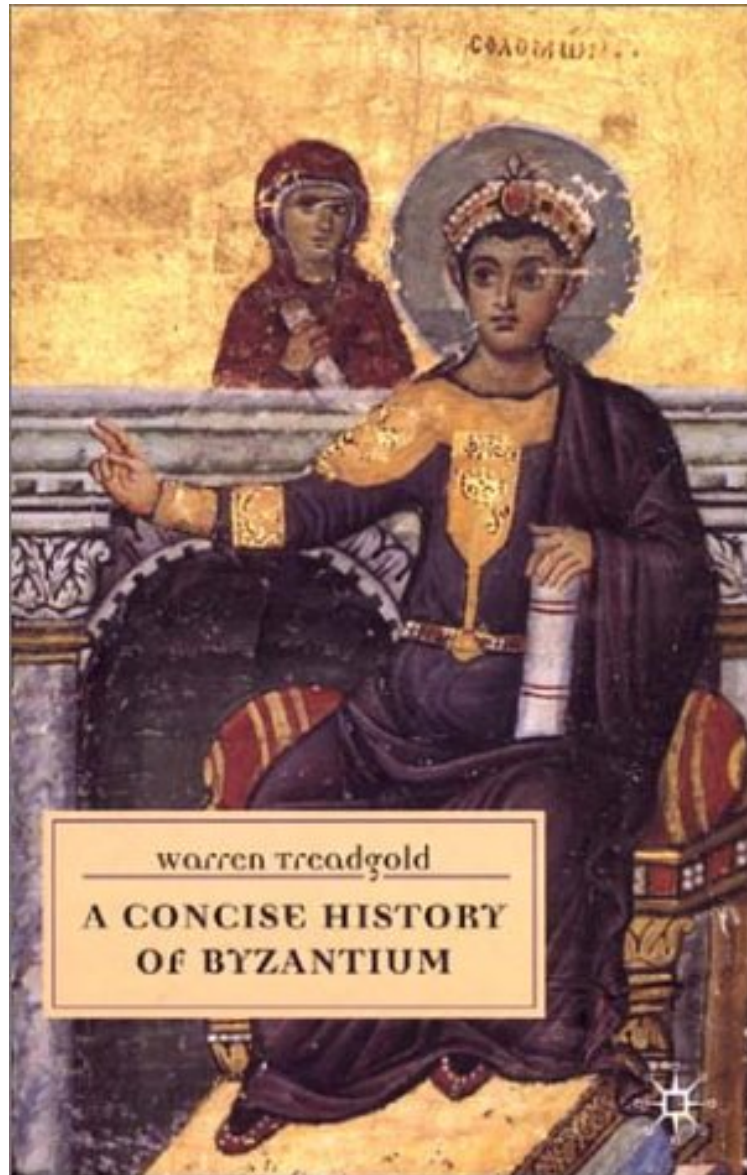


[Download] A Concise History of Byzantium (European History in Perspective)

## A Concise History of Byzantium (European History in Perspective)

Warren Treadgold

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**Warren Treadgold : A Concise History of Byzantium (European History in Perspective)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Concise History of Byzantium (European History in Perspective):

13 of 17 people found the following review helpful. An Alternate to NorwichBy A CustomerThis book covers Byzantine history from 285 to 1453 at the rate of about 5 years per page, and in my view does a solid job of it.

Obviously, many details are omitted, though I suspect anyone new to the subject might feel there is an overwhelming amount of detail. Prof. Treadgold writes in his usual no-frills scholarly style, which I prefer to the more lively style of Norwich. Despite the style, this book does not include much scholarly apparatus--most notably there are no footnotes. The book is organized into 40 sections, on average about 6 pages long. There are two introductory sections and two concluding sections. The core of the book consists of the 36 sections between, divided into 6 chapters, each chapter covering a period of Byzantine history. The chapters are composed of 3 to 5 narrative sections always followed by a section on society and one on culture. The second page of each chapter has a (very good) map taken from Prof. Treadgold's longer work. There are 12 black-and-white plates. There is only one chart in the book and it presents statistics for area control, population, revenue, and army size at 13 points during the Empire's history. A graph repeats the area information. There is a list of rulers appended, and a 16 page index. The book emphasises military fortunes, emperor actions (or lack thereof), and religious disputes. I appreciated the emphasis on military affairs, but others might not. The overall viewpoint is the empire as seen from Constantinople. This is not an anecdotal approach to history; none of the colorful but dubious legends are even mentioned (no blind Belisarius). And, for example, Prof. Treadgold's sober approach to the reign of Justinian II is in marked contrast to Lord Norwich's approach. Which approach you prefer is a matter of taste. I much prefer the Treadgold approach, but still felt I couldn't rate this book 5 stars. I expect most people would find it a little dry, and the facts come perhaps too thick and fast. But on the other hand, I also noticed a couple of omissions that I think even a beginner would notice: the death year of Belisarius is not stated, and while Prof. Treadgold very neatly summarizes Byzantine Spain as "never much more than a set of embattled outposts", he does not complete the thought with something like "which were all lost by the mid 620's", and it can only be deduced from the book's maps that they were lost by 780. Minor points perhaps, but not the perfection I expected from Prof. Treadgold. Perhaps I hold him to too high a standard! But I will conclude by noting that I plan to start rereading the book right away.

8 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Good short overview of Byzantium history  
By Derek Law  
It seems like this is the only English book out there that summarizes Byzantine history using latest scholarly research. The author's primary interest is in the revivals declines that happened during the long Byzantine history. In a way, he is still responding to Gibbons' history. I think this is important to keep in mind when reading this book. The writing style is clear, and the sections are very evenly divided. As such, besides being a good read, this book provides good pointers for further reading in Byzantine history.

17 of 19 people found the following review helpful. Very Good analytical history  
By Tom Munro  
This is a very good although brief little book. Byzantium is the name given to the part of the Roman Empire which survived the collapse of the West. Those who lived in it would have known themselves as Romans and Byzantium is very much an artificial name thought up after the event by scholars who had something of a prejudice against the Eastern Empire. This book is a strongly argued rebuttal of that position. The historian who has shaped the popular view of the Roman Empire is Gibbon. His rather long work explores a theme. That theme is that the Roman Empire reached its peak when its members were pagan and immersed in the values of a classical civilisation. The conversion to Christianity changed the nature and structure of the empire and led to its decline. This book broadly suggests that this view is poppycock and it uses a statistical and analytical approach to prove its point. Broadly what is argued is that the reason for the decline of Rome was bound up in the nature of the imperial system in 200 onwards. The basis of the authority of the Emperor was the support of the army. The army in turn consisted of troops who were generally non-roman. Although the Empire was nominally the strongest power in Europe at the time its internal authority was subject to fragmentation and it was this which led to the collapse of the Empire in the West. In the East a similar thing happened. However the Emperors were gradually able to re-assert civil power over the military. In addition it was also possible to build a common culture based on the Greek language and Christianity which unified the Empire and gave those who lived in it a common identity. Rather than declining the Eastern Empire was able under Justinian to go on the offensive and to re-conquer Africa and Italy. Whilst the Empire was to suffer reverses it lasted to 1200 and was still one of the strongest powers in Europe in 1000. This book uses statistics on the revenue of the empire, the size of its army and the extent of its territory to prove it's the central thesis. This book is far easier to understand than a straight chronological history like that of Norwich. It is a book which cannot be recommended highly enough.

This short and accessible history, primarily aimed at those unfamiliar with the subject, traces the development of Byzantium from AD 285 until its fall in 1453. Treadgold demonstrates that Byzantium's remarkable cycle of decline and recovery was largely due to the character of individual emperors and inherent weaknesses in the empire's structure. Each narrative chapter concludes with discussions of Byzantium's society and culture during six distinctive chronological periods.

From Library Journal  
Much as H.D.F. Kitto condensed *The Greeks* (1988), Treadgold (history, St. Louis Univ.) here abridges his massive *History of the Byzantine State and Society* (LJ 9/1/97). The Byzantine Empire (285-1461) spanned three continents and demands a succinct overview, especially given its relevance to such diverse disciplines as modern Balkan politics and church history. The author's historiography depends greatly on quantifying change. In

each chapter, he provides a narrative account of the events of a specific period followed by sections on the society and culture. These latter sections reflect the author's interest in the size and pay of the armies, the demographic variations of regions and cities, and such factors as urbanization or the lack thereof. He draws fascinating conclusions from the revenues and bureaucracies of the different eras. The excellent bibliography will give students a good start on research in any of the periods discussed. Recommended for all libraries. Clay Williams, Hunter Coll., New York Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Edward Gibbon regarded the Byzantine (or East Roman or Later Roman) Empire with disdain. It was both a pale imitation of classical Hellenic culture and a degenerate inheritor of Roman Latin political institutions. Although subsequent historians have modified that view, the general perception of a static empire in a state of "perpetual decline" remains. This compact survey of an empire that outlasted the Roman Empire in the West by a millennium may not dispel that notion, but it does pay tribute to the vibrancy, cultural richness, and historical legacy of the first great "Christian" empire. Treadgold necessarily moves quickly, but he convincingly illustrates how the Byzantine (1) transmitted elements of classical culture to disparate groups, including Slavs and Arabs, (2) were instrumental in bringing Christianity to eastern "barbarians," and (3) maintained a degree of stability in the eastern Mediterranean despite constant external threats. This is an excellent general history of a still underappreciated people and of their contributions to the modern world. Jay Freeman Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "This is an excellent general history of a still under appreciated people and of their contributions to the modern world." --Booklist