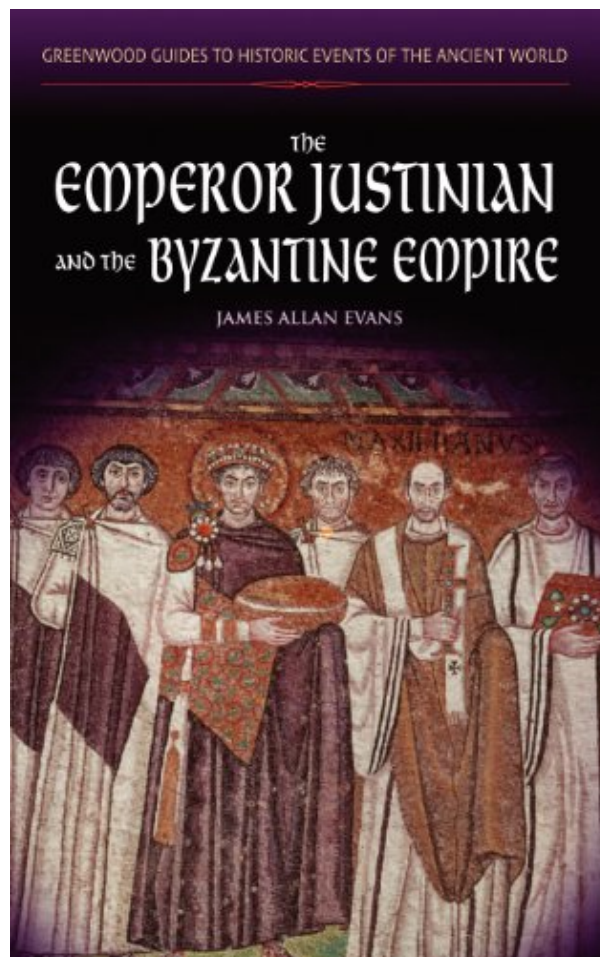


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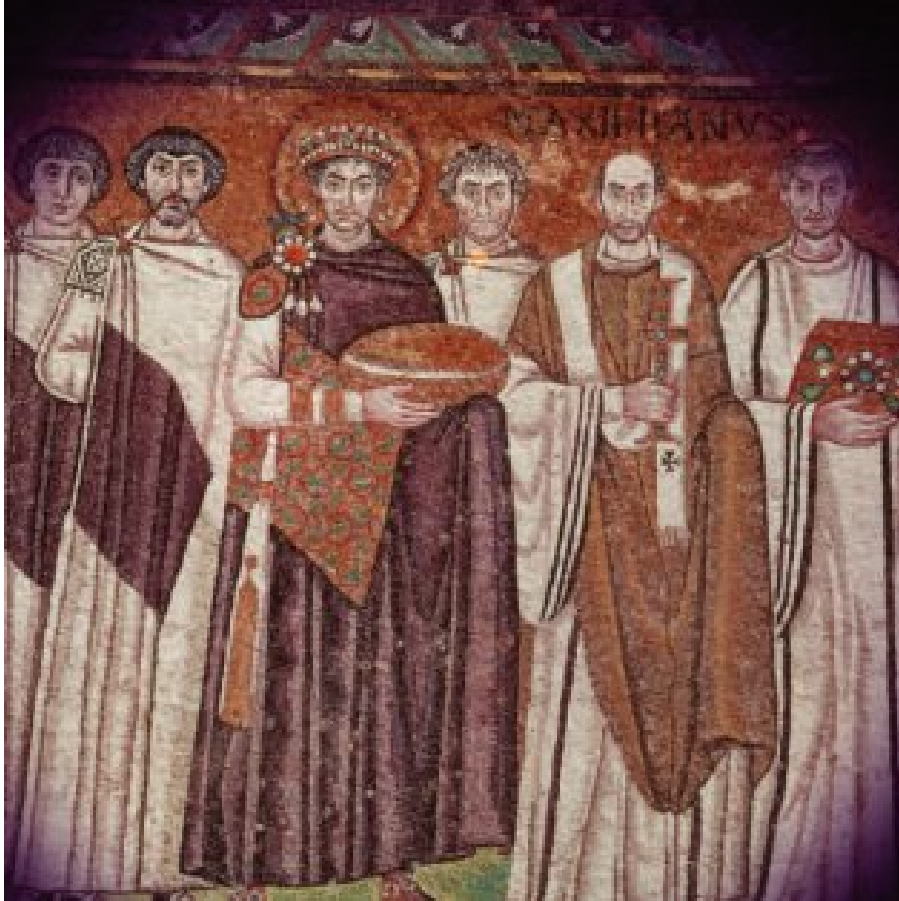
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## Review

"Recommended. Lower-division undergraduates and two-year technical program students; general readers." - Choice

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When Justinian first assumed the title of Roman Emperor in 527 CE, his inherited empire—now based in Constantinople—had lost almost all of its connection with the Eternal City itself, and was threatened from within by profound theological splits, and from without by the various barbarian kingdoms that surrounded it. By taking military action against the barbarian Ostrogoths, Visigoths, and Vandals, and signing an eternal peace with Persia, Justinian managed to reclaim much of the lands formerly held by Rome; while through his incessant legislation and monetary contributions to an extensive building program, he sought to reestablish the old Roman cultural institutions of order and architectural beauty in his newly won kingdom. This inveterate reformer and innovative leader, whose name remains on the beams of the Hagia Sophia, and whose influence extends into the legal practices of the present time, remains as compelling a man today as he was to his original historians almost 1500 years ago.

Designed as an accessible introduction to Justinian's reign and his time, *The Emperor Justinian and the Byzantine Empire* offers readers and researchers an appealing mix of descriptive chapters, biographical sketches, and annotated primary documents. An overview of the world of Late Antiquity is presented in the introduction, and is followed by chapters on the shape of the Empire, the Nike revolt of 532, the legal achievements of Justinian, the Empress Theodora, and Justinian's building program. The narrative chapters conclude with a section discussing the imperial achievements as a whole. An annotated bibliography and index are also included in this work.

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#### Most helpful customer reviews

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Very informative short book

By mjare

This short book is well-written. It is also very informative source of knowledge about the reign of Justinian. Author made an attempt of Justinian's conquests justification. Previously some historians condemned Justinian for his attempts of the Roman Empire restoration in the western part of the Mediterranean Sea. They claimed that Justinian left eastern borders of his Empire without the proper protection, what in their opinion might be confirmed by the sack of Antiochia by Persian troops in 540 AD. Evans shows in his book that eastern provinces were also very important in Justinian's policy. An author clearly emphasizes the role of the empress Teodora, which she had in the imperial policy in those times. Her influence on the Justinian's decisions was huge. For instance she convinced her husband Justinian to suppress the Nika Riots, which were directed against their rule. I find the collection (at the end of the book) of short biographies of people, who were involved in the main events of the Justinian's reign very useful and informative.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

The last of the Romans

By FrKurt Messick

Justinian's reign was the a high point of the final days of the Roman Empire - besieged from within and without, the Roman Empire was based administratively in Constantinople, and had all but lost contact with the 'Eternal City', the home of its origin, Rome. There was a definite East/West split that had already begun to solidify linguistically and culturally, and there were increasing tensions in the now-officially Christian Empire as to just what kind of Christianity was going to be the official line.

When he was born, Justinian wasn't really meant to be Emperor. His uncle Justin came to power somewhat

unexpectedly, but Justinian adapted to the coming responsibility with shrewdness and ability. He has been called the last of the Romans for good purpose; the city of Rome itself had been sacked by Visigoths and Vandals in the preceding century, and the western lands were more often than not in open defiance of Roman authority. When they were officially Roman, they were as often demanding as they were supportive. Justinian's long reign enabled him to reunite most of the old Roman Empire one final time. After Justinian, no one would be able to reunite East and West again.

There were different groups pressing at the borders of the Empire - the various European tribes of peoples, from Goths and Germans to Slavs, pressed in on the northern borders with increasing power. The African provinces were increasingly problematic, and the ancient enemy to the east, the Persians (formerly Parthians). Justinian was the last emperor to expand territory and defend against the invaders on all the fronts. Some peace treaties (such as that with the Persians) leads to long-term problems; Justinian's successor refuses to pay the treaty amounts, for example, and war ensues with Persia once more.

As interesting a period as this is internationally, it is also an interesting period theologically; it is one of the few times in Roman history where the dominant belief (or at least wishes) of the Emperor are not translated into theological orthodoxy. The Monophysite party had great influence, not just with Justinian, but with his Empress, Theodora, and thus prompted church councils, that nonetheless determined against the Monophysites. Several heretical issues arose during Justinian's reign; some of the aftermath still survives in official church doctrine for the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic worlds, as well as for splinter groups in Christendom that remain to this day.

Evans also writes about the building of the Hagia Sophia, the crowning building project of Justinian's reign, and a magnificent structure which remains in the city of Istanbul to this day.

The book is arranged in an interesting manner - there is a timeline with annotations beginning with the dedication of Constantinople in the year 330, leading to the overrun of Greece by Avars and Slavs in the year 587, twenty years after Justinian's death. Evans put these events in some wider context - the prophet Muhammad was born about the same time as Justinian's death; the final stage of the united Roman Empire fell as Muhammad came of age.

The second section is a narrative history in six chapters, each one looking at particular significant topics (the overall context of the world in late antiquity; the Nika revolt of 432; the legal achievement of Justinian; the Empress Theodora; the building programme of Justinian; and a concluding chapter). This is followed by a biographical section, with short essay biographies of the major figures of the time period. The fourth section includes primary documents from the Byzantine Empire, including legal documents, architectural descriptions (Hagia Sophia), reports on the plague and more. Finally, there is a useful glossary, index, and list of bibliographic references that make this a truly useful volume for the historian in a hurry.

The text includes a few photographs in black-and-white of significant buildings and mosaics. The one disappointment for me was that there are no maps; a few showing the lay of the lands would be helpful.

Overall, this is an interesting, accessible volume for a little-studied time period. Bella Vivante states in the series foreword that knowing the past is essential to knowing the present, and gives good reason for studying time periods such as late antiquity and the reign of Justinian. James Evans' style of writing is engaging and succeeds in bringing these issues into relevance.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.  
Short and concise, interpretive work.

By Douglas E. Libert

The eastern Roman Emperor Justinian is most famous for his *Civilis Juris*, that his his interpretation of Roman Laws; alot of the interpretations of which can still hold up today. The book is only 178 pages long, very readable and gives short chapters in regard to significant epochs and events of Justinians' reign. He was a christian emperor so concerned with orthodoxy that at times he seems more like a pope than a Caesar. In fact the term Caesaropapism was coined to describe him. The book also has a glossary of Byzantine Empire terms that are unique to the Eastern Roman Empire of Justinian.

However despite all his concerns with laws and orthodoxy the eastern Empire is anything but a Pax Romana, with Invasions ,Counterinvasions, Riots over food and chariot race drivers, etc. The book spends a significant amount of time on the different writers of the Justinian Age and explores some of their motivations for explaining Justinians reign as they did. Lots of black and white pictures of Justinians ambitious building constructions. Despite all the lofty pronouncements of Justinian you still get the feeling there was lots of ways of skirting the laws like is still done today.

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