robe)

Bishop of
Ravenna





MAXIMIANVS



Early Byzantine
(330-750)



Ara Pacis Augustae
(Altar of Augustan Peace)
Rome
9 BC



Emperor Justinian and His Attendants,
Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy
c. 547 AD

ICON PAINTING



Portable Icon with the Virgin Eleousa
early 1300s

Acheiropoieta: meaning "made without hands," was an image believed to have been miraculously created.

Icon: Greek for "image" or "painting"; Sacred images representing saints, Christ and the Virgin, as well as narrative scenes such as the Crucifixion.

The Iconoclastic Controversy (726–843)



Page from the Chludov Psalter, 9th century showing Iconoclast, John the Grammarian destroying the image of Christ.

Icon: Greek for “image” or “painting”; Sacred images representing saints, Christ and the Virgin, as well as narrative scenes such as the Crucifixion.

Iconoclasm: literally translates as “image breaking”; a period of the destruction of religious imagery for fear of idolatry.

Theories for Iconoclasm:

- ▶ Restricting the growing wealth and power of the church
- ▶ Fear that the worshippers veneration would be misdirected towards the images, not the holy people
- ▶ The introduction of Islam and the attempt to integrate Muslim and Jewish populations

Middle Byzantine (843–1204)

- ▶ The Iconoclastic Controversy ended in 843 with the victory of those in favor of the use of images.
- ▶ With the death of the Emperor Theophilus in 842, his widow Empress Theodora worked quickly to restore the destroyed icons, and several years of Byzantine artistic production continued.
- ▶ The Iconoclastic controversy had a profound effect on the kind of art that was created in the period following it: more standardized program of church wall decoration in its mosaics and frescos, and there was now an evolution of distinct portrait types for individual saints.
- ▶ The Middle and Later Byzantine periods continued the stylistic and thematic interests of the Early Byzantine period, but there was now a renewed interest in building new churches and decorating their interiors.

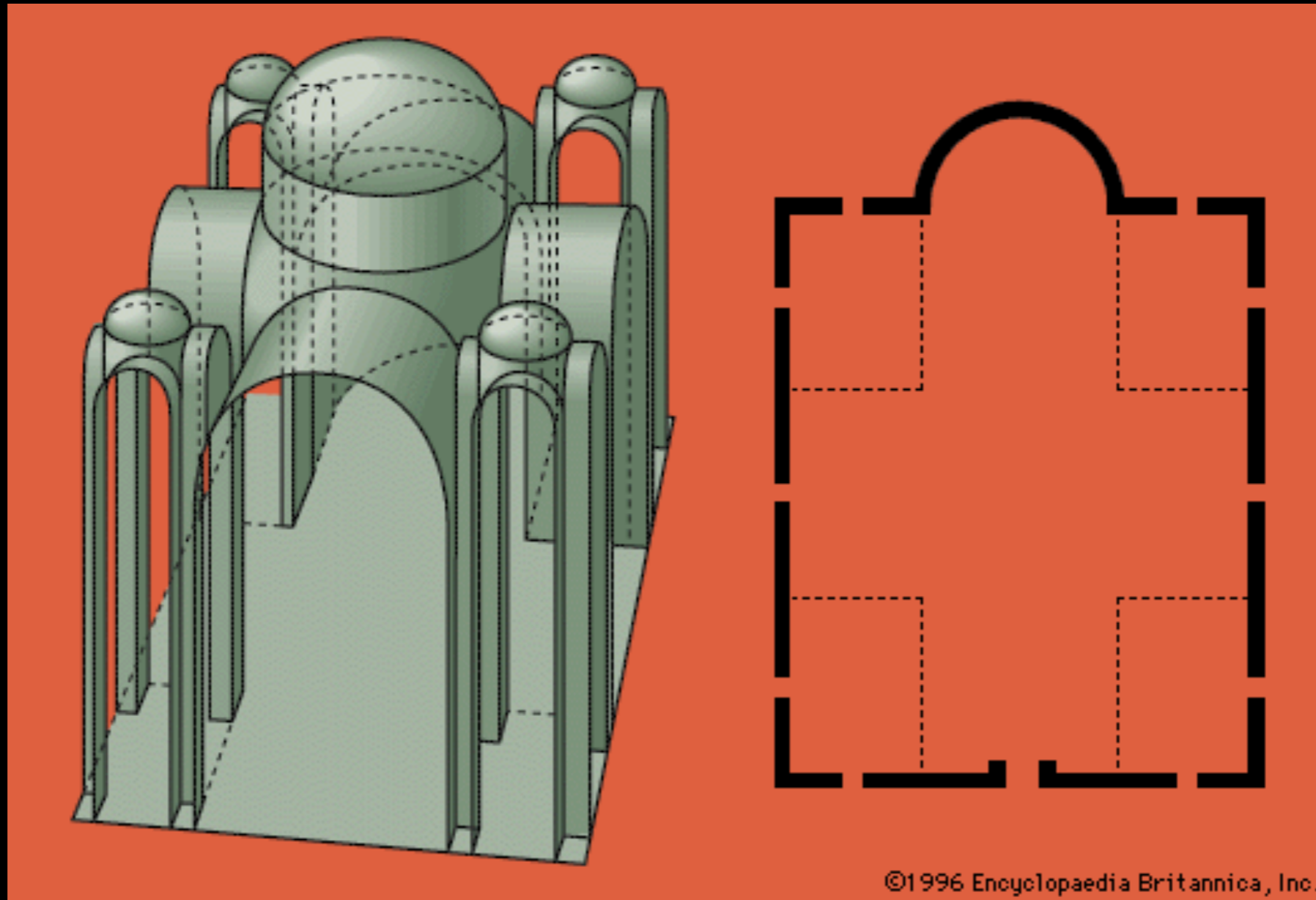
Middle Byzantine
(843-1204)



Hosios Loukas, Greece
early 11th century

"It seems that everything is in ecstatic motion, and the church itself is circling round. For the spectator, through his whirling about in all directions and being constantly astir, which he is forced to experience by the variegated spectacle on all sides, imagines that his personal condition is transferred to the object." -Photios of Constantinople





(Left) Perspective drawing of a quincunx, or five-domed church
(Right) plan of the church, showing cross-in-square design.

Middle Byzantine
(843-1204)



Harbaville Triptych
ivory, traces of polychromy
Constantinople
mid 10th century
Louvre Museum

The Latin occupation

(1204-1261)



15th century miniature depicting the Fourth Crusade



Also known as the 4th crusade- period of war between Eastern Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Church. Over a period of 3 days, caused great destruction in Constantinople.

Late Byzantine 1261–1453

- ▶ Following the Latin Occupation, the Byzantine Empire had shrunk considerably and was left weaker
- ▶ Nevertheless, the Late Byzantine era began to renovate and restore churches.
- ▶ However, the Occupation had destroyed the economy and left the city in ruins. Artists thus used more economical materials and miniature mosaics
- ▶ In icon paintings, the suffering of the population during the Conquest led to an emphasis upon images of compassion

Late Byzantine
(1261-1453)



Chora Monastery
Istanbul, Turkey
c. 1315-21



Chora Monastery interior





Chora Monastery interior

FALL OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE



Map showing the expansion of the Ottoman Empire



Interior of Hagia Sophia



Interior of Hagia Sophia

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/22/opinion/hagia-sophia-mosque.html>

537: Hagia Sophia is built as a church

1453: Converted into a mosque when Constantinople fell to Ottoman forces

1934: Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the secular, modern republic of Turkey, transformed the Hagia Sophia into a museum

2020: Turkish President Erdogan converts it back to a mosque



OPINION | The Hagia Sophia Was a Cathedral, a Mosque and a Museum. It's Converting ...

Opinion

The Hagia Sophia Was a Cathedral, a Mosque and a Museum. It's Converting Again.

Changing the secular space back into a religious one is a risk for the World Heritage Site.



By **The Editorial Board**

The editorial board is a group of opinion journalists whose views are informed by expertise, research, debate and certain longstanding [values](#). It is separate from the newsroom.

July 22, 2020

On Friday, after 86 years as a museum, the great [Hagia Sophia in Istanbul](#) will once again echo with Muslim prayers. To Turkish

Discussion

How do pilgrims or visitors to these sites experience historical sacred spaces today?

How do you think this experience is different now that these sites are viewed as art historical or architectural spaces, as opposed to its use during its time?

GLOSSARY

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