

## Byzantium and its Enemies circa 520 – 1071 AD

### The Byzantine Army

The 'Byzantine Era' nearly 1,000 years, from the 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD to the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. During this time the armies of the Byzantine Empire went through many changes and it would not be practical to try and represent them by a single army list. Although there are numerous views on the how the Byzantine army changed and developed over time, for the purposes of this article I have drawn up lists for what I regard as the main three periods of the Byzantine army up to the Battle of Manzikerk in 1071. After Manzikerk the Byzantine army spent the next 20 years exhausting itself in both civil and external wars. By the time of the Crusades it was comprised in a large part of mercenaries and although it was able to rebuild itself for short periods it never again regained the strength and power of the earlier periods.

#### **List 1. Early Byzantine**

This list covers the Byzantine armies from the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century up to the loss of the Middle Eastern and North African Provinces to the Arabs. It covers the wars of Justinian and Heraclius. During this time the army was in a transition from the late Roman period with a reduction in barbarian federates in the army and an increase in 'native' troops. A number of lance & bow armed units were raised to supplement regular cavalry and the infantry were reasonably well trained and equipped. Mercenary units were often used to supplement regular forces.

Name	Type	Att.	H	Sv	Cmd	Sz	Units	Pts.	Notes
Belisarius	Gen	2			10		1	170	*1
General	Gen	2			9		1	125	*1
Officer	Hero	1			8		1 / 2	80	
Bucellarii	Cav	4/1	3	5		3	- / 1	115	*2 Elite
Lance & Bow Cavalry	Cav	3/1	3	5		3	1 / 4	100	
Regular Cavalry	Cav	3	3	5		3	2 / -	90	
Mercenary Heavy Cav	Cav	3	3	4		3	- / 1	110	*5
Hun Mercenaries	Cav	3/1	3	6		3	- / 2	80	
Moorish Mercenaries	Cav	2/1	3	0		3	- / 2	65	*3 Skirmishers
Skoutatoi	Inf	3	3	6		3	- / 6	55	*4 Shieldwall
Archers	Inf	3/1	3	0		3	- / 2	55	
Light Infantry	Inf	2/1	3	0		3	- / -	40	*3 Skirmishers
Bolt Thrower	Art	1/1	3	0		2	- / 1	65	

Notes:

1. Either Belisarius OR a General may command the army.
2. Bucellarii are the elite bodyguards of the Byzantine Commanders.
3. Moors and light infantry have skirmisher ability.
4. Byzantine close order infantry can form a shieldwall
5. Vandal, Goth or Persian Prisoners of war or Lombard/Herul mercenaries.

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**List 2. Thematic Byzantine**

This list covers the period from the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century to the early 10<sup>th</sup> Century AD when the Byzantines were primarily on the defensive against Arabs to the East and Bulgars/Slavs to the NorthWest. The army consisted of a regular 'core' of regiments based around the capital (the 'Tagmata') supplemented by local militia forces in each Theme. The quality of the thematic forces could vary considerably. Infantry became primarily a garrison force to hold the fortresses along the border and at key crossroads, with the emphasis on lighter cavalry to deal with mobile raiders.

Apart from the occasional major invasion most conflict was in the form of large-scale raids especially on the frontier with the Arab Emirates in Syria. The Themes would mobilise to harry and shadow the raiders until sufficient regular forces could be concentrated.

Name	Type	Att.	H	Sv	Cmd	Sz	Units	Pts.	Notes
General	Gen	2			9		1	125	
Officer	Hero	1			7		- / 2	45	*1
Tagmata Cavalry	Cav	3/1	3	5		3	2 / 4	100	
Thematic Cavalry	Cav	3/1	3	6		3	2 / -	85	
Trapezti Light Cavalry	Cav	3/1	3	6		3	- / 1	80	*2 Skirmishers
Skoutatoi	Inf	3	3	6		3	1 / -	45	
Infantry / Bow unit	Inf	3/1	3	6		3	- / 2	60	*3
Light Infantry	Inf	2/1	3	0		3	- / -	40	*2 Skirmishers
Bolt Thrower	Art	1/1	3	0		2	- / 1	65	

1. The lower rated Officers in this list reflect the presence of 'part-time' thematic commanders.
2. Light Cavalry and Light Infantry have skirmisher ability.
3. A number of infantry units were mixed spear men and archers. To reflect this these units have a -1 on their to hit dice score when shooting.

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**List 3. Re-conquest Byzantine**

By the 10<sup>th</sup> Century the Byzantine Empire was in a position to take the offensive against the Arabs in the East and the Bulgars in the Balkans and this list covers that period from mid 10<sup>th</sup> century to 1071 and the Battle of Manzikert. The regular army was strengthened with additional heavy cavalry and a large body of well-trained and drilled infantry. By the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> Century the enemies of the Byzantine Empire had been so cowed that a peace settled on the region and the army was allowed to deteriorate to reduce costs. The Thematic forces had already been neglected when the regular forces were built up and in consequence, in the decade leading up to Manzikert, mercenary units were recruited to supplement the regular army.

Name	Type	Att.	H	Sv	Cmd	Sz	Units	Pts.	Notes
General	Gen	2			9		1	125	
Officer	Hero	1			8		- / 2	80	
Kataphaktoi	Cht	3	3	4		3	- / 1	120	
Tagmata Cavalry	Cav	3/1	3	5		3	2 / 6	100	
Thematic Lance/Bow	Cav	3/1	3	5		3	- / 4	100	
Thematic Lance only	Cav	3	3	5		3	- / -	90	
Trapezti Light Cavalry	Cav	3/1	3	6		3	- / 1	80	*1 Skirmishers
Skoutatoi	Inf	3/1	3	5		3	1 / 4	70	*2
Varangian Guard	Inf	4	3	5		3	- / 1	70	*3
Light Infantry	Inf	2/1	3	0		3	- / -	40	*1 Skirmishers
Norman Mercenaries	Cav	3	3	4		3	- / 1	110	
Turkish Mercenaries	Cav	3/1	3	6		3	- / 2	85	
Pechneg Mercenaries	Cav	2/1	3	0		3	- / 3	65	*1 Skirmishers
Bolt Thrower	Art	1/1	3	0		2	- / 1	65	

1. Light Cavalry, Pechnegs and Light Infantry have skirmisher ability.
2. A number of infantry units were mixed Spearmen and archers. To reflect this these units have a -1 on their to hit dice score when shooting.
3. Elite.

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**The Enemies of Byzantium**

**Enemy 1. Vandals**

The Vandals in North Africa were dramatically defeated in a whirlwind campaign by Belisarius in 533 AD. The Vandals had crossed over to North Africa in 428 AD and carved a State for themselves out of the Roman Province. They formed a military aristocracy living off the native population and after building a fleet they terrorised the Western Mediterranean, sacking Rome itself in 455 AD. They regularly fought with the Moors of the interior but also allied with them on occasion.

Name	Type	Att.	H	Sv	Cmd	Sz	Units	Pts.	Notes
King	Gen	2			8		1	95	
Chieftain	Hero	1			7		- / 2	45	
Bodyguard	Cav	3	3	4		3	- / 1	115	*1 Warband
Vandal Cavalry	Cav	3	3	5		3	6 / -	95	*1 Warband
Moorish Cavalry	Cav	2/1	3	0		3	- / 4	65	*2 Skirmisher
Moorish Infantry	Inf	3/1	3	0		3	- / 2	40	*3 15cm range
Moorish Skirmishers	Inf	2/1	3	0		3	- / -	40	*2 Skirmisher
Moorish Archers	Inf	3/1	3	0		3	- / 2	55	
Dismounted Vandals	Inf	3	3	5		3	- / -	60	*1 Warband, *4

1. All Vandal units have Warband capability
2. Moorish cavalry and light infantry have skirmisher capability
3. Moorish infantry have a shooting range of 15cm
4. When they raided only a small portion of the force would have been cavalry. This option allows for a force of dismounted warriors. A dismounted Vandal unit can be used in place of one of the required Vandal Cavalry.

**Enemy 2. Ostro-Goths**

Like their fellow Germanic tribesmen in North Africa, the Goths in Italy formed a sort of Military caste in the occupied Roman homeland. The better off Goths formed a heavy cavalry being equipped by the old Imperial Armouries and workshops, the richer the Goth the better equipped. The poorer members of the tribe served as primarily as archers but it is not unreasonable for at least a few to be equipped as Spearmen. On at least one occasion the Goths allied with the Franks from Gaul against the Byzantines.

Name	Type	Att.	H	Sv	Cmd	Sz	Units	Pts.	Notes
King	Gen	2			9		1	125	
Chieftain	Hero	1			8		- / 2	80	
Bodyguard	Cav	3	3	4		3	- / 1	115	*1 Warband
Noble Cavalry	Cav	3	3	5		3	2 / 4	95	*1 Warband
Other Cavalry	Cav	3	3	6		3	- / -	75	*1 Warband
Gothic Spearmen	Inf	3	3	6		3	- / 2	45	
Gothic Archers	Inf	3/1	3	0		3	2 / -	55	
Franks	Inf	3	3	6		3	- / 4	50	*1 Warband

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**Enemy 3: Sassanid Persian**

The Persians were the only other 'civilised' power in contact with the Roman and later the Byzantine Empire in this period. Regular wars were fought between the two nations from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century until the Persians were subjugated by the Arabs in the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. From 610-630 AD the two empires fought a protracted and debilitating war that left both protagonists weak and exhausted – just as the armies of Islam were exploding out of the Arabian Peninsula.

Name	Type	Att.	H	Sv	Cmd	Sz	Units	Pts.	Notes
General	Gen	2			9		1	125	
Officer	Hero	1			8		- / 2	80	
Cataphract	Cht	3	3	4		3	- / 1	120	
Clibanarii	Cav	3/1	3	5		3	2 / -	100	
Infantry Spearmen	Inf	3	3	0		3	4 / -	45	*1 Shieldwall
Infantry Archers	Inf	2/1	3	0		3	- / -	55	
Infantry Skirmishers	Inf	2/1	3	0		3	- / -	40	*2 Skirmishers
Light Cavalry	Cav	3/1	3	6		3	- / 4	80	*3 Range 15cm
Elephant	Mon	6/1	4	5		1	- / 1	100	
Bolt thrower	Art	1/1	3	0		2	- / 1	65	

1. Sassanid Infantry can force Shield wall
2. Has skirmisher ability
3. Light Cavalry have a shooting range of 15cm

**Enemy 4: Arab Conquest**

This represents the type of Arab army that burst out of Arabia to conquer the world for Islam. Current historical thinking tends towards the bulk of the Arab forces fighting on foot. Infantry was often used to 'soak up' the enemy attack and then counter attack with the cavalry. The 'liberal' allocation of 'Imans' will allow for the creation of a fanatical force of 'Holy Warriors' fighting for Allah and Plunder (or Paradise).

Name	Type	Att.	H	Sv	Cmd	Sz	Units	Pts.	Notes
General	Gen	2			9		1	125	
Officer	Hero	1			8		- / 2	80	
Iman	Wiz	1			7		1 / 4	45	
Fanatic Warriors	Inf	4	3	6			- / 1	55	*1 Warband, Elite
Bedouin Warriors	Inf	3	3	6		3	4 / -	50	*2 Warband
Archers	Inf	3/1	3	0		3	- / 4	55	
Skirmishers	Inf	2/1	3	0		3	- / -	40	*3 Skirmishers
Camels	Cav	3	3	5		3	- / 1	100	*4 Camel
Cavalry	Cav	3	3	5		3	- / 2	90	
Light Cavalry	Cav	3/1	3	6		3	2 / -	80	*5 Range 15cm

1. Fanatical Warriors have a Warband Ability and are Elite
2. Warband Ability
3. Have skirmisher ability
4. Camels cause terror in Horse mounted units.
5. Shooting range of 15cm

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**Enemy 5: Buglars**

From about 680 to 1018AD there was an ongoing power struggle in the Balkans between the Buglars and the Byzantine Empire. The Bulgars were of a Turkic origin and on their arrival in the Balkans they originally subjugated the Slavic tribes in the area but over time assimilated with them. At times the Bulgar Empire almost rivalled the Byzantines in terms of prestige in the Balkans but was eventually defeated and incorporated into the Empire by Basil II.

Name	Type	Att.	H	Sv	Cmd	Sz	Units	Pts.	Notes
General	Gen	2			9		1	125	
Officer	Hero	1			8		- / 2	80	
Noble Cavalry	Cav	3	3	5		3	2 / 4	90	
Heavy Archers	Cav	3/1	3	5		3	- / 2	50	
Horse Archers	Cav	3/1	3	6		3	4 / -	80	
Slavic Infantry	Inf	3	3	6		3	- / -	45	
Slavic Skirmishers	Inf	2/1	3	0		3	- / 4	40	*1 Skirmisher

1. Has Skirmisher Ability

**Enemy 6: Later Arabs**

With the subjugation of the Persian Empire and the Byzantine Provinces in the Middle East, the Arab Conquerors settled down to form a military aristocracy over the native population. The original Arabs served primarily as Cavalry (the 'Jund') and were supplemented by more recent converts keen to serve in a jihad against the infidel (the Byzantines) or gain plunder in raids. Some Persian Heavy cavalry units served with their new masters and as the Arab Empire became more established some artillery was supplied by the cities.

A More balanced army than the original conquest army but not so hard hitting or unpredictable

Name	Type	Att.	H	Sv	Cmd	Sz	Units	Pts.	Notes
General	Gen	2			9		1	125	
Officer	Hero	1			8		- / 2	80	
Iman	Wiz	1			7		- / 1	45	
Jund Cavalry	Cav	3	3	5		3	2 / 4	90	
Heavy Archers	Cav	3/1	3	5		3	- / 1	100	
Spearmen	Inf	3	3	6		3	3 / -	45	
Archers	Inf	3/1	3	0		3	1 / -	55	
Skirmishers	Inf	2/1	3	0		3	2 / 1	40	*1 Skirmisher
Light Cavalry	Cav	3/1	3	6		3	- / -	80	*2 Range 15cm
Bolt Thrower	Art	1/1	3	0		2	- / 1	65	
Stone Thrower	Art	1/3	3	0		1	- / 1	75	

1. Has Skirmisher Ability
2. Shooting Range of 15cm

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**Enemy 7: Seljuk Turks**

Early in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century tribes of Turkish Nomads began to migrate into the Middle East. The Seljuk Turks conquered the Arab Emirates in Syria and launched many raids into Byzantine territory. The campaign that led to the disastrous battle of Manzikert was to try and stop these incursions. However the aftermath of the battle and the capture of the Emperor saw a 10 year long civil war which allowed the Turkish Nomads to move into the central Anatolian plateau, driving the natives off the land. This changed the entire economic and political structure of Asia Minor and saw the beginning of the transformation of the area into what is today 'Turkey'.

Name	Type	Att.	H	Sv	Cmd	Sz	Units	Pts.	Notes
General	Gen	2			9		1	125	
Officer	Hero	1			8		- / 2	80	
Iman	Wiz	1			7		- / 2	45	
Noble Cavalry	Cav	3	3	5		3	- / 3	90	
Turcoman Cavalry	Cav	3/1	3	6		3	6 / -	85	
Dismounted Turks	Inf	3	3	6		3	- / 4	50	*1 Warband
Dismounted Archers	Inf	3/1	3	0		3	- / 2	45	

1. Dismounted Turks have Warband ability