

Topic Page: [Byzantine chant](#)

Summary Article: **Byzantine chant**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

The name given to the Christian chant of the Greek-speaking Orthodox Church. In 330 Constantine the Great made Byzantium (henceforth Constantinople) capital of the Roman Empire; but only in 527, with the coronation of Justinian I as emperor, did Byzantine liturgy, art, and music gain supremacy throughout the empire. Other important dates are 726–843 (the iconoclastic age), 1054 (the final break from Roman Catholicism), and 1453 (the sack of Constantinople by the Turks). During the course of the 11th century the introduction of new hymns was forbidden, and the power of the Byzantine Empire was broken with the establishment of the Latin Empire (1204–61). However, the restoration of the Eastern Empire in 1261 led to a renaissance which lasted for a century, followed by a gradual deterioration until the end of the empire.

Byzantine music and liturgy were dominated by its hymns, which adorned the Offices rather than the Mass. The *troparion* (later *sticheron*) was an intercalation between the verses of a psalm. The *kontakion* was a sermon in verse, sung after the reading of the Gospel at the Morning Office. At the end of the 7th century it was replaced by the *kanon*, consisting of nine odes of nine stanzas each: each ode had its own melody. Finally acclamations to the emperor were sung throughout the period; unlike music actually sung in church, these were accompanied by instruments, especially the organ.

Byzantine music, notated in neumes, is based on a system of eight modes (*echoi*), defined by characteristic melodic formulas as well as by tonality. The verse itself it is Semitic in origin. The comparative simplicity of earlier and middle Byzantine music gave way, at the end of the period, to a highly embellished style in which the balance between verse and music tended to be destroyed.

APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA

Byzantine chant. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. Abington, UK: Helicon. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/byzantine_chant



© RM, 2018. All rights reserved.



© RM, 2018. All rights reserved.

APA

Byzantine chant. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. Abington, UK: Helicon. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/byzantine_chant

Chicago

"Byzantine chant." In *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*, edited by Helicon. Helicon, 2018. https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/byzantine_chant

Harvard

Byzantine chant. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. [Online]. Abington: Helicon. Available from: https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/byzantine_chant [Accessed 14 October 2019].

MLA

"Byzantine chant." *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*, edited by Helicon, 2018. *Credo Reference*, https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/byzantine_chant. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.