
The Power Configurations of the Central Civilization/World System in the Eighth Century

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ABSTRACT

This paper is the nineteenth in a series in which the political careers of civilizations/world systems receive snapshot codings of their overall power structures at feasible intervals. The narratives are produced by collating histories with large frames of reference. The codings are done using a nominal variable, polarity, with seven available values: nonpolarity, multipolarity, tripolarity, bipolarity, (nonhegemonic) unipolarity, hegemony and empire. Previous articles in the series have examined the Indic system 550 BC–AD 1800, the Far Eastern 1025 BC–AD 1850, the Southwest Asian c. 2700–1500 BC, and the Northeast African c. 2625–1500 BC. The Northeast African and Southwest Asian systems and sequences merged c. 1500 BC to form the Central system. A previous article has coded this system from 1500 BC to 700 BC, and previous papers have examined the system from AD 800 to date. In the current paper, the Central system's power structure is coded at ten-year intervals, AD 700–800. The system begins in a tripolar state, but becomes multipolar in this century.

Keywords: *Arab Empire, Bulgaria, Byzantine Empire, Central Civilization, the eighth century, Francia, Hispania, Ifriqiya, Longobardia, Khazaria.*

THE POWER CONFIGURATIONS OF THE CENTRAL CIVILIZATION/WORLD SYSTEM IN THE EIGHTH CENTURY

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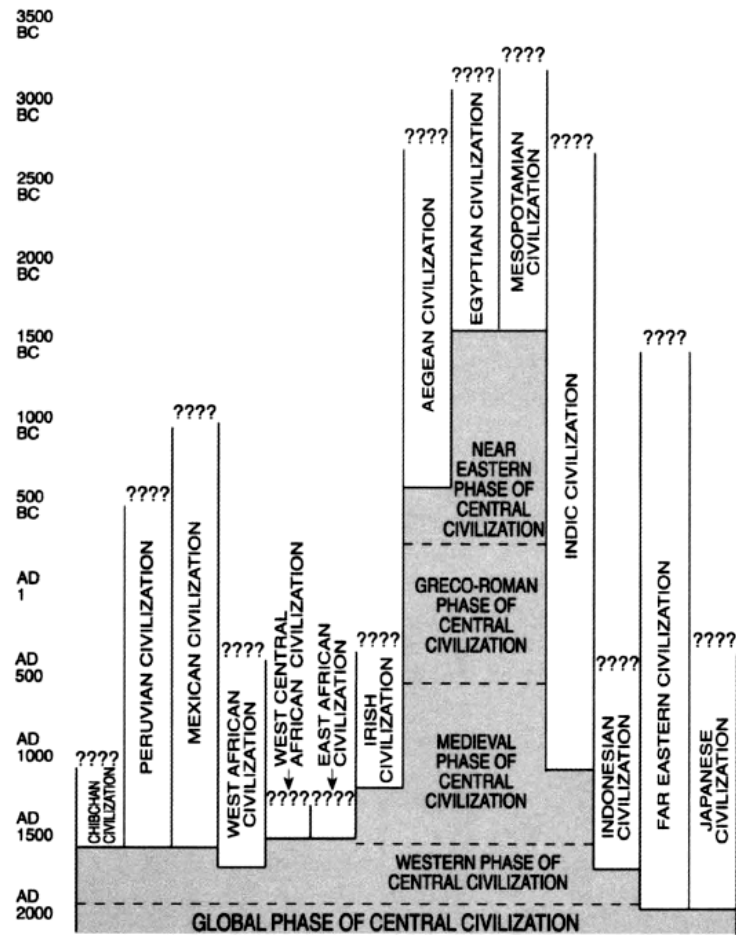
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collating histories with large frames of reference: Fouracre 2005; Frye 1975; Holt *et al.* 1977a, 1977b; McKitterick 1995; Robinson 2010; Shepard 2008; Shepherd 1911; Sinor 1990. The codings are done using a nominal variable, polarity, with seven available values: nonpolarity, multipolarity, tripolarity, bipolarity, and (nonhegemonic) unipolarity, hegemony and empire. Previous articles in the series have examined the Indic system 550 BC–AD 1800, the Far Eastern 1025 BC–AD 1850, the Southwest Asian *c.* 2700–1500 BC, the Northeast African *c.* 2625–1500 BC. The Northeast African and Southwest Asian systems and sequences merged *c.* 1500 BC to form the Central system. A previous article has coded this system from 1500 BC to 700 BC (Wilkinson 2004), and previous papers have examined the system from AD 800 to date. In the current paper, the Central system's power structure is coded at ten-year intervals 700–800. The century begins in tripolarity and moves back and forth to end in multipolarity.

This paper continues work in the making and analysis of data sequences for the power structures of world systems which has been previously published or presented elsewhere. The concept of the civilization/world system as fundamentally *a politico-military network of cities* (hence also a 'civilization'), containing a plurality of cultures, polities and 'identities,' and contained in a wider, more loosely linked *world-economy* or 'oikumene,' has been previously developed (Wilkinson 1992, 1993) and will not be elaborated here.

Similarly, the 'Central' world system, the specific target of this study, has been elsewhere (Wilkinson 1987) identified and bounded, and thereby distinguished from its neighbors, such as the West African, East Asian, Indic and other world systems, with which the Central system converged and merged in the modern era. Accordingly, only a brief discussion of boundary-drawing and of the eighth century boundaries of the Central system will be provided here.

The incorporation of all pre-globalization civilizations into the Central system is however illustrated in Figure 1.



This figure illustrates the successive incorporation of autonomous civilizations into a larger, composite "Central civilization" (in grey). ???? = Transitions to civilization took place no later than this date.

Fig. 1. From many civilizations, one global civilization

Note: own work: Wilkinson 1987.

**SPATIAL BOUNDARIES OF THE CENTRAL CIVILIZATION/
WORLD SYSTEM DURING THE EIGHTH CENTURY**

For the purposes of power structure analysis, which necessarily focuses upon politico-military networks (PMNs) and the interactions of the Powers therein, the spatial boundaries of a 'world system' must be

determined by the intensity of politico-military interactions between nodal points.

What were the boundaries of the Central system in the eighth century? From the maps we shall borrow from Talesman's Atlas, and from the narrative of politico-military transactions we shall construct below, it will readily be seen that in the eighth century nearly all of 'Europe' – Western Europe, Central Europe, Italy, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans – is part of the same system. So are North Africa and Egypt, Anatolia and Syria, the Caucasus, Mesopotamia, Arabia, Iran, and even Central Asia (which may be spoken of as the 'East End' of the Central system during the period under study). Culturally, these areas may be seen as (most of) the Christian and the Islamic culture zones; politically, they are bound together in a single network of politico-military transactions, whose structure must be seen as a whole. The field of action of the Central system AD 700 is seen in Figure 2, which shows the civilization/world system as a set of states and peoples. Figure 3, with equal validity, shows the system as a set of cities; but its date is AD 622, and so will require an updating commentary.

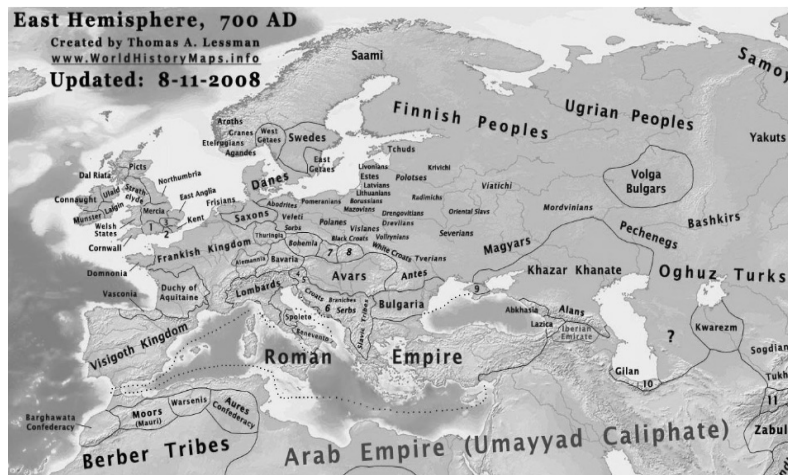


Fig. 2. The Field of Action in AD 700

Note: This is part of the full east-hem map available for free at http://worldhistorymaps.info/images/East-Hem_700ad.jpg; Numbered Countries are shown there. Attributed to Thomas A. Lessman CC-BY-NC-ND-3.0.



Fig. 3. Cities of Central Civilization in AD 622

Note: Own work, after Chandler 1987.

MAJOR CITIES OF THE CENTRAL CIVILIZATION/ WORLD SYSTEM AT THE START OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY

For locating large cities at various moments, we have used Tertius Chandler's encyclopedic work (1987). Chandler provides city size data estimates for AD 800, but not for AD 700; his nearest date is AD 622. There was turnover among the largest cities as between Chandler's AD 622 data and our start date of AD 700. From east to west (see Figure 3): Stakhr was destroyed in Arab campaigns of 640–649. Basra and Kufa were Arab foundations, in 636 and 637–638 respectively; Basra was first a military base and then an intellectual center, Kufa a temporary capital and then also an intellectual center. Ctesiphon in Iraq suffered plague in 638, civil war in 639, and Muslim conquest and refugee flight in 637. Dvin, in Armenia, was sacked by the Umayyads in 642, as were Aleppo (637) and Edessa (638) in Syria.

The granary of Egypt, with major urban centers at Alexandria, had fallen to the Umayyads in 639–646. Inland Fostat was created in 641 to displace Alexandria as Egypt's capital (to 750), partly to avoid Byzantine sea raids, partly because the Nile trade routes now sent Egypt's grain not oversea to Constantinople but overland to Arabia and Syria (and the Nile-to-Red Sea Canal of the Pharaohs had been redug in 641 or 642 by Amr ibn al-As, the Muslim conqueror of Egypt, to divert Lower Egypt's grain supply to Mecca and Medina).

Carthage was destroyed by the Umayyads in 698, and was replaced as Umayyad capital of Ifriqiya/Tunisia by Kairouan about that time.

An AD 700 map of the largest cities should therefore include the following cities from Chandler's AD 622 list, again east to west: Samarkand, Merv, Rayy, Kermanshah, Caesarea, Coptos/Qift, Damascus, Jerusalem, Constantinople, Alexandria, Thessalonica, and Rome. It would be reasonable to add Basra, Kufa, Fostat and Kairouan. Seville may not belong to the AD 700 list, but the Visigoth capital Toledo probably should.

THE CODING PROCESS

Power configurations in the Central system were coded at ten-year intervals from AD 700 to 800. A narrative of political-power behavior was first constructed, and broken down by decades, so that the information provided for each decade describes such power behavior during that time period, and implies the coding, or change of coding, of the system-wide structure of power at the end of the decade; the coding applies, not to the entire decade, but to the single year by which it is dated.

The codings employed were: nonpolarity, multipolarity, tripolarity, bipolarity, unipolarity (non-hegemonic), hegemony, and empire. A 'nonpolarity' coding would be used for any period in which no 'great power' behavior is detected. An 'empire' coding is rejected for any period in which the vast majority of the system's territory and population is not under the control of a single centralized state. The historical narratives of great power interaction provide the evidence for distinguishing the other five 'intermediate' codings of multipolarity, tripolarity, bipolarity, unipolarity and hegemony. A 'hegemonic' coding would be produced, for example, by a single state making a claim that the rest acknowledged its supremacy, but only if such a solitary claim were combined with tributary, placatory, submissive, followership behaviors on the part of other states, especially former great powers. Where two or more states assert and evince such spheres of influence, of comparable dimensions, bipolar, tripolar and multipolar codings are appropriate, depending upon the numbers of such states and spheres. Evidence of non-hegemonic unipolarity would be found where, for example, only a single state makes supremacy claims, and manages to extend its sphere of influence disproportionately to that of any other state, but its claims are nonetheless resisted or ignored by many other states. Even without any explicit diplomatic or monumental claim, the recorded sphere and results of politico-military operations

provides significant evidence of the relative status of states at various moments in the system's history.

States become relevant to the power-structure coding process when they appear in the histories, ordinarily first in the histories of already established great powers, especially their neighbors, and cease to be relevant when they disappear from such histories, even their own. This is especially true of the 'great powers' upon whose existence and relations the 'intermediate' codings most depend.

The sensitive observer may feel that the following narrative is narrowly focused on wars, rebellions and civil wars, imperial collapses, state failures, dynastic ambitions and extinctions, territories claimed and invaded, gained and lost. The sensitive observer will be correct. The narrative focuses on those events by which power, and rank among the powers of the world, was gained and lost: for power is, and Powers are, our topic.

THE GREAT POWERS AT THE START OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY

As of AD 700, the start of the eighth century, the Arab Empire (Umayyad Caliphate) was the largest power, to some degree controlling Arabia, Syria-Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Libya, and the Mediterranean coast of Morocco, in the face of mutiny and resistance. Next was Byzantium, aka the Byzantine (Roman) Empire, with Anatolia, Thrace, the Greek coast, the Mediterranean islands from Cyprus to the Balearics, and positions in Italy. Bulgaria had forced tributary status on a Byzantine Empire wracked by pestilence and civil strife. Well behind were Khazaria, Longobardia (the Lombard kingdom of Italy), and the domains of the Franks ('Francia') and of the Spanish Visigoths ('Hispania'). At the east end of the Central system, there was a weak link to the Sinocentric Far Eastern system: the old city of Samarkand alternately paid tribute: at some times to the second Turkic Khaganate of the nomadic cattle-herding Gokturks under Qapaghan Qaghan (r. 692–716); at other times to the Empress Wu Zetian (r. 690–705) of the one-woman 'Wu Zhou' dynastic interlude that had interrupted the Tang dynasty of China.

Taking a closer look at the Powers, the *Arab Empire* would have been a clear first if it actually controlled from the center all the territories it had subjugated; but it did not. In 700, the Umayyad Caliphate of the Arab Empire, with Damascus as capital, under the rule of Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan ibn al-Hakam (r. 685–705), nominally stretched from Khorasan in the east to Tripolitania in the west, but Umayyad

control was everywhere challenged. Berbers in the west, Armenians north of the center, Iraqis and Persians in the east, were restive under Umayyad Arab rule from (and for) Syria. Most notably, in AD 700 Caliph Abd al-Malik was facing an Iraqi revolt under Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn al-Ash'ath against his commander al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. Another weakness suggested by later events was that the revenues, or loot, acquired by Umayyad governors in the far west and far east of the empire were not necessarily remitted to the rulers in Damascus even when the governors were not in open rebellion.

Byzantium was a power much depopulated and de-urbanized by the Plague of Justinian (542 ff.), which still provided cyclic aftershocks, the fourteenth in 698–701. Politically, Byzantium was early in the Twenty Years Anarchy (695–717). The last Heraclian Emperor, Justinian II, had been overthrown by the soldier Leontios and exiled to the Byzantine-Khazar grain-trade base of Cherson in the Crimea, where he intrigued with the Khazars. Leontios had in turn been overthrown by the soldiers who had been implicated in the final loss of Carthage to the Umayyads in 698, and in 700 their ruler du jour was Tiberius III; Justinian II aspired to restoration. The Byzantine Empire's heartland was now Anatolia, but its chief city remained European Constantinople, with other major places being Thessalonica in Greece and Caesarea Mazaca (Kayseri) in Cappadocia.

Byzantine polity was highly militarily structured, mostly as 'themes' (district armies): the Armeniac and Anatolic themes opposing the Arab positions in Anatolia by land, the Opsikion and Thracian themes defending the capital in Asia and Europe respectively, the Thrakesian theme and the Carabisian navy for Anatolia's west and south coasts respectively; the theme of Sicily and the more civil-religious Exarchate of Ravenna managed the Empire's western front. The Byzantine organization was advantageously stabler than that of the Arab opponents, except when a theme *strategos* (commander) chose to revolt or a theme army to mutiny, as they did repeatedly in the eighth century.

Reviewing lesser powers from east to west: *Khazaria* was a Khaganate north of the Caucasus between the Black and Caspian Seas in the mid-seventh century. Expanding to the lower Volga and Don, it had established by c. 700 the 'Pax Khazarica' whereby Khazaria facilitated and profited from trade: on the northern branch of the east-west Silk Road with its western terminus in Constantinople; northward up the river routes to fur country; and across the Black and Caspian seas to the Byzantine and Arab Empires. On the west coast of the Caspian

Sea Khazaria's capital Balanjar faced off against the Muslim raiding-and-trading base of Derbent.

Khan Asparukh (r. 681–700) had established the *First Bulgarian Empire*, ruling from the Danube delta to the Balkan range, exacting an annual tribute from Byzantium, founding the city of Pliska as his capital. In 700 he died in battle with Khazaria, and was succeeded by Ter-vel (r. 700–721).

Italy was divided into a Byzantine sphere and a Lombard sphere. Byzantine Italy was overseen by the Exarch of Ravenna, and including the Duchy of Venetia, the Duchy of the Pentapolis (south of Ravenna on the Adriatic coast), the Duchy of Perugia (connecting Ravenna to Rome), the Duchy of Rome, and the Duchy of Naples. Sicily, capital Syracuse, was, as noted, a theme, or Byzantine province; the theme included Calabria in the toe of the Italian boot. And perhaps Apulia, in the heel of the boot, as well.

Lombard Italy was also divided. ‘Longobardia minor’, in the south, included the usually effectively independent duchies of Spoleto (central Italy) and Benevento (southern Italy). *Longobardia major*, a kingdom with its capital at Pavia, comprised Italian Neustria in the northwest, Italian Austria in the northeast, and Tuscia in the southwest. Longobardia major was in a succession crisis in 700.

Mediterranean North Africa was divided into Umayyad Tripolitania under Hassan ibn al-Nu'man al-Ghassani, and Berber *Ifriqiya* (Tunisia) under the queen Dihya al-Kahina. Byzantine Carthage had been destroyed by Hassan in 698, to be displaced by inland Arab Kairouan and the Arab naval base city Tunis; Tunisia's grain supply was thereby lost to Byzantium. The destruction of Carthage and with it the Byzantine ‘Exarchate of Africa’ left Sardinia, formerly a duchy under that Exarchate, as a Byzantine duchy more or less loosely under Constantinople; Corsica was also nominally but ineffectively Byzantine.

Francia, poor in resources but rich in warriors and churchlands, was in 700 united under the effective rule of Pippin II of Herstal, Carolingian Mayor of the Palace of Austrasia, servant and master of the decaying Merovingian dynasty, Duke and Prince of the Franks, and overlord of western and central Frisia. Pippin and his successors would be occupied with what might be called ‘the Carolingian project,’ to wit, the restoration of Frankish control over the peak terrain of the sixth century Merovingian monarchs whom they had first served and then undermined. There was no great happiness with Pippin's rule among the various subaltern districts and peoples, but serious rebellion was deferred until his demise.

Visigothic *Hispania* encompassed the Iberian peninsula and southwestern Gallia ('Septimania'), and had some oversight over Ceuta/Septa/Septem Fratres in the northwest corner of Africa. Its capital was Toledo, a center of religious literacy, co-ruled by Egica and his son Wittiza, preoccupied with domestic religious persecution.

THE EIGHTH CENTURY POWER NARRATIVE

To reiterate: the preponderance of large cities and wealthy provinces under the Umayyads might lead to a conclusion that the AD 700 power structure was unipolar. But the Caliphate was in a period of civil-war instability, while Byzantium, despite the Twenty Years' Anarchy, had consolidated after its losses in Africa and was following an aggressive policy of destabilizing Arab rule over Armenia. At the same time, Byzantium was appeasing Bulgaria by paying tribute, which suggests respect for Bulgaria's power. Accordingly, the power structure of that year is judged:

AD 700. Tripolar: Arab Empire (Umayyad Caliphate), Byzantine Empire, Bulgaria). Regional powers: Khazaria, Berber Ifriqiya, Francia and Visigoth Hispania.

In 701, the Iraqi rebellion under Ibn al-Ash'ath against Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik and his Syrians was decisively defeated at the Battle of 'the monastery of Skulls', Dayr al-Jamajim.

In 701, Khan Asparukh, founder of the First Bulgarian Empire, died and was succeeded by his son Tervel.

The Umayyad expansion proceeded on the central and western fronts, not unchallenged. Armenia had revolted against Umayyad overlordship, and was re-subjugated by Muhammad ibn Marwan ibn al-Hakam in a series of campaigns (in 701, 703–704, 705) and revolts (702). Abdallah ibn Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan conquered (700, 703) the important Byzantine frontier strongholds of Theodosiopolis in Armenia and Mopsuestia in Cilicia. Sisium in Cilicia was the object of a back-and-forth struggle that left it in Byzantine hands.

The Umayyad commander Musa ibn Nusayr subdued the Berbers of Algeria at the battle of Tabarka, Tunisia, in 701, 702 or 703. In this decade, he also conquered Tangier and Sous in Morocco, and began the building of a navy to conquer the Balearics.

The year 705 was important for both major powers. The Byzantine ex-emperor Justinian II, having fled Khazaria to Bulgaria, and having there raised a force of Bulgars and Slavs and purchased the sponsorship of Khan Tervel with fair promises, overthrew and killed Byzantine Emperor Tiberius III in July/August. Tervel's price was Zagora, a district in

Thrace south of the Balkan Mountains, and the title of Caesar, second rank in the Byzantine Empire; Justinian paid up.

Caliph Abd al-Malik died in October, to be succeeded by al-Walid I (r. 705–715), who was to prove a successful manager of unruly conquerors at both ends of the Empire.

Through the agency of his eastern Viceroy (for Iraq and beyond), al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf (r. 694–714), Caliph al-Walid was able to underwrite and al-Hajjaj to oversee the conquest of divided Balkh, Tokharistan, Sogdia, and the Silk Road city of Bukhara (705–710) by Qutayba ibn Muslim, who faced resistance (708–709) from the local Turk Shahis/Kabul Shahis under Nazaktar Khan, assisted by rising Tibet.

The Arab-Byzantine war proceeded under Justinian II and al-Walid, with an Arab spoliation of Tyana (Cappadocia) in 707–708, and Amorium (Phrygia) in 708. However, Justinian chose to give priority to an attack on his Bulgarian ally, subject, and overlord, Tervel of Bulgaria. Justinian hoped to recover Zagora, but was defeated badly at Anchialos in 708. Figure 4 shows the Byzantine-Bulgarian campaigns of this and the preceding century.

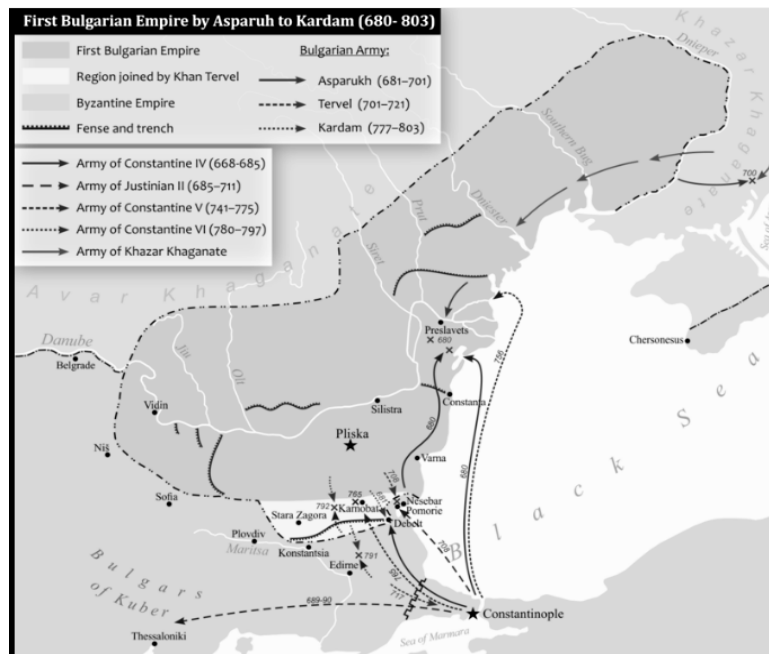


Fig. 4. Bulgaria (First Bulgarian Empire) 680–803

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In the 700s, Longobardia, the Lombard Kingdom of Italy, was effectively paralyzed by succession crises after the death of king Cunipert (700); Liutpert, Aripert (700), Liutpert again (701), and Aripert again (701) seized power. The Lombard dukes of Spoleto (central Italy) and Benevento (southern Italy) took advantage of Aripert's preoccupation with defense against the dynastic claimant Ansprand, exiled in Bavaria, to prey upon their neighbors.

Francia, under Pippin of Heristal, annexed Thuringia (700).

King Ergica of Visigoth Hispania died and was succeeded by his son and co-king Wittiza at some time between 701 and 703. Wittiza seems to have spent his reign reforming the clergy and conciliating Visigoth opponents of Ergica.

AD 710. Tripolar: Arab Empire (Umayyad Caliphate), Byzantine Empire, Bulgaria. Khazaria and Francia were regional powers.

Byzantium's Twenty Years' Anarchy continued. Byzantine Cherson (Crimea) rebelled against Justinian II, was defeated, and rebelled again (710); in 711 the rebel leader Philippicus Bardanes, with Khazar help, assumed power.

The Umayyad expansion on the eastern front continued – Sind in 711, Khwarezm (in the Aral Sea delta of the Oxus/Amu Darya) and Silk Road Samarkand in Transoxania 712. On the central front, Antioch was sacked in 713, and the Second Arab-Khazar war (713–737) begun with a series of indecisive Transcaucasian raids and counter-raids.

On the western front, Visigoth Hispania lurched toward its finale. King Wittiza died; a succession struggle between Roderic (Rodrigo) in the south and west, and Akhila in the north and east, followed; the Akhila faction invited the Arabs into Ceuta (710) to assist. The crossing of the Straits of Gibraltar by Tariq ibn Zayad began the Umayyad conquest of Hispania in 711; in that year King Roderic was killed in battle and the Visigoth capital Toledo fell. Seville was conquered in 712; the Visigoths lost Mérida in 713. In 714–716 Zaragoza, León, Astorga, and Barcelona fell, as did Narbonne in Gallia Septimania, and the conquest of Hispania was almost complete. Some Visigoth nobles in Septimania submitted, others resisted under Ardo (714).

There was a setback in the expansion of the Arab Empire after the death of the eastern Viceroy al-Hajjaj (714), the recall to Damascus of the overly-enriched western conquerors Musa ibn Nusayr and Tariq ibn Ziyad (714), the death of Caliph al-Walid, and the succession of his brother Sulayman ibn al-Malik (r. 715–717). Sulayman distrusted al-Walid's generals, and recalled Qutayba ibn Muslim, conqueror of

Transoxania, who revolted and was assassinated, and Muhammad ibn Qasim, conqueror of Sind, who submitted and was executed. Sulayman did succeed in establishing tributary suzerainty over Tabaristan, the southern coast of the Caspian Sea.

Imposing and costly preparations were made in 716 for a final assault on Byzantium, where the continuation of the Twenty Years' Anarchy had seen the displacement of Philippicus by an army mutiny enthrone Anastasios II (713), and another mutiny overthrowing Anastasios and elevating Theodosius III (715). However, premonitory Arab naval and land advances in Anatolia motivated Theodosius to make a concessional tributary peace and alliance with Bulgaria (716). Nonetheless Theodosius was deposed in 717 in favor of the military commander Leo III the Isaurian, who would institute a new and durable Isaurian dynasty (717–802). Figure 5 shows the Byzantine Empire c. 717, at the ascension of Emperor Leo III.

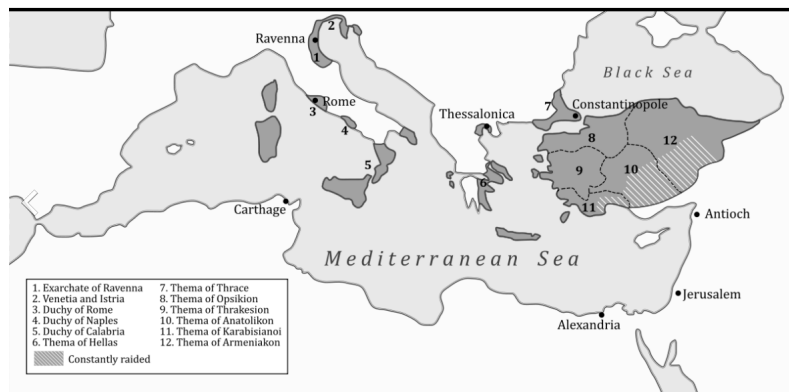


Fig. 5. The Byzantine Empire at the accession of Leo III the Isaurian c. 717

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The Second Arab Siege of Constantinople was undertaken in 717–718. The advanced naval weapon ‘Greek Fire’ destroyed one Arab supply fleet in 717 and another in 718. Famine, exposure, pestilence, the death of Caliph Sulayman, and the decisive intervention of Bulgaria on the Byzantine side, together put an end to the expedition, which marked the peak of Arab expansion against Byzantium on the central (Anatolian) front.

The new Caliph, Umar II (r. 717–720), finding the treasury and military depleted, abandoned conquest in Anatolia, and stopped ad-

vances in the east. On the western front, Christian forces resisted the Umayyads in Asturias, founding a kingdom there and beginning the long Christian *Reconquista* of Iberia; but in Gallia Septimania, Narbonne was taken by the Umayyads, and held for 40 years as a raiding base.

The key figure in Francia, Pippin II of Heristal, consolidated his rule in Thuringia with a royal diplomatic marriage (711). Pippin died in 714, and a civil war followed. Frisia and Aquitaine revolted to independence, and Neustria fought Austrasia. Pippin's illegitimate son Charles Martel emerged victorious in 716–718, and resumed Pippin's imperialist policy, attacking Saxony in 718 and re-subjecting western Frisia in 719.

King Ansprand of Longobardia died in 712; the Lombard Kingdom began a long rise under King Liutprand (r. 712–744), who made an alliance with Charles Martel about 718. The Lombard king and southern dukes all took advantage of the Byzantine preoccupation with the Arab invasion to make predatory attacks in Byzantine Italy.

AD 720. Tripolar: Arab Empire (Umayyad Caliphate), Byzantine Empire, Bulgaria. Khazaria and Francia were regional powers.

Umayyad Caliph Umar II was assassinated, and succeeded by Yazid II (r. 720–724), who promptly suppressed another Iraqi rebellion under Yazid ibn al-Muhallab, and resumed a militarist policy which he could scarcely afford, with raids against Byzantine Anatolia and Khazaria. Finances were to be restored by crackdowns on corrupt local administrators, which offended them, and by (nominally illegal) taxation of non-Arab Muslims. The tax policy met resistance in the Berber west (by assassination of the tax collector), and expulsion in the Transoxanian east (lost 722–729), where Sogdia revolted, and invading Arab armies met effective resistance (e.g., 'Day of Thirst,' 724) by the desert-nomad Turgesh Khaganate (ephemeral, 699–766, but then at its peak). Subversive activity by the alternative-claimant 'Abbasid' dynasty began throughout the empire about this time; its object was the creation of a 'united front' of the enemies of Umayyad power.

On the central front, there were alternating Khazar raids (in force) and Arab counterstrokes from 722 through the decade, with major victories for both sides that got loot but no decision. The Khazar capital, Balanjar, was sacked; the capital moved away from the frontier, to Samandar.

The Arab-Byzantine frontier in Anatolia stabilized, with fortresses on both sides (see Figure 6) and plundering raids as opportunity of-

ferred. Arab raids succeeded in looting Caesarea Mazaca in 725, and Gangra (in Paphlagonia) in 727, but failed at Nicaea in 727.

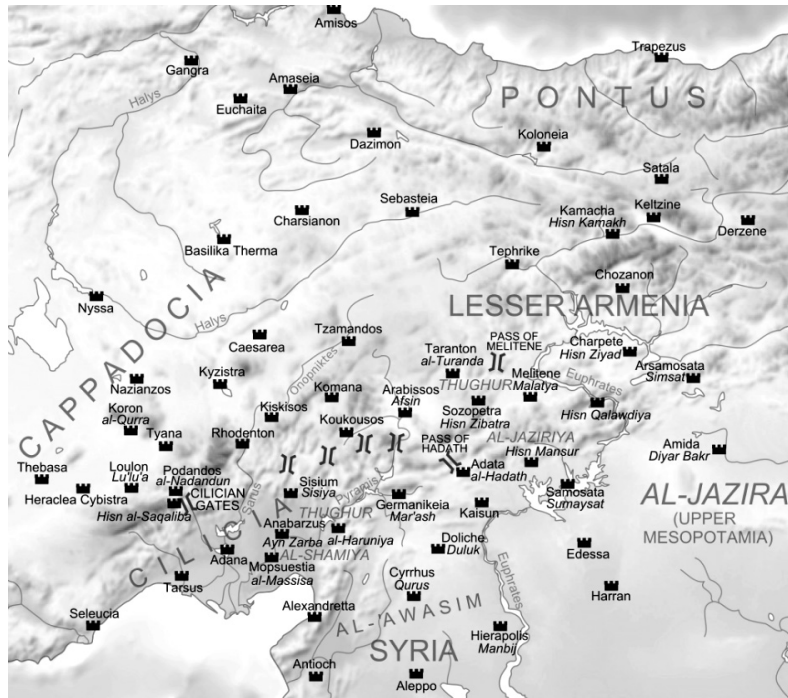


Fig. 6. The Byzantine-Arab Frontier Zone in southeastern Asia Minor, with the major fortresses

Note: attributed to C. Plakidas CC BY-SA 3.0.

There were Umayyad successes on the Arab western front, where King Ardo was killed, and the last Visigoths driven from Septimania into Aquitaine (720). An Arab attack on Toulouse was defeated by duke Eudes of Aquitaine (721), but Carcassonne and Nîmes were taken in 725, and Septimania became a major Arab raiding base.

Byzantine Emperor Leo III began to get money and make trouble for himself by raising taxes and promulgating 'iconoclastic' religious edicts against the veneration of images. Iconoclasm and taxation were resisted, by image-heavy monasteries wherever found, and more broadly in Greece (naval rebellion 727) and Italy. In Italy, Venice and Ravenna moved toward autonomy, as did the 'iconophile' pope Gregory II (r. 715–731), who began to assert temporal power in Byzantine Italy, and raised forces to oppose iconoclastic policies.

Tervel of Bulgaria died, apparently to be replaced by Kormesiy, who kept the peace with Byzantium through his obscure and quiet reign.

Caliph Yazid II died in 724, and was succeeded by his brother Hisham (r. 724–743), who suffered losses in Transoxania, but was able to resist, or defer, further disintegration of the Arab Empire.

Longobard King Liutprand augmented his prestige and power by acquiring effective control of nominally Byzantine Corsica, defending it against Muslim raids about 725. Liutprand expanded his territory against Byzantine north Italy during the iconoclastic agitation, donating part of Latium to Pope Gregory II and thus founding the Papal State. Liutprand was able to establish momentary hegemony over Spoleto and Benevento in 729.

Charles Martel spent this decade and the next subjugating Francia and assailing the Germans east of the Rhine, with campaigns in Saxony (720, 724), Alemannia (725) and Bavaria (725, 728).

AD 730. Multipolar: Arab Empire (Umayyad Caliphate), Byzantine Empire, Bulgaria, Khazaria. Regional powers included Longobardia (Lombard Kingdom), and Francia; the Papal State was a new local power.

The Arab Empire's expansion in east and west met setbacks, but there were successes on the central front. In the east, the Battle of the Defile (731) was a victory too costly to be celebrated, severely weakening the Umayyad forces, which had to retrench, leaving the mobile forces of the Turgesh Khaganate and most of the cities of Transoxania independent; but the Battle of Kharistan (737) ended the Turgesh threat, as the Turgesh leader Suluk paid the frequent penalty of failure in 738, and disorder followed his death.

In the west, in 732, the Arab forces, having nearly destroyed the Aquitaine army, confronted the Franks under Charles Martel at Tours, were badly defeated, and withdrew to Septimania or to al-Andalus. Thereafter, the Arabs concentrated on local raids, consolidations, and minor extensions. Francia proceeded to reduce west Frisia, Aquitaine, and Burgundy to obedience (734–739), campaigning again in Saxony (738), and taking the field against the Umayyads in Septimania and their allies in Provence, where Charles Martel captured Marseille in 739.

In 739, the Great Berber Revolt against Umayyad-Arab taxation and discrimination broke out in Morocco.

The Arab raids against Byzantine Anatolia in the 730s were profitable: Charsianon in 730, Attalia, Dorylaeum, and Akroinon in 733.

The Arab-Khazar war was more vigorously fought: an Arab assault in 730 was met by a deep Khazar thrust and the sacking of Ardebil, the capital of Azerbaijan. Back and forth raiding and looting continued through 732. In that year the Byzantine heir Constantine V married the Khazar princess Tzitzak (→Irene). A significant Arab victory in 737 effectively ended the war operations, with advantage in loot and submission to the Arabs, but with both sides exhausted. Sometime between 730 and 750, the Khazar capital again moved northward, away from the Arab frontier, to Atil/Itil in the Volga delta.

Byzantine Emperor Leo III escalated the Iconoclast controversy with popes Gregory II and Gregory III (r. 731–741) by ordering the destruction of icons (730), attempting military enforcement of his decrees, and confiscating of papal properties and revenues. Gregory III responded by increasing stress on the importance of venerating icons and relics, and by founding iconophile monasteries.

There was a triangular balance-of-power struggle of war and diplomacy in Italy as among Lombards, Byzantines and Popes. Lombard King Liutprand swapped allies in north Italy in 730, joining Eutychius, Byzantine exarch of Ravenna, against Rome under Pope Gregory III, so as to bring the Lombard duchies of Spoleto and Benevento, disobedient once again, back to heel. In this decade Liutprand variously directed his efforts at expansion against Ravenna, Rome, Spoleto and Benevento. Pope Gregory III appealed to Charles Martel of Francia, but got only temporary assistance against Liutprand.

The Bulgarian Khan Kormesiy was deposed in favor of his son Sevar (738–753), who continued the ‘silent era’ of Bulgarian history.

AD 740. Tripolar: Arab Empire (Umayyad Caliphate), Byzantine Empire, Bulgaria. Longobardia and Francia were regional powers.

The 740s were a decade in which both Arab and Byzantine empires suffered severe setbacks.

The Umayyad Caliphate of the Arab Empire, shown in Figure 7, was beset in the west by the Berber Revolt, in the center by Byzantine advances, and worst of all in the east, by civil war within the Umayyad dynasty, and then by a follow-on civil war that destroyed that dynasty.



Fig. 7. The Central System in 740

Note: attributed to Constantine Plakidas CC BY-SA 4.0.

In the west, the Berber Revolt (inflamed by Kharijite Islamist egalitarianism) against the Arab discrimination and Umayyad over-taxation had by 743 expelled Umayyad (Syrian Arab) power from Morocco and Algeria, and weakened it in al-Andalus, to the advantage of the Christian remnant kingdom of Asturias. The revolt had also undercut the Umayyad attempt to conquer Sicily in 740.

In the center, a Byzantine army under Leo the Isaurian and his son and future successor Constantine V (r. 741–775) defeated invading Arab forces at Akroinon, Phrygia (740), so badly that serious Arab overland raids on this front ceased for some decades. And a decisive naval victory over the Umayyad Egyptian fleet at Keramaia, Cyprus (746? 748?) put an end to serious naval attacks in the eastern Mediterranean for the rest of the century.

Meanwhile, an inter-Umayyad civil war, the ‘Third Fitna’ (744–747), engrossed the Umayyads. Umayyad Caliph Hisham died in 743; his successor al-Walid was overthrown and killed by the ambitious Yazid III in 744; Yazid died that year, and his successor Ibrahim was pushed aside by the equally ambitious Marwan II (r. 744–750). Marwan faced and put down revolts by the Banu Kalb tribe in Syria (744–745) and the Kharijite sect in Mesopotamia (744–747).

In the east, however, Marwan's writ never quite ran; rather there was a confusion of rebellions and recoveries. Multitudinous discontents – various Sunni Arab clans struggling against one another; non-

Sunnis (Shias and Kharijites) hostile to Sunni orthodoxy; non-Arabs (Egyptians, Persians and Khwarezmians) against linguistic and cultural discrimination or persecution; non-Muslims (Zoroastrians) against religious discrimination and persecution – were diplomatically conjoined by Abbasid leaders.

The Arabs' Byzantine adversaries had their own internal troubles. Leo III died in 741, to be succeeded by Constantine V, a martial emperor. While Constantine was active in fighting against the Umayyads in Anatolia, his brother-in-law Artabasdos seized the capital and held the throne until a brief civil war 742–743 restored Constantine. Minor expeditions continued in Anatolia – Constantine seized people from Germanikeia and translocated them to Thrace in 746/747 – but on the whole the Arab-Byzantine balance stabilized in this decade. The fifteenth (and last) major epidemic (746–747) of the two-centuries-long Plague Cycle of Justinian at Constantinople and in its environs, which also affected the Islamic world, may have contributed to the suppression of militant imperialism on the Arab-Byzantine front.

Bulgaria remained quiet under Sevar. Khazaria had been made tributary by the Umayyads after 737, but slipped away during the Arab civil wars, and likewise remained quiet.

In Francia, Charles Martel died in 741, to be succeeded by the divided rule of his sons Carloman and Pippin III the Short, and revolts in Aquitaine, Alemannia, Bavaria and Saxony 741–746. Carloman retired to a monastery in 747, leaving Pippin as an effective ruler of Francia, with more troubles to come in Saxony, Bavaria and Aquitaine.

In Italy, Lombard king Liutprand made peace with Pope Zachary (741–752), who worked to quiet the violent ambitions of the Lombard dukes of Spoleto and Benevento and the Byzantine Exarch of Ravenna. Liutprand re-established effective control over the southern duchies by force in 741. Liutprand's successor Hildeprand (744) broke with Zachary and was swiftly overthrown by Ratchis (744–749). Ratchis reigned a while in peace, but then began to expand against Byzantine Ravenna. When Ratchis retreated under diplomatic pressure from Zachary, he was deposed by his militant nobles in favor of his more aggressive brother Aistulf (749–756).

AD 750. Tripolar: Arab Empire (Umayyad→Abbasid Caliphate), Byzantine Empire, Bulgaria. Francia, Longobardia, and Khazaria were regional powers.

In 750, the ‘Abbasid revolution’ replaced the Syrian-based Umayyad Caliphate of the Arab Empire with a dynasty based in Iraq and pieced together from many discontents. The first Abbasid Caliph, as-Saffah (r. 750–754), ‘the Blood-Shedder,’ attempted to exterminate the Umayyads, but missed Abd al-Rahman ibn Mu'awiya, who escaped to al-Andalus (Hispania). As-Saffah accepted Jews, Nestorian Christians, and Muslim Persians in his administration, and enrolled non-Arabs and non-Muslims in his army.

In 751, at the battle of Talas (Figure 8) in the Jaxartes (Syr Darya) valley, Abbasid forces, aided by Tibetans and defecting Karluk Turk mercenaries, inflicted a major defeat upon the Tang Empire of China.

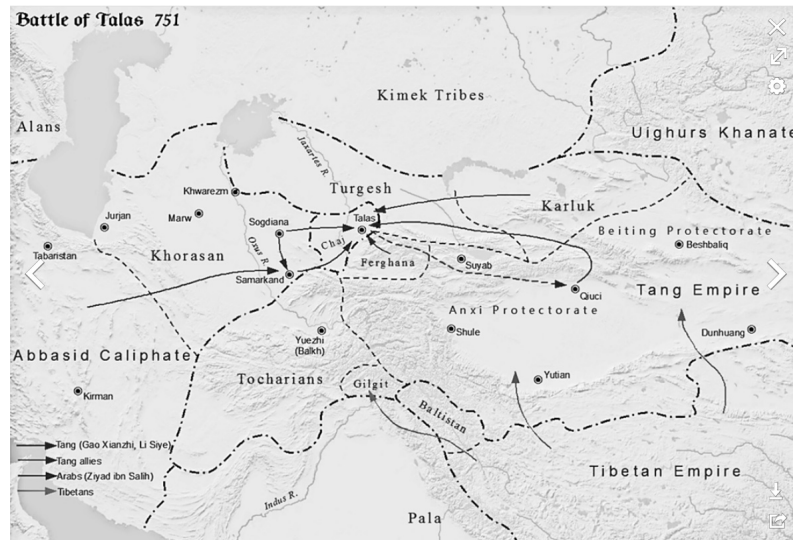


Fig. 8. The Battle of Talas 751

Note: attributed to SY CC-BY 4.0

The Tang forces retreated, and were soon forced to turn their attention to the great An Lushan rebellion (755–763). The Abbasid control of Transoxania was at last secured, but Byzantine attacks in Anatolia, which liquidated the Arab raider bases Melitene (Malatya, 751) and Theodosiopolis in Armenia (754 or 755) by transplanting their populations, deflected Abbasid attention toward the central front.

Caliph as-Saffah died in 754, and was succeeded by his brother al-Mansur (‘the Victorious’), who spent the rest of the decade in first

provoking (by murdering his victorious but disobedient Khorasani general Abu Muslim in 755) and then putting down rebellions in Iran and Transoxania. He did however succeed in refortifying the anti-Byzantine raiding base of Malatya (757).

Constantine V ruled Byzantium through this decade. From the Synod of Hieria in 754, he intensified the persecution of iconophiles, and expropriated monasteries for the benefit of state and army. He continued the scorched-earth defensive policy toward the Arabs, stabilizing the frontier by transferring its population far away, so as to create a no man's land where raiders would find no footholds, friends or forage. In 757 a truce was agreed with the Arabs, still busy at civil war.

Constantine's policy of Christian transplantation from the Anatolian frontier involved resettlement of Armenians and Syrians in Thrace, to the disadvantage of Bulgaria. Sevar's successor Kormisosh (r. 753–756) demanded reparations by tribute, was refused, raided Thrace in 755 and was rebuffed. He was replaced by Vinekh (c. 756–762). Constantine then invaded Bulgaria repeatedly, winning a victory at Marcellae in 756 but suffering defeat at the Rishki Pass in 759; Vinekh sought peace.

Constantine neglected unsympathetic, iconophile Italy. The Lombard king Aistulf captured Byzantine Ravenna in 750 or 751 to reach the summit of Lombard power (see Figure 9). With Pope Zachary's approval, Pippin III the Short had usurped the Frankish throne and become the first 'Carolingian' king of Francia (r. 751–768). Invited by Pope Stephen II (752–757), Pippin's Franks drove the Lombards out of Ravenna in 754–756; Pippin then 'donated' Ravenna to the iconophile pope Stephen, with the result that the Papal State cross-divided Italy, as had the Byzantine lands, obstructing the southward expansion of the Lombard kingdom in the north and freeing the hands of the Lombard duchies of Spoleto and Benevento.



Fig. 9. The Lombard Kingdom of Italy at its Greatest Extent under King Aistulf (749–756)

Note: attributed to InvaderCito CC BY-SA 3.0.

Aistulf died while hunting in 757 and was replaced by Desiderius (r. 757–774), who initially had Frankish and papal support, but soon turned against Pope Paul I (r. 757–767), occupied Frank-donated papal territories that obstructed his campaigns, and re-subjugated the southern duchies (758).

Pippin III continued his wars of subjugation elsewhere as well: Saxony (753, 758) and Aquitaine (759–768).

In 756, Abd ar-Rahman ibn Mu'awiya successfully established the Umayyad Emirate of Cordova in al-Andalus, where the Arab settlers had been much at odds with one another; but had to fight Abbasid remnants and others, not attaining control beyond Cordova and the south until 779. Meanwhile Pippin III the Short had conquered Narbonne and driven the Arabs out of Septimania in 759.

By 758, Khazaria had sufficiently recuperated that the Abbasids attempted a marital alliance with the Khazar royal family, but the suspicious death of the Khazar leader's daughter put paid to that attempt.

AD 760. Multipolar: Arab Empire (Abbasid Caliphate), Byzantine Empire, Bulgaria, Khazaria. Regional powers: Longobardia, Francia.

In the 760s, the Arab-Byzantine frontier was relatively quiet, while Constantine V and al-Mansur pursued other options. Al-Mansur

busied himself with subjugating his realm till 762, when he founded the new capital city that became Baghdad. In 761 he sent an expedition of Khorasanis that regained control of Berber-plagued Tunisia. In 763 he sent an expedition under al-Ala ibn-Mugith against Abd ar-Rahman I in al-Andalus; but the whole force was destroyed. In 765, the Khorasani soldiers of Tunisia mutinied and gained quasi-democratic control over the Abbasid governors. In 768, al-Mansur put down another rebellion in the east.

Constantine V continued to raid Bulgaria, enticed by extreme instability within the khanate. Khan Vinekh of what became a 'peace party' was overthrown and his family massacred in 762. He was succeeded by:

Telets 762–765 (war party; defeated at Anchialos 763; lynched),

Sabin 765–766 (peace party; driven out by war party),

Umor 766 (party and fate uncertain),

Toktu 766–767 (policy uncertain; murdered),

Pagan 767–768 (peace party; made peace; double-crossed by Byzantine invasion; fled; murdered by his retainers), and apparently at last by Telerig 768?–777, of whom no more is heard till 774.

Upon the death of Pope Paul I in 767, a violent struggle for the spoils of the new Papal State broke out; two losing contestants were designated 'antipopes'. The victor-pope, Stephen III (r. 768–772) unsuccessfully opposed the attempts of king Desiderius of Longobardia to arrange a royal marriage of his daughter Desiderata with the Frankish co-heir Charles ('Charlemagne').

Pippin III the Short, now King of the Franks, spent this decade in conquering Aquitaine with fire and sword. Pippin died in 768, dividing the realm between his sons Carloman I (r. 768–771) and Charlemagne (r. 768–814). The brothers quarreled while putting down rebellion in Aquitaine, but their family and Pope Stephen III worked reconciliation.

Khazar general Ras Tarkhan led a punitive expedition south of the Caucasus against the Abbasids in 762–764, sacking Derbent; an Arab army was sent to Armenia for deterrence sake, and thereafter peace prevailed on that frontier.

The Umayyad Emirate of Cordova was so preoccupied with its intra-Arab and Arab-Berber quarrels that it made truce with Christian Asturias 767–786.

AD 770. Multipolar: Arab Empire (Abbasid Caliphate), Byzantine Empire, Khazaria, Longobardia.

The 770s were noteworthy in power-narrative terms for the recon-
solidation of Bulgaria, the consolidation of the Emirate of Cordova,
and above all the rise of Francia.

Pointless fighting leading nowhere – perhaps intentionally staged
for show – went on between Byzantium under Constantine V and
Bulgaria under Khan Telerig 774–775. Constantine died in 775; in
777 Telerig fled to the protection of Constantine's son and orderly
successor Leo IV 'the Khazar' (r. 775–780; so named for his Khazar-
royal mother Tzitzak → Irene). Kardam (r. 777–803) succeeded Tele-
rig, and a placid era returned.

Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur also died in 775, to be succeeded or-
derly by al-Mahdi (r. 775–785). Al-Mahdi concerned himself mainly
with developing Baghdad into a world city and conducting pogroms of
the freethinkers perhaps tempted by the multiculturalism he had there-
by encouraged. He received friendly congratulations from Byzantium
on his accession, and accepted Byzantine technological assistance.
Al-Mahdi put down a rebellion in Khorasan in 777 and another in Syr-
ia in 778. The Byzantine peace was broken when Leo IV destroyed
the raid-base of Adata/Hadath and attacked Germanikeia in 778 in
order to kidnap Syriac Jacobites (adherents of the Syriac Orthodox
Church) for forcible resettlement in Thrace, in continuation of the
transplantation policies of Constantine V.

The west witnessed more significant changes. A series of Frank-
ish and Lombard familial intrigues culminated in the death of co-king
Carloman I in 771 and the conquest and annexation of the Lombard
Kingdom by the now sole Frankish king Charlemagne in 774. Pope
Adrian I (r. 772–795), having associated himself with Charlemagne in
the intrigues, profited territorially.

Charlemagne conquered and lost Saxony with almost blinding ra-
pidity (775, 776, 779), but was finally able to suppress independence
in Aquitaine.

In al-Andalus, between 775 and 778, a second Abbasid counter-
claimant, Abd al-Rahman ibn Habib al Fihri, landed and was defeated
and killed by Umayyad Emirate forces. By 779, the last Umayyad tar-
get in Muslim Spain, Zaragoza, had come under the control of Umay-
yad Emir Abd al-Rahman I. Despite an abortive and nearly disastrous
intrusion by Charlemagne in Zaragoza, the decade ended with a (tem-
porarily) consolidated emirate and a greatly empowered Frankish
kingdom.

*AD 780. Multipolar: Arab Empire (Abbasid Caliphate), Byzan-
tine Empire, Francia, Khazaria.*

Byzantine Emperor Leo the Khazar died in 780, to be nominally succeeded by his nine-year-old son Constantine VI (780–797), whom we may style ‘the Unfortunate’. Constantine’s mother Irene the Athenian in fact ruled as regent all through this decade. She put down a revolt by the Sicilian *strategos* Elpidios in 781. An Arab invasion was defeated at Caesarea in 781, but another under Harun al-Rashid was successful in 782, reaching the Anatolian trade-route center and military base Chrysopolis on the Bosphorus across from Constantinople, and imposing a harsh tribute and ransom in return for a three-year truce, with Byzantine prisoners not restored.

The Sclaveni (South Slavic ex-raiders turned settlers) of Thessaly and Peloponnese were campaigned against by the eunuch general Staurakios in 782–784; loot and tribute were acquired, and many persons were transported to Anatolia. Success emboldened Irene to do a triumphal tour of Macedonia and found a new ‘theme’ or military district there; and, she being an iconophile, to call a church council to condemn iconoclasm in 787.

Abbasid caliph al-Mahdi died in 785. His son and successor al-Hadi had an abbreviated rule (785–786) in which he faced an Alid alternative-dynastic rebellion in Mecca, a Kharijite sectarian revolt, a Byzantine invasion that again destroyed the rebuilt raidbase of Adanta, and the rise of an independent Idrisid dynastic state in Morocco.

Al-Hadi’s brother and successor Harun al-Rashid (r. 786–809), likewise had a turbulent rule, punctuated by rebellions and Byzantine wars.

Charlemagne spent the decade in conquest. He conquered Saxony yet again 782–785. He subdued Bavaria and Carinthia in 788. He failed to subdue the Lombard duchy of Benevento despite attacks from 787, and was unable to establish his authority south of the Pyrenees. Perhaps it was in the 780s that he succeeded in conquering Corsica and Sardinia. After a failed marital alliance ended a Frankish-Byzantine rapprochement that lasted 781–787, a Byzantine invasion of southern Italy in support of Desiderius’s son Adelchis was defeated by an alliance of Spoleto, Benevento, and Francia in 788, and Frankish forces under Charlemagne’s son Pippin of Italy took Istria from the Byzantines in 788–789. Charlemagne faced a new challenge from long-quiet Avaria, in today’s Hungary, which attacked both Bavaria and Lombardy in 788.

In the 780s, the Byzantine-Bulgarian frontier remained quiet.

Pope Adrian I remained on good terms with Charlemagne and faced no secular attacks once the Lombard kingdom had been absorbed into ‘greater Francia.’

Umayyad Emir of Cordova Abd ar-Rahman I died 788 after having put down an independentist rebellion in Zaragoza 781–783 and conducted noteworthy infrastructure development, and was succeeded as intended by his son Hisham I (r. 788–796), who retained power despite challenges from his brothers Suleiman and Abd Allah. Those challenges quashed, Hisham enjoyed internal peace and was able to press upon Christian Asturias.

AD 790. Multipolar: Arab Empire (Abbasid Caliphate), Byzantine Empire, Francia, Khazaria.

Harun al-Rashid maintained his rule of the Arab Empire throughout this decade. He was troubled by disaffected Umayyad elements in Syria, and moved his capital to Raqqa in Syria (796–809), closer to the Byzantine frontier, where he captured and destroyed the fortress of Safsaf near the Cilician Gates (797/798), but was diverted from deep raids by Khazar pressure. Troubles were also blooming in Ifriqiya (Tunisia) to the west, Khorasan to the east, and Arabia to the south. Harun received envoys from Charlemagne with friendly gifts in 799.

Charlemagne continued his imperial expansion of Francia. He conquered ever-rebellious Saxony yet again in 792–794, and put down a local rebellion there in 796. He expanded the Frankish area of influence north and south of the Pyrenees, subduing northern Basques (790), reaching the Ebro (794), incorporating Girona, Cardona, Osona and Urgell into his 'Marca Hispanica' (795), adding Pamplona (798), adding but losing Barcelona (797–799), and conquering the Balearic Isles (799).

Charlemagne made no extensions against Lombard Benevento in Italy, but was able to subdue areas to his east: Bavaria (again) in 794; Avaria in 791 and 794–796. Having thus driven a Germanic wedge between northern and southern Slavs, Charlemagne maintained a suzerain alliance with the Abodrite/Obotrite Confederacy of northern (Baltic) Slavs beyond Saxony, and with the southern Slavs of Croatia (796). Charlemagne's additions to the domains of Francia are shown in Figure 10.

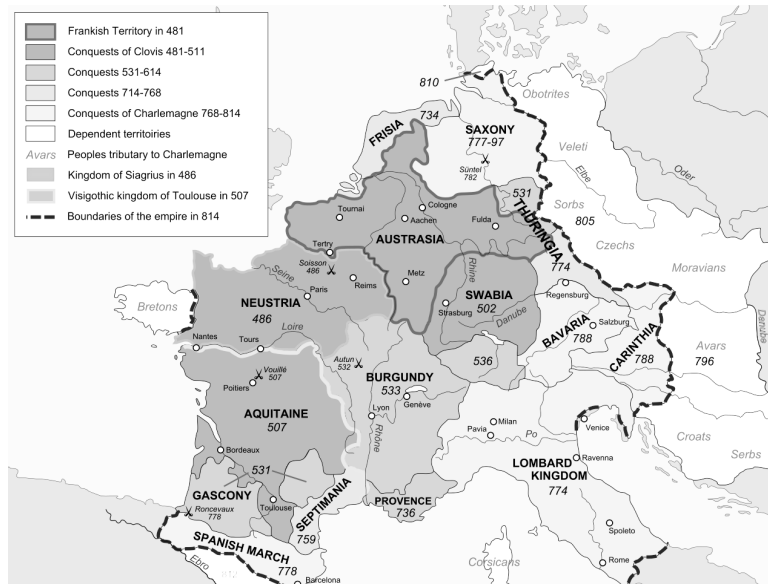


Fig. 10. The rise of Francia

Note: Attributed to Sémhur CC-BY 3.0.

Constantine VI the Unfortunate seized power from his mother the Regent Irene the Athenian in 790, and tried to rule. He was defeated by the Muslims in 791. Kardam of Bulgaria (r. 777–803) restored Bulgarian power by successfully resisting the attacks of Constantine at Adrianople (791) and Marcellae (792); again Bulgaria imposed tribute as the price of peace. Constantine restored empress Irene to power as co-regent in 792, though he had in consequence to put down a rebellion (in his favor!) by the Armeniac army in 793.

Constantine VI mounted another failed attack against Bulgaria at Adrianople in 796. He was deposed and blinded in a coup in 797. Irene the Athenian ruled as Byzantine Empress 797–802. After an Arab raid reached the military base and staging area of Malagina, Bithynia, in 798, she resumed payment of tribute to buy an armistice with Harun al-Rashid.

Pope Adrian I died in 795. His successor Leo III (r. 795–816) was rescued from a local plot by envoys of Charlemagne, and the Papal-Frankish relationship held fast.

Umayyad Emir of Cordova Hisham I (r. 788–796) raided across the Pyrenees in 793 and against Asturias and Basques in 794, taking loot and slaves but not conquering nor ruling. Hisham died in 796, and

his son al-Hakam I (r. 796–822) was challenged by his uncles Suleiman and Abd Allah. Both were defeated, and Sulayman killed in 800, but Abd Allah attained a local control in Valencia, whence he raided the Balearics in 798. Al-Hakam's rule was never secure and he made no headway abroad.

Khazaria and the Arab Empire engaged again in attempted but failed marital diplomacy followed by Khazar raids in 799, but the frontier was otherwise quiet.

AD 800. Multipolar: Arab Empire (Abbasid Caliphate), Byzantine Empire, Francia, Bulgaria, Khazaria.

THE GREAT POWERS AND THE MAJOR CITIES AT THE END OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY

Figure 11 shows the domains of the Powers AD 800. The *Arab Empire* (now the Abbasid Caliphate) under Harun al-Rashid stretched from Transoxania in the east to Tunisia in the West and was in friendly relations with Francia while receiving tribute from Byzantine Empress Irene. The Empire had frayed on its western edge, but added lands to the east (see Figure 12).



Fig. 11. The Field of Action in AD 800

Note: This is part of the full east-hem map available for free at http://worldhistorymaps.info/images/East-Hem_800ad.jpg; Numbered Countries are shown there. Attributed to Thomas A. Lessman CC-BY-NC-ND-3.0.

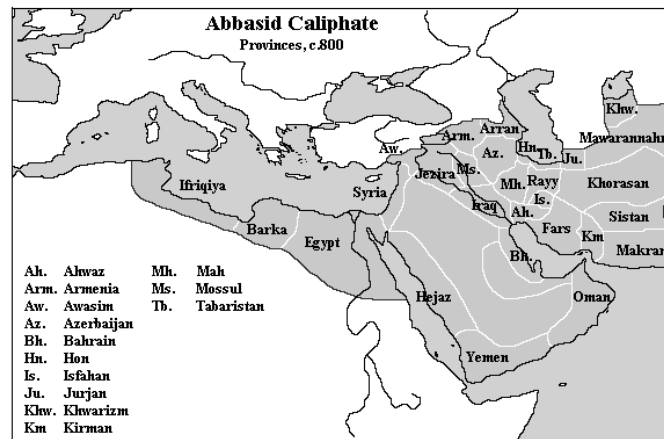


Fig. 12. Provinces of the Abbasid Caliphate c. 800

Note: Attributed to WHKMLA: History of the Abbasid Caliphate, 750–1258. <https://www.zum.de/whkmla/region/arabworld/xabbasidcaliphate.html>. Fair Use.

The *Byzantine Empire* still held Anatolia, most of today's Greece, the heel and toe of the boot of Italy, the Adriatic towns of Venice and Ragusa (Dubrovnik), and the islands of Cyprus, Crete, and Sicily, but had lost its AD 700 holdings in north and central Italy, including the Duchy of Rome, now part of the Papal State. Byzantium had temporarily rented peace through tribute with Bulgaria to the north and the Abbasid Caliphate to the south, had good relations with Khazaria across the Black Sea and cool but mostly peaceful relations with Francia.

In AD 800, Charlemagne, King of the Franks since 768 and King of the Lombards of Northern Italy since 774, was crowned 'Holy Roman Emperor.' The Frankish Empire, *Francia*, encompassed today's France, Germany, Low Countries, Switzerland, Austria, northern Italy, the Pyrenees, and part of Hungary, where it had reduced the Avar Khaganate of Pannonia. Francia was at peace with the Abbasid Caliphate and Byzantium, and at locally expansionist war with the Umayyad Emirate of Cordova in the Iberian Peninsula.

In AD 800, the *First Bulgarian Empire*, incorporating much of today's Romania and Bulgaria, was at peace with, and had a pact to receive tribute from Byzantium.

In 800, *Khazaria*, with its capital at Khazaran-Itil by the Volga, controlled the mouths of both the Don (at the Sea of Azov, with the Black Sea trade) and the Volga (Caspian Sea trade), as well as territo-

ries on the Black Sea and Caspian Sea steppes; Khazaria tended to ally with Byzantium.

There were lesser regional powers in AD 800. The remnant *Umayyad Emirate of Cordova* was notable for its instability. In Morocco, the Zaydi-Shia *Idrisid Emirate* ruled independently. There were also forewarnings of future powers. The nomadic Pecheneg tribes of the Caspian Pontic steppe were driven west about this time by Khazaria and the Oghuz Turks, and in turn began to drive the Magyars before them. And in 800, the Caliphate created the *Aghlabid Emirate* of Tunisia, which remained nominally submissive to the Caliphate even while becoming de facto independent.

Figure 13 shows major world cities at the end of the eighth century. Some large Central system cities of AD 800 came to flourish only in the eighth century. From east to west: Nishapur prospered as an Abbasid regional capital and Bokhara as a Silk Road city only after the Abbasid conquest of Khorasan, insecure till 751 and the battle of Talas. The Abbasid capitals Anbar (752–762) and Baghdad (762–796) were the eighth century foundations, and also respectively a trade center and an intellectual center. The trade route from Upper Egypt via the eastward Luxor Bend of the Nile to the Red Sea ports shifted over time from Coptos/Qift to nearby Qus. Cordova rose as capital of the Umayyad emirate from 766.



Fig. 13. Cities of Central Civilization AD 800

Note: Own work, after Chandler (1987). Bd = Baghdad. Cs = Caesarea Mazaca. Ds = Damascus. Km = Kermanshah. Js = Jerusalem.

The most significant change in the Central system's cities in the eighth century was in rising prosperity of the cities of the Arab Empire on the Silk Road to China and the (oversea) Spice Route to India and

beyond, and in the exploitation of that prosperity by the Abbasid rulers al-Mahdi, and especially, Harun al-Rashid to subsidize, not imperialist expeditions of conquest, but architectural display, courtly luxury, and intellectual advancement.

DISCUSSION

The eighth century began tripolar. The Arab Empire (Umayyad Caliphate) was by far the largest in area, population, and wealth, but lacked the capacity for firm control and exploitation of its vast territory. In the eighth century, the Arab Empire reached its maximum in the east and west, and then lost most of what it had gained in the west. The Byzantine Empire was far smaller and in frequent civil strife; it lost most of its western outposts in Italy, and inflicted serious wounds upon itself; but it was far more tightly integrated for military action, especially in defense. The First Bulgarian Empire was smaller in population and wealth than either of the other Powers, but militarily efficient, with quick striking power that allowed it to defend against or defeat the field armies of both its rivals, and extort wealth and status from the nearer; after a late-century crisis period, Bulgaria had restored that status.

The eighth century leaned toward multipolarity. Khazaria rose, fell, and rose again as a power to be reckoned with. Longobardia came into the lists, and went. And under its new dynasty, Francia had revived to organize and trouble the northwest, in between its own form of patrimonial collapse.

So the power pattern of the century fluctuated: tripolarity to multipolarity, back, and back again (see Table 1). The eighth century ends multipolar.

Table 1

Great powers of the 8th century – decennial tabulation

Coding date: AD	700	710	720	730	740	750	760	770	780	790	800
Khazaria				1			1	1	1	1	1
Arab Empire	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Byzantium	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Bulgaria	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				1
Longobardia								1			
Francia									1	1	1
Total	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	5

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