

## BYZANTIUM: THE GEOGRAPHICAL LOGIC OF THE EMPIRE

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18509/GBP.2020.94>

UDC: 91(495.02)

908(495.02)

930.85(495.02)

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### ABSTRACT

In order to understand the geographical logic of the Byzantine Empire, it is necessary to know the elements of the geography of the eastern Mediterranean. During the New Age, it played a dual role in imperial conquests, favoured the networking of the newly conquered territories and, at the same time, represented the frontier for further imperial expansion. In the case of Byzantium, parallels are evident with its predecessor, imperial Rome, which expansion is thought to have reached as it reaches its natural boundaries. Despite the similarity of Byzantium with Rome, there was a significant difference in geography. It is a millennial geographic thought, which was greatly simplified in the Byzantine Empire. Compared to its ancient predecessors, and it is difficult to understand this "major setback in geography" without being familiar with the "wider picture". It can be understood as a geographical logic that is essentially determined by three groups of factors: the system of philosophical-theological ideas, the mysticism of biblical ideas, and purely local geographical factors. As an introduction, the historical-geographical narrative of this ecumenical empire will be used, as offered by [9, 12, 21, 23]. By learning about the legacy of ancient geography and its cosmogonic-cosmological ideas, one will also understand the greatest challenges facing the emerging empire. The existing Aristotelian-Ptolemy system was upgraded by St. Augustine thus creating a world of dogma and scholasticism, which will remain dominant for the next millennium. Therefore, it will be necessary to become familiar with the basic features of New Platonism and Orthodoxy [11,13], which will influence geographical thinking [14, 28]. Byzantium during the Middle Ages would represent the greatest achievements of the overall development of European society, but also the basis for the formation of a new Christian civilization (Orthodox). At the same time, these processes will be accompanied by "a great decline in geographical thinking", whereby the geographical imagination of Byzantium and the world will be clarified through the analysis of numerous geographical sources [5, 7], the philosophical works of Aristotle [1, 2, 10, 18] and St. Augustine [3, 6, 13] and Ptolemy's geography [23, 26, 27]. These representations of medieval geography / cosmography, as exemplified by Byzantium, will be viewed through Bible sources and works in different works [16, 25]. Finally, the elements of the settlement-demographic development of Europe [19] and the general political and geographical characteristics of the empire [4, 16] will allow a more complete understanding of the geographical logic of the Byzantine Empire.

**Keywords:** Byzantium, geographical thinking, geographical logic, Aristotelian-Ptolemaic image of the world, great decline in geography.

## INTRODUCTION

Byzantium was a state that got its present name only when it disappeared from the historical scene and during its development the level of geographical thinking and the development of geographical ideas was significantly inferior to the realms of historical science. History and geography were essential to the identity of Byzantium, as an ecumenical empire of long duration and reach that spread across three continents. The most beautiful and simplest description of Byzantium can be summarized as follows:

"Roman rule, Greek culture and Christian faith are the main sources of Byzantine development. Without any of these three elements, Byzantium cannot be imagined. It was not until the Hellenistic culture and Christian religion merged with the Roman state form that the historical phenomenon we called the Byzantine Empire emerged. This merger was due to the shift of the center of gravity of the Roman Empire to the East, caused by the great crisis of the 3rd century. It is most clearly reflected in the Christianization of the Roman Empire and the establishment of a new capital on the Bosphorus. These two events, the victory of Christianity and the final relocation of the state center to the Hellenized East, markedly mark the beginning of the Byzantine era" [22].

The Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) was the most important medieval European country, manifested in three ways. First of all, it was the state that lasted the longest in the New Age, from the partition of the Roman Empire by Emperor Theodosius (394) to the Turkish conquest of Constantinople (1453) or it is the "only state from this sides of the Chinese Wall that survived from ancient times to the dawn of the New Age" [24]. The historical-geographical development of the Empire was the result of the relationship of military forces between Byzantium and its neighbours (Persia, Germans, Slavs, Arabs, Tatars, Turks). The peak of the empire's expansion came during the reign of Justinian I (6<sup>th</sup> century) and then during the golden period of development (9<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> centuries), followed by the weakening of the empire. This development did not flow linearly and, as a turning point in its history, there were crusades, organized with the purported goal of protecting the tomb of Christ, and the real goal was something else. During the Fourth march (1204) Western European armies (French, English, German, Genoese, Venetians) plundered and set fire to Constantinople. After this affliction, the empire weakened significantly, and the final fall was represented by the Turkish conquest of Constantinople (1453). Also, this was the first Christian state, founded on the principles of the Christian faith (Emperor Theodosius, 380). Of particular importance to this, as well as to all European history, was Emperor Constantine (272-337), who forbade the persecution of Christians (Milan Edict, 312). It was in Byzantium that the specialty of Christian teaching developed, which after the Great Schism (1054) would become recognizable as the Orthodox (Byzantine) church. In her teaching, mysticism does not appear as a school or a particular mysticism related to a particular personal experience, but rather it has a special significance.

The characteristic of Orthodox mysticism is essentially an ecclesiastical one. An Orthodox Christian educated on the mystery of faith, is nourished and spiritually formulated by the Church and the Church. The mystery of the Church is the center of his life. He prays to him, he sings, the Church has received the mystery of the Resurrection, and she must teach it, re-publish it, with all the possible shine that is provided by the liturgical expression. In every baptized Church there is a mystery of glorious immersion in salvation, and a sign of return to the Father [24].

Emperor Constantine was also credited with founding Constantinople (330), the capital with the most favourable geographical position in the world at that time, which for most

of this period would be the largest European city. It was an indispensable urban framework in which the Hellenic culture was most successfully nurtured and radiated from it to other centres of the empire, most notably Alexandria. The cohesion element was also the legacy of the Roman state administration, on the basis of which a powerful official-financial apparatus was built. In the end, the geography of the eastern Mediterranean played a double role during the New Age in imperial conquest. It favoured the networking of the newly conquered territories, and at the same time represented the frontier for further imperial expansion. In the case of Byzantium, parallels are evident with its predecessor, imperial Rome, which is thought to have reached expansion by reaching its natural borders (the Sahara in the south and the Rhine-Danube in the north). Viewed from the centre (Rome or Constantinople), for both empires the Mediterranean was the basis of communication and trade, not a barrier. Both empires reached similar spatial outlines of borders and the same geographical objects represented the border between the Empire and predominantly the same tribal neighbours. However, in the domain of geography, there was another significant difference. It is a millennial geographic view that has been greatly simplified in the Byzantine Empire compared to its ancient predecessors, and it is difficult to understand this "a great decline in geography" without taking into account the wider context.

### **THE LEGACY OF ANCIENT GEOGRAPHY**

The ancient world of geography is essentially characterized by a kind of cosmological-cosmogonic synthesis (Aristotelian-Ptolemy vision of the world), which would become the basis of scholastic learning and the paradigm of all scientific knowledge throughout the Middle Ages. Aristotle's interpretation of cosmogonic ideas and meteorological phenomena is only part of his *philosophia naturalis*, and his most significant contribution to geographical thinking has been in understanding socio-geographical processes. He applied logical principles to explain the physical laws and thus to describe the planetary system, to debunk different myths and he claimed that the universe was "finite, uninhabitable, and indestructible" [2] and in the domain of cosmogony he refuted the views of Plato, Pythagoreans, and Empedocles. Aristotle also came to the conclusion that "the sky must have a spherical shape, and therefore, it is the closest to its substance and appears first in nature" [1]. According to him, the Earth is circular, not flat in shape, and as a reason he cited the Earth's shadow on the moon, which is always round during the eclipse. He also cited the example of watching a ship sail out into the open sea and that the hull of the ship disappears first and then the sails (because of the curvature of the Earth). He portrays the universe as a polispherical, geocentric, and mathematical system, to which the fixed Earth and many spheres belong, of which the farthest sphere consists of fixed stars. In the domain of physical geography and explanation of meteorological phenomena, Aristotle's inevitable work is *Meteorology*, in whose introduction he states: "We have already discussed the first causes of nature and all other natural movements, also the arrangement of stars as they move in the sky, and the physical elements - enumerating, specifying and showing how they change from one to another - whereby they arise and perish, in general. One part of this investigation, which all of our predecessors called meteorology, remains to be considered. It refers to natural events, though their order is less perfect than with the first body. They take place in the region closest to the movement of the stars. Such are the Milky Way, comets and meteor movements. It also studies all the propensities we might call common air and water, and the types and parts of Earth and the interconnections of its parts. This sheds light on the

causes of winds and earthquakes and all other consequences that involve these species and parts of the Earth” [1].

Thus, his interpretation of physical geographic phenomena and processes will remain unchanged over the next 1800 years and will form the basis of scholastic learning. Aristotle's philosophy is described as an "amalgam of astonishing philosophical necessity" in the framework of a consonant, realistic teaching labelled as hylomorphism. Aristotle mentions the "first matter" from which free bodies (water, fire, earth and air) will form, and he attributes the perfection of circular motion to the fifth element, which he calls ether, and is found in the supralunar world (away from the moon), where souls also dwell of the dead.

Claudius Ptolemy (90 to 147 years) was the second scientist who determine the character of the whole of science over the next millennium, and ends with a series of famous Greek geographers. His contribution to geographical thinking can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, his contribution to science, especially geographical thought, was enormous, as he expanded the use of mathematics to scientifically understand natural phenomena. In addition to a number of landmark successes in the field of astronomy, Ptolemy also created “two misguided theories that will significantly diminish his overall scientific contribution” [27]. The first was astronomical and related to the geocentric theory that the Earth is at the centre of the universe. The second was geographic in nature and strengthened the so-called the "Aristotelian-Ptolemaic" character of the science on which the Catholic Church (St. Augustine) will develop dogmatic learning and prevent the dissemination of scientific knowledge, including geographic ones. He supplemented Aristotle's work on climate by expanding the number of climatic zones to seven. With his work, the theological interpretation of cosmogonic ideas and natural phenomena began to be reinvigorated as a result of his rigid determinism, especially in the domain of the significance of planets and stars. Like Aristotle, Ptolemy assumed that there was symmetry in nature and believed that the southern hemisphere was habitable. and that they could be divided into the same climatic zones as the northern ones. Dividing the country into specific zones had consequences not only for geography and meteorology, but also for theology, two from astronomy and one from geography. Many geographers state that “the Great corpus of astronomy is one of his most famous works on changes in the position of celestial bodies” [28] in which he has collected all the astronomical knowledge he has received so far (thirteen books). The book was translated and preserved by the Arabs under the name *Almagest* and brought to Europe many centuries later. In this passage, Ptolemy explained the geocentric system of the cosmos, by which the Earth is at its centre, the sun and planets orbiting it, and the stars attached to the celestial sphere. Like Aristotle, Ptolemy believed that the Earth was stationary, the objects fall towards the centre of the Earth and he thought, because the Earth must be the centre of the universe. Western Christianity had no major objection to Ptolemy's geocentric system, because it had enough space for heaven and hell on the other side of the fixed stars, so the church accepted this model of the universe as the only true one. His other significant work was the astrological treatise *Tetrabiblos*, in which he tried to adapt horoscopic astrology to the then Aristotelian philosophy of nature. Because he predicted changes in the position of celestial bodies in the *Almagest*, in this work he foresaw (astrology) their influence on earthly events. This occult knowledge will be a major astrological textbook over the next thousand years and will be subsequently printed during World War II. The third major work is *Geographia Hipegezis* (Geographic guide), in which Ptolemy compiled a collection of what was known about the geography of the world in the Roman

Empire (2nd century), with the greatest reliance on the works of the geographer Marinus of Tyre, as well as the geographical lexicons of Rome and the Persian Empire. A significant part of the book is a discussion of the data and the methods and collections of maps (atlas) used. Interesting is the content of this third book, in which Ptolemy provides very significant explanations for the differences between geography and chorography, defines the basics of geography, methodology for calculating lengths along the meridian arc, the importance of observing phenomena, comparing different reports of the same phenomena over time, Marinus of Tyre's geographical manual, instructions for compilation of maps, how the Earth is represented on the ball and plane, and a description of the meridians and parallels that are entered on the Earth's view. In a certain way, Ptolemy closed one chapter in geophilosophy very early, called the idea of the world, and, along with Aristotle, clearly defined a new idea, the idea of God. It was a strict framework of scientific aspirations, and thus of geographical imagination for the next thousand and four hundred years. After this "major setback", a new sense of geography emerges, as a science that integrates diverse knowledge, in order to discover the "measure of the whole or the law of functioning of the global system" [10].

### **CHRISTIAN THOUGHT AND THE "A GREAT DECLINE" IN GEOGRAPHICAL THINKING**

The emergence and spread of Christianity also had a significant impact on the development of medieval geography (cosmogony), which was reflected in the Judeo-Christian belief in God's creation and care for the universe. Some geographers recognized these elements in the Old Testament [9], and others emphasized that Plato's cyclical theory was dominant until then, according to which the world would last only 72,000 years. The first half of this world cycle will represent the Golden Age, but during the other 36,000 years. "The Creator will relent in his control of the world," a period of disorder and chaos will ensue, and "God will restart the cycle" [6]. From this it can be seen that in the world of Antiquity time had a cyclical character, and history repeated itself (closed circuit) and always returned to the beginning. It is at this point that Christianity emerges, which directly influences the transformation and development of philosophy, thus causing a major upheaval. Formally, this was evident through the shift of the main philosophical centre from Athens to Alexandria (Philo and Plotinus), and substantial changes were recognized through the establishment of new central philosophical concepts (issues of history and personality). This reversal emphasizes St. Augustine, which fundamentally changes the doctrinal views of ancient science in the domain of understanding the concepts of time (history) and space (geography), which we will continue to address.

"The first significant philosophy of history, which was founded in the Christian period of world history, the philosophy of the history of Blessed Augustine, to a great extent conditional on the further construction of the philosophy of history, coincides with one of the most catastrophic moments of world history, with the downfall of the ancient world and the fall of Rome (. . .) Christianity introduced historical dynamism, the exclusive force of historical events, and created not only that philosophy of history called Christian in the religious sense, such as the philosophy of the history of Blessed Augustine (...) The time of our worldly reality, the time of our world eon is torn apart time; it is a bad time, because it contains an evil, deadly principle, it is not the whole time, but broken into the past, present and future. In this respect, it is an ingenious teaching of the time of St. Augustine" [8]

St. Augustine (354-430) considered the ancient cyclical theory of history inconceivable because it denied the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the promise contained in his teaching about the ultimate salvation of man (Last Judgment). He took from Judaism the idea of a linear progression of time and for him the world is history, a happening with a beginning, a duration and an end. He takes this interpretation from the scriptures and points out that the original meaning of all human endeavours, through history, is to move into the true umbrella of peace and tranquillity, which also "marks the end of history attaches particular importance to the books of the prophets Daniel and Jeremiah". The first attempts through Nebuchadnezzar's dream to create a "scheme of history in the history of mankind," and the second speaks of "God's punishment of the people by which these prophets turn to what is to come" [8].

The question of the end of history is an eschatological question relating to the resurrection of eternal life or the Kingdom of God, which will occur by the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, Christianity is tied to the central historical event (birth of Jesus Christ), and the whole history is divided into two parts: before (Old Testament) and after Christ (New Testament). In explaining his concept of history, Augustine begins by saying that every act of God's interference with human life is a moment of history, and therefore significant socio-historical changes are given religious value in his interpretation. Thus according to St. Augustine, history knows six epochs - from the creation of Adam to the flood, from the flood to Abraham, from Abraham to David, from David to the Babylonian enslavement of the Holy Land, from Babylonian slavery to the birth of Christ and finally, from Christ to the end of the world. For this reason, Christianity is a "way out of the closed circle of Greco-Roman ontology, as it has opened the space for understanding the world in the paradigm of creation" [13].

The second aspect of St. Augustine is predominantly geographical and refers to Aristotle's five points about the habitation of the southern continent. According to him, there can be no race of people permanently separated from the North (Old World), all because of the belief in "the creation and common origin of all people." The views of St. Augustine about the invasiveness of the Southern Hemisphere in such a way that, in the face of the inability to navigate the oceans, would mean that "God created a counterpart to Adam and Eve. A righteous God would not create people in a space inaccessible to the apostles of Christ, because they would be accursed as a result of unfair living conditions" [18]. That's right for St. Augustine, the Bible was proof that Earth's antipodes must be without humans. In book *The City of God*, he says:

"And as for the story that there are humans on the Antipodes, that is, on the opposite side of the Earth, where the sun rises, when it sets, and that people walk their feet opposite ours, this is by no means credible. And indeed, it is not confirmed that this was acquired by historical knowledge, but by scientific presumption, on the ground that the Earth is surrounded by a curved sky and that there is as much space on one side as there is on the other: hence, they say, that the part that is " below us, "must be inhabited. But they do not state that, though it should be supposed or scientifically proved, that the world is round and spherical, it does not follow that the other side of the earth is bare water; even though it is desolate, does it immediately follow that it is inhabited. For the Scripture which proves the truth of its historical statements by the fulfillment of its prophecies does not give false information; it is too absurd to say that some people have traveled by ship and crossed the whole ocean, and crossed from this side of the world to another, and that, even the inhabitants of that far off region, are descendants of that first man. So we ask if we can find the City of God dwelling on Earth, among those human races that are said to

be divided into seventy-two nations, and as many languages. For it continued until the Flood and the Ark, and it is proved that he continued to exist among Noah's sons, by his blessings, and chiefly in the eldest son of Shem; For Japheth received this blessing to dwell in Shem's tents" [3].

The merging of Augustinian and Aristotle views resulted in a common medieval belief that there was only one compact and inhabited zone, corresponding to the Northern Hemisphere (Old World), while the hot (torrid) zone was too hot to allow human life, and also to border the ecumenical south. The Augustinian - Aristotelian concept dominated the conceptions of the nature of the Earth until the late Middle Ages, when it was refuted by the establishment of a scientific experiment. In the realm of cognition by numerous geographical facts, this was the experiment of Henrique the Navigator and the beginning of the Great geographical discoveries. Immediately afterwards, in the domain of astronomy, N. Copernicus, T. Brahe, and G. Galilei conducted scientific experiments, thus beginning the scientific revolution.

If we now focus only on Byzantium, we will notice that the initial reflections on the "a great decline in geography" and the reasons for such geographical imagination lie in the domain of philosophical-theological ideas, which determined the character of the whole Byzantine society. According to the origin and historical-geographical development of Byzantium, its philosophy was the natural and historical successor of Hellenic philosophy. It developed mainly in the sign of New Platonism and mysticism, as opposed to Latin (Western) Christianity, which, under certain historical circumstances, embraced and developed mainly scholastic Aristotelian rationalism. "Christological and soteriological debates were heavily influenced by New Platonism" [11] and that these are the specifics of the development of early Christianity and Byzantine philosophy. This is the period after the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325, when philosophers were replaced by apologists and church fathers. They work to systematize Christian dogmas, since Jesus Christ left no written trace behind. Of particular importance was the teaching of the Logos, in the interpretation of the Alexandrinus Philo and Origen, John the Theologian, the writer of the fourth Gospel of the New Testament, but also of Byzantine patristics in the works of the Cappadocian's (Vasily the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and Gregory of Nyssa,). Plotinus was" the founder of New Platonism and is the last of the great philosophers of ancient times" [26]. Although he lived in the chaotic period during which the collapse of the Roman Empire began, he did not write about the scenes of misery and ruin that were part of his reality. He thought of the eternal world of Good and Beauty, because he believed that this profane world offered no hope and that it was worth devoting only to another world. For the Christian, the other world was the kingdom of heaven which is enjoyed after death; for the Platonist, it was the eternal world of ideas, the real world as opposed to this deceptive, appearing world. It is on these elements, as in the previous period of ancient Greece, recognizes the elements of European identity, which is built from a "mixture of chaos and uncertainty in which the geography of the European peninsula will grow into history" [13].

### **MYSTICISM OF BIBLE EVENTS AND CARTOGRAPHIC PERFORMANCES**

Geography in the Byzantine Empire was not a subject that was widely studied, as the main fields of interest were literature, philosophy, and theology. The core of Byzantine science was the University of Constantinople (425), which arose from the reorganization and expansion of the high school of Constantine the Great and was called Pandidaktirion.

The new university, which became the most important cultural focal point of the Byzantine Empire, was taught by Greek and Latin professors of grammar, rhetoric, philosophy and law. There were other famous schools of late antiquity, such as those in Athens, Antioch, then Lebanon, Alexandria, Aphrodisiada, Beirut. The next high school was in Magnavra (9th century), and "there was a shortage of colleges filled with general education schools (ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία). This reform was imposed by the circumstances themselves, since the abandonment of cities, the reorganization of the state and iconoclasm created entirely new circumstances" [17].

One of the first texts to begin this phase in the development of geographical thinking was *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*, which binds to Gaius Solinus (III v). He found wonders both near and far, thus describing the people in Italy who sacrificed to Apollo "playing barefoot on coals of fire", pythons growing and fattening themselves "sucking milk from cow's udder". He states that there was a creature in Germany that had "such a large upper lip that it could only be eaten by walking inward." He emphasized the exoticism of the African continent in the way that "Simeons who had dog heads" lived in Ethiopia, and "four-eyed people" lived along its shores, while in Niger lived "ants as big as mastiffs". The continuation of such geographical representations was also realized in the work of Cosmas Indicopleustes, who wandered in the Sinai and wrote his memoirs and "classic defence of the Christian vision of the Earth" in twelve volumes, with the aim of defining a clear geographical location for each geographical term in the Bible. His basic conclusion is that the Earth is not round but shaped like a crate with a bulge at the top. This was an example of the incredible "decline" of geographical thinking, which will remain in Byzantium for a very long time [6].

Some of these elements have already been indicated in "ecumenical maps", designed to show what orthodox Christians are expected to do, which is to "believe." These maps were not so much knowledge-based as they were derived from the dogma of Scripture. Such simplification of geographical representations was a function of Christian belief, as explained by Isidor of Seville (VI-VII c.) In such a way that the Earth (*orbis terrarum*) resembles a wheel because of its round shape (*orbis*). Therefore, the maps, which represented the ecumenical community of the time, were called "dotted" or "T - O maps," and were based on a simplified Christian representation of the Earth: three continents in the middle surrounded by the Oceaunus Sea. And these folders were part of church dogma and Old Testament tradition, according to which each place mentioned in Scripture was to be "placed in a specific location." In doing so, a great challenge for geographers and theologians was the geographical definition of the three sites.

The first was the Garden of Eden or the Garden of Enjoyment, in which many kinds of fruit were planted, but also the tree of life. There is no cold or too much heat in this garden, but an eternal spring in it. In the middle is a spring that feeds the whole garden, and then the four rivers (the Nile, Danube, Euphrates and Tigris) are forked. Because of Ancestral fault, human access is forbidden here. Geographers at the time believed that this place was located in the eastern regions, which was set on a hill that "touches the circle of the moon's trajectory, to stay safe after the Flood." To be inaccessible to humans, paradise is surrounded by a lifeless beast with numerous beasts and is usually surrounded by high mountains or a flaming wall that reaches to the sky. The cartographic play is marked by the characters of Adam, Eve and the serpent in the upper part of the map, and favourite medieval literature described the path to paradise (Alexander the Great, Saint Brendan, the kingdom of John the Priest).



Another important location related to the centre of the world (*umbiculus terrae*), which is located in the centre of the map. This symbol has had a specific significance for every civilization, and so throughout history this "omphalos or navel of the world" has moved. Initially related to the Hellenic oracle of Delphi, the Jews considered it to be a temple of Solomon located on Temple Hill in Jerusalem, and for Christians it was Jerusalem, only its location was the church of St. John. The grave on Golgotha. This is confirmed by Bible sources, as the Languages prophesied: "... who taught and prophesied in Babylon, and his prophecies were learned in Jerusalem (...) he saw the most terrible destruction of Jerusalem, when the wrath of God slaughtered all but those who had previously been marked by a Greek sign called Tavy" [7]. And that sign is like our letter T, which is again the sign of the cross. The position of the centre of the world can also be recognized by this description: "Thus said the Lord: This is Jerusalem, which I have set up in the midst of the people, and overtook them in the land" [7].

The geographical location of Byzantium had a transcontinental significance, as the empire lay on three continents (Europe, Asia and Africa). With the strengthening of the Byzantine state, Constantinople became Second Rome, and the site of the coronation of the Byzantine emperors was transposed into the center of the world. In other words, the central place on the map of the world, which was recognized as Hagia Sophia, corresponded to the capital of the most powerful Christian empire.

The third "mystical" location refers to the Gog and Magog countries, multifaceted geographical terms referring to countries, rulers or nations. These terms are interpreted differently in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The earliest mention of these terms is recorded in the Old Testament, the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, in which the enemies of the people of God were prophesied: "And when the thousand years are over, Satan shall be released from his prison. And they will go out to deceive the nations in all four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle, whose number is like the sand of the sea. [7].

A possible explanation for this biblical statement can be found in the "Apocalypse - An Interpretation of John's Revelation," which states: "It is thought of the appearance of the antichrist before the end of the world. The liberated Satan will seek to deceive all peoples on Earth in the face of the Antichrist and to encourage Gog and Magog to fight against the Christian Church"[5].

It is clear that the interpretations of these geographical terms in the scriptures had a great influence on the geographical imagination of certain religious communities, and since they were eschatologically understood, their geographical representations were interpreted differently. In other words, for the Jews, Gog and Magog were Scythians, who lived on the northern shores of the Black Sea, for Christians it was the Huns, and the Muslims believed that Zulkarnejn's inaccurate connection with Alexander the Great was interpreted by Western sources.

## **GEOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS**

The third group of elements in the construction of geographical logic had purely geographical elements. We have already pointed out, by the example of Constantinople and its geographical location, the importance of this ecumenical empire. Based on the broadest geographical concepts (continents), it is common knowledge that the division of the world into three continents (Europe, Asia, and Africa) was first developed by ancient Greek geographers and then transmitted to Greek and Latin Middle Ages. Initially,

continents were defined solely as geographical terms, but over time they evolved into cultural concepts. This is most evident from the example of the term Europe, which "Towards the end of the Middle Ages, in the West, and especially in Renaissance Italy, it established itself as a meta-geographical term expressing a sense of cultural and religious identity within a politically divided world, above all, Latin Christianity in relation to the emerging and smaller Ottoman Empire. degree, and to the 'schismatic' Christian East.

**Table 1.** The largest cities in Europe 800-1400. g., classified into three regions: eastern and western Mediterranean, and north (all cities north of the Pyrenees, Alps and Danube). Source: [19]

800							
No.	City	Location	No. inhab.	No.	City	Location	No. inhab.
1	Constantinople	East	300 000	6	Naples	West	30 000
2	Cordoba	West	160 000	7	Metz	Nord	25 000
3	Rome	West	50 000	8	Paris	Nord	25 000
4	Merida	West	40 000	9	Milan	West	25 000
5	Plisna	Nord	34 000	10	Toledo	West	25 000
1000							
No.	City	Location	No. inhab.	No.	City	Location	No. inhab.
1	Constantinople	East	450 000	6	Venice	West	45 000
2	Cordoba	West	450 000	7	Thessaloniki	East	40 000
3	Seville	West	90 000	8	Ratisbon	Nord	40 000
4	Palermo	West	75 000	9	Amalfi	West	35 000
5	Kyiv	Nord	45 000	10	Rome	West	35 000
1200							
No.	City	Location	No. inhab.	No.	City	Location	No. inhab.
1	Constantinople	East	250 000	6	Milan	West	60 000
2	Palermo	West	150 000	7	Cordoba	West	60 000
3	Seville	West	150 000	8	Granada	West	60 000
4	Paris	Nord	110 000	9	Cologne	Nord	50 000
5	Venice	West	70 000	10	London	Nord	40 000
1400							
No.	City	Location	No. inhab.	No.	City	Location	No. inhab.
1	Paris	Nord	275 000	6	Genoa	West	100 000
2	Bruges	Nord	125 000	7	Prague	Nord	95 000
3	Milan	West	125 000	8	Constantinople	East	75 000
4	Venice	West	110 000	9	Gent	Nord	75 000
5	Granada	West	100 000	10	Rouen	Nord	70 000

The comparison is all the more interesting and justified in the light of the fact that Byzantium and the medieval Latin West were brothers within the Christian civilization, who inherited the works of the ancient geographers, though in different ways and each to a different extent" [4].

The second factor is the natural-geographical characteristics of the Empire [12] and refers to the climatic vegetation characteristics (predominantly steppes, semi-deserts and deserts), which limited the spatial distribution of the population. Finally, the third significant factor is the location of the population and the maritime orientation of the cities (urbanization of the coastal zone). It can be seen that, among other things, the difference in the degree of urbanization can be explained by the different historical and geographical development of the whole Euro-Mediterranean area during the New Age. Undoubtedly, the first refers to a geographical thought by which a large, diverse and rich set of concepts and ideas are described, describing, organizing and mentally mapping the world of ecumenical knowledge that the Byzantines knew or imagined. From the texts studied, it follows that there is no clear and systematic idea of the macro-spatial concepts and ideas that existed in Byzantium during the Byzantine period geographical texts and travelogues are relatively rare compared to texts from other medieval civilizations [15]. According to him, extensive historical, literary, hagiographical and educational writings, which shed light on the geographical world of Byzantine authors, should be studied. The character of Byzantium best reflects the assessment that:

"Under Constantine and his successors, the Eastern Roman Empire or Byzantium became a refined and somewhat refined counterweight to the earlier empire, with a better development of goods traffic, a more disciplined army, and a stricter formalism. It lived for another thousand years as a civilization stopped in its development. Those who believed in the fourth century that the Roman Empire had a thousand more years to live had the right, if they identified Rome with Constantine's new capital. Byzantium succeeded in overcoming the parasitism and disorder that undermined the power of Rome, but managed to preserve itself only as an enclave whose boundaries and importance became diminishing from one century to the next" [16].

In order to describe "a great decline in geography" based on the previous causes of geographical development, it is necessary to define terminologically more precise terms. The description of geographical concepts and ideas should begin with a topography and overview of the most important cities of the Empire. Undoubtedly, in addition to the aforementioned Constantinople, Athens was of great importance, and the most important cultural foci and major centres in Asia Minor were Ephesus and Antioch, and in Egypt it was Alexandria.

Based on Table 1, we note that the regional ratio between the 10 largest cities in Europe in the first period (800 AD) was: 1 (east): 6 (west): 3 (north), and then this ratio changed and was **1000.**: 2 (E): 6 (W): 2 (N); **1200.**: 1 (E): 6 (W): 3 (N) and lastly, **1400.**: 1 (E): 4 (W): 5 (N). During the observed period, the dominance of cities in the west has been continuously maintained, and in the last phase it has moved north. It is clear that apart from Constantinople, and to a lesser extent Thessaloniki, there were no cities in the East that could rival the cities of the West with their demographic strength. Simplified, new political-geographical relations have emerged from such relations in the domain of urbanization. Indeed, when we compare both parts of the former Roman Empire over the past two millennia, we can see that for the most part of this period, its eastern part existed as the Byzantine Empire (330-1453) and the Ottoman Empire (1299-1923). On the other hand, there were far more historical geographical changes in the western part. This is a kind of confirmation of the thesis that during the historical development of society, the progress of humanity, and even the rise of scientific thought, dominates the cities and the concentration of human and material values.

## CONCLUSION

The geographical logic of the Byzantine Empire was deeply determined by different groups of elements, which significantly determined the quality of geographical thinking. The complexity and diversity of these performances can also be seen on a spatial scale, from global, through regional to local. That the “Byzantine geographers did not recognize the global vision of the world” [21] is confirmed by the fact that the Byzantine elite did not produce any geographers whose teaching would be equivalent to ancient scholars. In other words, geographical thinking in the domain of cosmogony / cosmology was not raised to a higher level than that of Strabo or Ptolemy, on the contrary, it was significantly degraded (Cosmas Indicoplovest), and chronographic (regional-geographical) studies did not come close to describing Pausanias or al-Idrisi. At the same time, at the regional level, there were “clear ideas about the number, ethnic structure and characteristics of neighbouring nations and the organization of their countries” [20]. This has been translated into important political-geographical writings (Constantine Porphyrogenitus), which clearly indicate both the military and economic supremacy of Byzantium in regional terms. Finally, the confirmation of local knowledge and the importance of geographical elements for the quality of life are shown by capital objects built in Byzantium, which shows the success of the state organization. Despite its lack of understanding of global geographic representations, Byzantium was building, within the European framework, a representative system of geographical thinking. This is confirmed by numerous objects that included geographical knowledge (aqueducts, fortifications, religious objects, bridges) as well as objects of universal artistic value, sown in the wide arc between Constantinople and Ravenna.

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