



Good day Worthy Knights, in this part 112, Nicomedia

Wikipedia

Nicomedia Greek: Νικομήδεια, modern İzmit, was an ancient Greek city located in what is now Turkey. In 286 Nicomedia became the eastern and most senior capital city of the Roman Empire, chosen by Diocletian who assumed the title *Augustus of the East*, a status which the city maintained during the Tetrarchy system (293–324).

In 330 Constantine chose for himself the nearby Byzantium (which was renamed Constantinople, modern Istanbul) as the new capital of the Roman Empire.

The city was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire with the victory of Sultan Orhan Gazi against the Eastern Roman Empire.

History

It was founded in 712/11 BC as a Megarian colony and was originally known as Astacus. After being destroyed by Lysimachus, it was rebuilt by Nicomedes I of Bithynia in 264 BC under the name of Nicomedia, and has ever since been one of the most important cities in north western Asia Minor.

Nicomedia was the capital of the Province of Bithynia under the Roman Empire. It is referenced repeatedly in Pliny the Younger's Epistles to Trajan during his tenure as governor of Bithynia. Pliny, in his letters, mentions several public buildings of the city such as a senate-house, an aqueduct, a forum, a temple of Cybele, and others, and speaks of a great fire, during which the place suffered much. Diocletian made it the eastern capital city of the Roman Empire in 286 when he introduced the Tetrarchy system.

Persecutions of 303

Nicomedia was at the centre of the Persecution of Christians which occurred under Diocletian and his Caesar Galerius. On 23 February 303 AD, the pagan festival of the Terminalia, Diocletian ordered that the newly built church at Nicomedia be razed, its scriptures burnt, and its precious stones seized. The next day he issued his "First Edict Against the Christians," which ordered similar measures to be taken at churches across the Empire.

The destruction of the Nicomedia church incited panic in the city, and at the end of the month a fire destroyed part of Diocletian's palace, followed 16 days later by another fire. Although an investigation was made into the cause of the fires, no party was officially charged, but Galerius placed the blame on the Christians. He oversaw the execution of two palace eunuchs, who he claimed conspired with the Christians to start the fire, followed by six more executions through the end of April 303. Soon after, Galerius declared Nicomedia to be unsafe and ostentatiously departed the city for Rome, followed soon after by Diocletian.

Later Empire

Nicomedia remained as the eastern (and most senior) capital of the Roman Empire until co-emperor Licinius was defeated by Constantine the Great at the Battle of Chrysopolis in 324. Constantine mainly resided in Nicomedia as his interim capital city for the next six years, until in 330 he declared the nearby Byzantium the new capital. Constantine died in a royal villa in the vicinity of Nicomedia in 337. Owing to its position at the convergence of the Asiatic roads leading to the new capital, Nicomedia retained its importance even after the foundation of Constantinople.

A major earthquake, however, on 24 August 358, caused extensive devastation to Nicomedia, and was followed by a fire which completed the catastrophe. Nicomedia was rebuilt, but on a smaller scale. In the sixth century under Emperor Justinian I the city was extended with new public buildings. Situated on the roads leading to the capital, the city remained a major military centre, playing an important role in the Byzantine campaigns against the Caliphate. From inscriptions we learn that in the later period of the empire Nicomedia enjoyed the honour of a Roman colony.

In 451, the local bishopric was promoted to a Metropolitan see under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and was ranked 7th in the *Notitiae Episcopatum* among the metropolises of the patriarchate. In the eighth century the Emperor Constantine V established his court there for a time, when plague broke out in Constantinople. By that time, most of the old, seawards city had been abandoned and is described by the Persian geographer Ibn Khurdadhib as lying in ruins, with settlement restricted to the hilltop citadel. In the 1080s, the city served as the main military base for Alexios I Comnenos in his campaigns against the Seljuk Turks, and the First and Second Crusades both encamped there.

The city was briefly held by the Latin Empire following the fall of Constantinople to the Fourth Crusade in 1204. The city remained in Byzantine control for over a century after that, but following the Byzantine defeat at the Battle of Bapheus in 1302, it was threatened by the rising Ottoman Empire. The city was twice sieged and blockaded by the Ottomans before finally succumbing in 1337.

Infrastructure

During the Empire, Nicomedia was a cosmopolitan and commercially prosperous city which received all the amenities appropriate for a major Roman city. Nicomedia was well known for having a bountiful water supply from two to three aqueducts, one of which was built in Hellenistic times. Pliny the Younger complains in his *Epistulae* to Trajan, written in 110 AD, that the Nicomedians wasted 3,518,000 sesterces on an unfinished aqueduct which twice ran into engineering troubles. Trajan instructs him to take steps to complete the aqueduct, and to investigate possible official corruption behind the large waste of money. Under Trajan, there was also a large Roman garrison. Other public amenities included a theatre, a colonnaded street typical of Hellenistic cities and a forum.

The major religious shrine was a temple of Demeter, which stood in a sacred precinct on a hill above the harbour. The city adopted official cults of Rome avidly, there were temples dedicated to the Emperor Commodus, a sacred precinct of the city dedicated to Octavian, and a temple of Roma dedicated during the late-Republic.

The city was sacked in AD 253 by the Goths, but when Diocletian made the city his capital in 283 AD he undertook grand restorations and built an enormous palace, an armoury, mint and new shipyards.



