

SSWH4 Analyze the Impact of Byzantine and Mongol Empires



Element D: Explain the decline of Byzantium and the impact of the fall of Constantinople in 1453 CE.

Decline of Byzantium

- The fall of the Byzantine Empire was precipitated by a very slow decline that began in the sixth century after the Bubonic Plague struck.
 - The empire's population gradually shifted away from urban areas leading to less centralized leadership and the inability to resist growing Muslim power in the region.
 - During the seventh century Muslim armies took considerable territory including Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.
 - In addition to the threat from Arab Muslims, the Byzantine Empire also faced threats from Turks and Slavs in this period.
 - In the eleventh century, Turkic armies united under Seljuk leadership presented a serious threat to Byzantine power in the region and inspired the Western European Crusades.



Fall of Constantinople

- While the declared target of the majority of Western European Crusades was the Muslim rulers of Jerusalem, the Fourth Crusade in 1204, sacked and destroyed much of the capital of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople.
 - The reasons for this Christian Crusade against Christians was complicated but include a desperate need for financing and lingering resentment over the Schism of 1054.
 - In many ways the Crusaders sack of Constantinople in 1204 served as the death blow to the empire.
 - For the next two hundred years the empire struggled with the loss of territory to a new regional power, the Ottoman Turks, civil war, and another outbreak of the plague.
- This decline culminated in the final fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453.



Impact of Constantinople's Fall

- The fall of Constantinople to the Turks opened the door to Turkic Muslim expansion in the Middle East, North Africa and Southeastern Europe.
 - With control of Constantinople, now called Istanbul, the Ottoman Turks held the Bosphorus Straits, an essential location for the transport of goods and people between Asia and Europe.
 - This strategic advantage, along with the military innovations of the Ottoman Sultans allowed the growth of a new powerful Muslim empire in the region.
 - Additionally, with Constantinople under the control of Muslims, the center of Christian Orthodoxy shifted north to Russia.


