

Historical Dictionary of Byzantium (Historical Dictionaries of Ancient Civilizations and Historical Eras)

By John H. Rosser

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The Byzantine Empire dates back to Constantine the Great, the first Christian ruler of the Roman Empire, who, in 330 AD, moved the imperial capital from Rome to a port city in modern-day Turkey, which he then renamed Constantinople in his honor. From its founding, the Byzantine Empire was a major anchor of east-west trade, and culture, art, architecture, and the economy all prospered in the newly Christian empire. As Byzantium moved into the middle and late period, Greek became the official language of both church and state and the Empire's cultural and religious influence extended well beyond its boundaries. In the mid-15th century, the Ottoman Turks put an end to 1,100 years of Byzantine history by capturing Constantinople, but the Empire's legacy in art, culture, and religion endured long after its fall.

In this revised and updated second edition of the *Historical Dictionary of Byzantium*, author John H. Rosser introduces both the general reader and the researcher to the history of the Byzantine Empire. This comprehensive dictionary includes detailed, alphabetical entries on key figures, ideas, places, and themes related to Byzantine art, history, and religion, and the second edition contains numerous additional entries on broad topics such as transportation and gender, which were less prominent in the previous edition. An expanded introduction introduces the reader to Byzantium and a guide to further sources and suggested readings can be found in the extensive bibliography that follows the entries. A basic chronology and various maps and illustrations are also included in the dictionary. This book is an excellent access point for students, researchers, and anyone wanting to know more about Byzantium.

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Editorial Review

Review
The second edition of this dictionary, which is 100 pages longer than the first (CH, Nov'01, 39-1271), thoroughly covers the period from 324 to 1453 CE. Rosser (formerly, Boston College) updates his earlier edition with dozens of new entries and revisions of many previous entries. The entries lack bibliographical references, but the 75-page bibliography is exhaustive and organized thematically, archaeologically, by historical period, by religion, and more. Most of the bibliographical references are in English, though a few are in French and even fewer in German. Some important entries (e.g., the ecumenical First Council of Ephesus in 431 CE) receive more space, and readers will find extensive cross-referencing throughout. First-edition entries noted by other reviewers to be based on shaky Greek remain uncorrected; e.g., "anchorite" does not mean "withdrawal" but "the one who withdraws." Included are maps, photographs, architectural plans of major edifices such as Hagia Sophia, a chronology, and a decent 20-page introduction. Overall, this dictionary is good for beginners and those who need a quick reference to Byzantium. Moreover, its bibliography is very up-to-date.... **Summing Up:** Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates and graduate students. (*CHOICE*)

Rosser’s (retired, history, Boston Coll.) revised and updated work, intended as a starting point for the study of the Byzantine empire for both general and specialized readers, reflects in both its text and bibliographic entries the dozens of studies and new source materials made available since the release of the 2001 first edition. An introduction, a chronology of events from 324 to 1461, and maps and illustrations all contribute to a concise overview of the culture. The dictionary proper covers the people, arts, history, and many other aspects of Byzantine life....**VERDICT** Each section informs in a direct, inviting manner, and the numerous books, articles, and other sources Rosser lists by subject in the bibliography will prove useful to students and scholars alike. A wise choice for larger public libraries and university and research collections. (*Library Journal*)

Rosser's introduction to this concise volume opens up to the inquirer a wealth of information about Byzantium and the Byzantine Empire. After giving the reader a brief overview of Byzantine history, including a very detailed chronology, the dictionary's author presents the individuals, offices, places, and things that comprised this lesser-known empire. The entries in this second edition have been expanded since the publication of the first edition (2001) and specific topics such as transportation and gender have been included this time around. As presented, the volume readily lends itself for use in the context of discussions about Byzantine history, culture, artifacts, religion, and related topics; bibliography for which the author provides at the end of the book. This extensive bibliography, more than 75 pages in length, along with related photographs, maps, and site plans, make this volume a valuable asset for any major public library and virtually all college and university libraries as well as for the private libraries of medievalists and medieval aficionados. (*American Reference Books Annual*)

About the Author
John H. Rosser taught in the Department of History at Boston College from 1971-2011. His fields of specialization are Byzantine History, Byzantine Archaeology, and Crusader Castles.

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