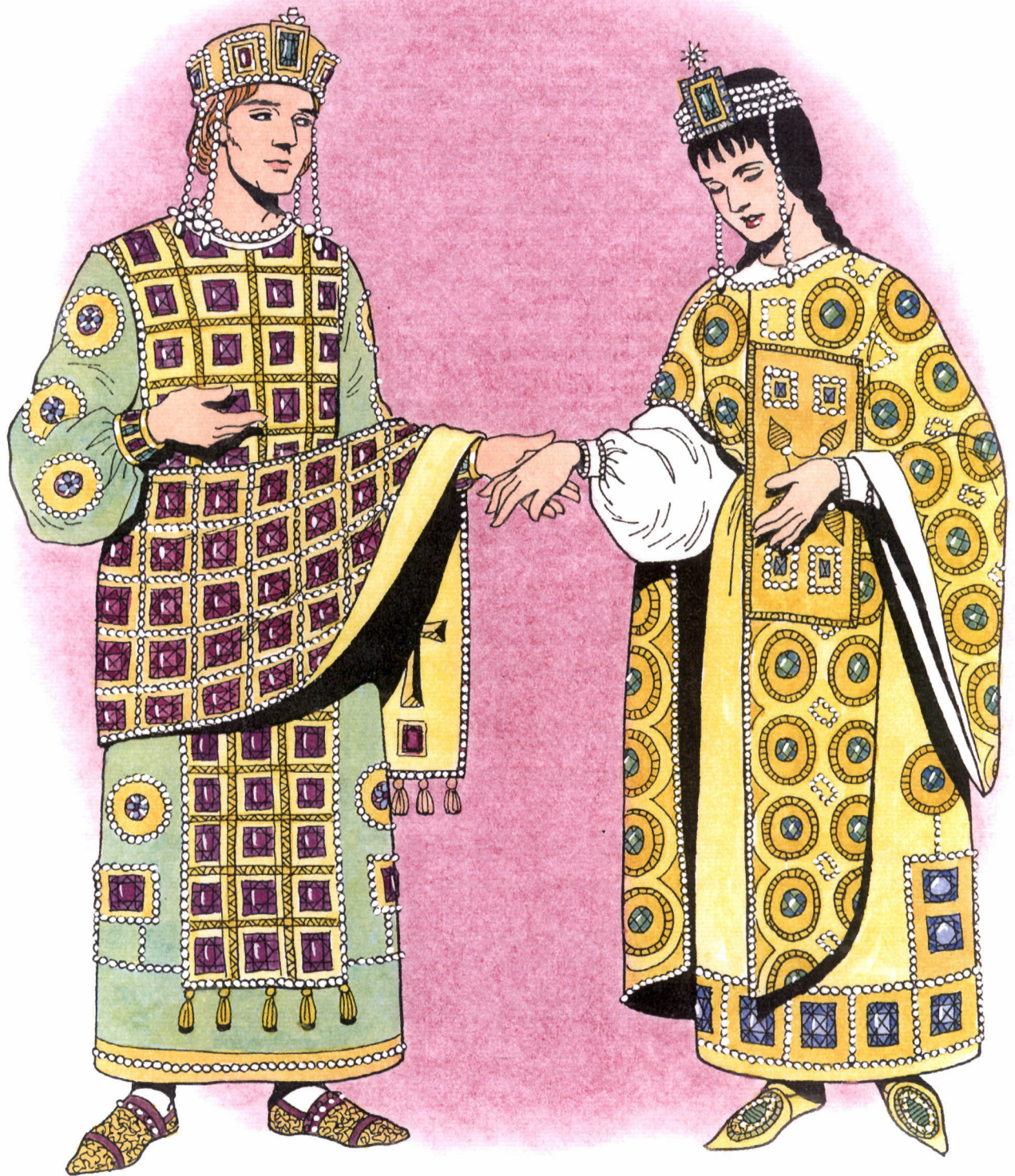


# Byzantine Fashions



Tom Tierney





Eleventh-century Royal Wedding Costume, page 40.

# Byzantine Fashions

Tom Tierney



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# INTRODUCTION

The Byzantine Empire began in A.D. 330, when Emperor Constantine I moved the capital of the Roman Empire to a city that became known as Constantinople, or Byzantium (modern-day Istanbul). Constantine I was impressed by the city's strategic location, notably its command of the Mediterranean, Aegean, and Black seas. The Byzantine Empire's thriving commercial trade led to immense wealth, its trade routes extending from Scandinavia and Russia to Armenia and Ethiopia. In A.D. 364, Emperor Valentinian I divided the Roman Empire into two parts—east and west—with two emperors, to facilitate the management of the vast territory. East and west, however, differed greatly, the eastern portion having a larger population and greater wealth. After the fall of Rome in the fifth century at the hands of the Germanic Goths, the eastern Byzantine Empire ruled alone. This empire lasted for over 1,100 years—until 1453, the year of the death of Emperor Constantine XI and the fall of the empire to the Ottoman Turks.

During this era, costume attained a richness of color, fabric, and ornament that far exceeded the greatest days of Rome. The Byzantine culture was a complex blending of east and west. Included within Byzantine fashions are not only those styles worn in the city of Byzantium after it became the capital of the Roman Empire, but also clothing worn in regions that fell under its influence, such as Italy, Greece, and Russia. Until the sixth century, the Roman influence was still strong, with draped styles predominating the cut of dress. The *tunica* (a universally worn loosely draped garment of undyed wool or linen), the *dalmatic* (a wide-sleeved over-robe of cotton, linen, or wool for the commoners, and silk for the wealthy), and the *stola* (a high-belted woman's garment constructed from a folded rectangle) were the basic foundations of Byzantine style. The *dalmatica* evolved from knee-length in the early part of the empire (sixth to tenth centuries) to floor-length (tenth to thirteenth centuries), finally resembling a Turkish caftan in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. From the beginning, the fabrics and colors used were strongly influenced by Persian, Assyrian, Egyptian, and Arabian sources. As time passed, these eastern styles of costume began to assert themselves in the form of trousers, footwear, head coverings and, above all, decoration and jewelry.

Most of our knowledge of Byzantine fashions comes from surviving mosaics and sculptures. Clothing artifacts reveal remarkably intricate, elaborate brocaded fabrics with jeweled surfaces. These brocaded fabrics gave a new stiffness and luminosity to garments—a departure from the soft wool and linen that characterized Roman drapery. The Emperor Justinian introduced the manufacture of silk to Constantinople in the sixth century. Silk fabric allowed for the use of brilliant colors—jewel-like reds, blues, yellows, greens, and

gold (the privilege of wearing purple was limited to emperors and empresses by law). A uniquely Byzantine article worn at court was the *tablion* (sometimes called a *clavus*), an ornamental jewel-encrusted, rectangular piece of fabric inset on men's and women's cloaks. The *tablion* identified the wearer as a member of the royal house or court dignitary. Another unusual garment was the Persian-derived *maniakis*, a separate collar of gold-embroidered, jewel-encrusted fabric.

Byzantine dress typically covered the arms and legs, sleeves extending to the wrists. After the eighth century, the *lorum* was introduced—a long scarf that was draped around the body, reminiscent of the Roman toga that it had replaced. The *lorum* was generally made of silk or gold cloth and was heavily jeweled, indicating the wearer's status. Men of means draped themselves in a rich dalmatic with a *tablion* placed on the left front edge. Women wore a *stola* (*palla*) over their long tunics, using one end of the garment as a head covering. Both men and women fastened their mantles on the right shoulder with an ornate jeweled clasp called a *fibula*. The *camisia*, an undergarment made of linen or silk, was worn beneath the *tunica*, protecting the rich fabrics of the outer garments from body oils and perspiration. The long *tunica* evolved into the *gunna* (gown). In the latter centuries of Byzantine rule, a short shirt with long dolman-style sleeves, called a *juppe*, was worn over long tunics.

Elaborately designed jewelry was a hallmark of the Byzantine era. Pearls were plentiful and used lavishly with diamonds and other precious gems; eventually, colored glass beads and tiny mirrors were added to decorative embroideries. Women enveloped their hair in a coil of silk or net worked with pearls. A favorite motif in jewelry and fabrics was pairs of birds (see pages 26 and 39). Sandals, standard footwear in Roman days, were still worn, but soft ankle-high boots—*calcei*—were the preferred footwear of the wealthy. The boots were generally made of soft, brightly colored leather, often embroidered and jeweled, and had long, pointed toes.

The Byzantine empire made two important contributions to western fashion. In the third century, its weavers began using shuttles to produce patterned fabrics. Later, in the sixth century, Emperor Justinian initiated the raising of silkworms from the cocoon. Under his aegis, silkworm eggs and seeds of the mulberry bush, concealed in hollow bamboo staffs, were brought into Byzantium by two Persian monks. The Byzantine mode of dressing became more and more sumptuous until the fall of the empire; its influence is evident throughout the Medieval and Renaissance periods of European fashion. In addition, it provided the foundation for the liturgical costume of both the eastern and western Christian churches, particularly those of Russia.



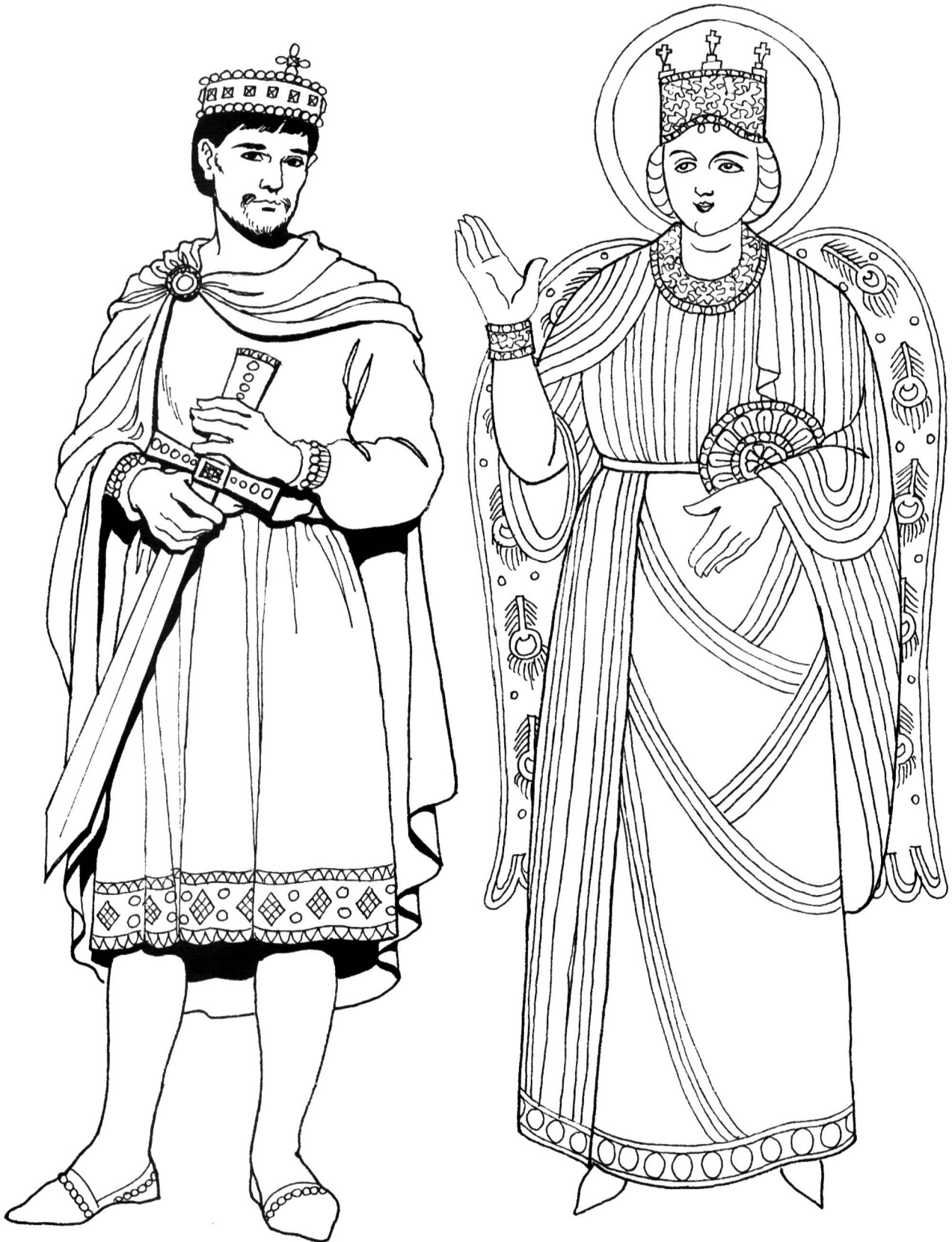


### Emperor Constantine and his mother, Helena

Emperor Constantine I, the founder of the Byzantine empire (ruled A.D. 324–337), is shown here with his mother, Helena. Information about their costumes has

been gathered from surviving sculptures. The intricate geometric patterns that embellish their garments are typical of the Byzantine era.





#### Constantine and the Angel (fourth century)

According to legend, Constantine I (at left) dreamed that an angel told him to go to battle under the Christian cross to achieve a victory. The emperor followed the angel's advice and was victorious, his success leading to his founding the Byzantine empire.

Constantine's mantle and tunic were depicted in bright primary colors in Byzantine art, the angel's (at right) in pastel tones. The mantle is fastened in typical style over the right shoulder with a jeweled clasp. Constantine wears decorated slip-on shoes.

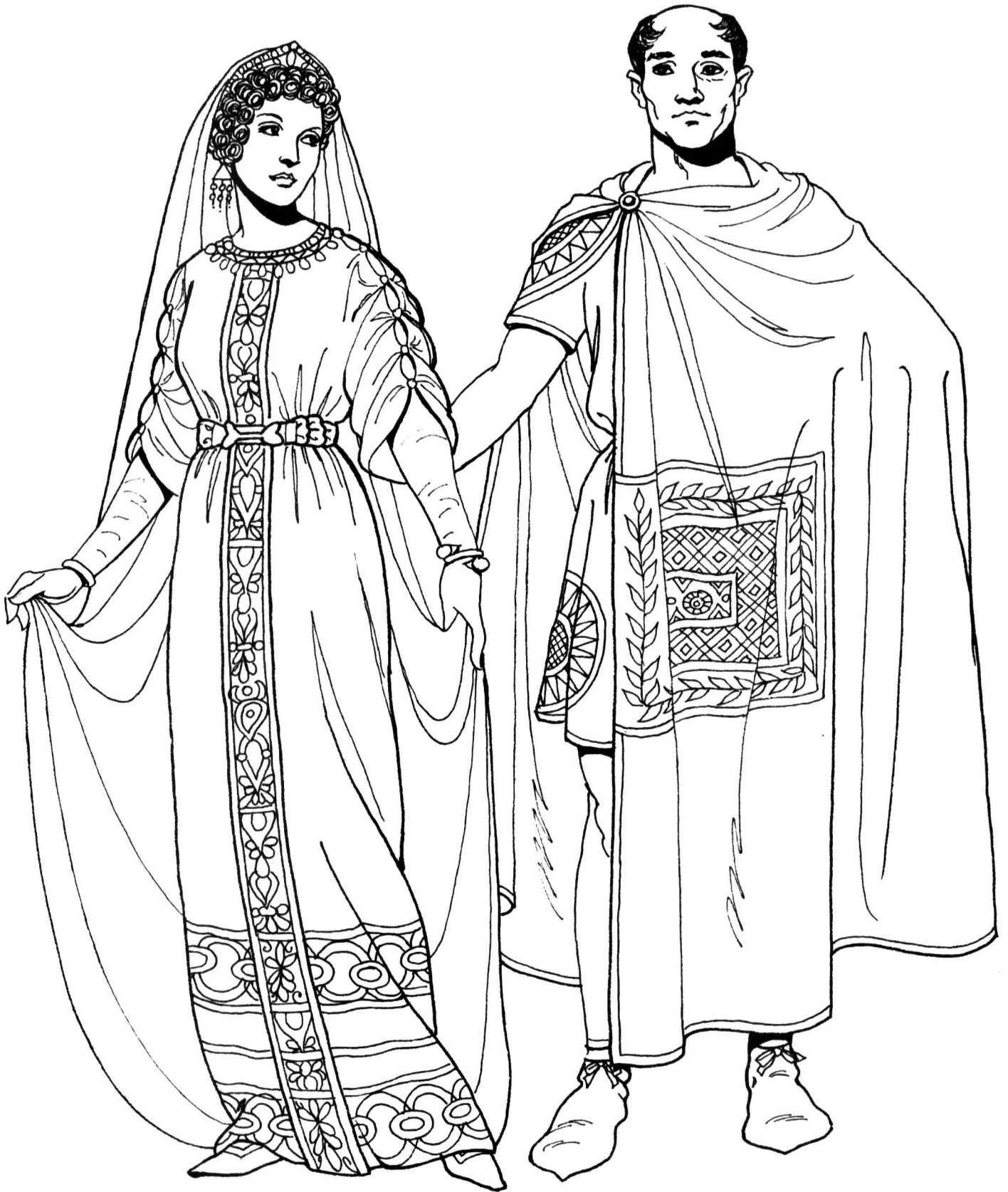




#### Fourth-century Early Christian Commoners

**Left:** The woman wears a long-sleeved tunic under a short-sleeved stola for everyday wear at home. The belted waist gives a blousy effect. **Right:** The man wears a long-sleeved light-colored tunic and dark wool

cloak, fastened at his right shoulder. Both have multi-colored geometric embroidered trim on their garments, she at the neck, sleeves, and waist, he at the sleeves.

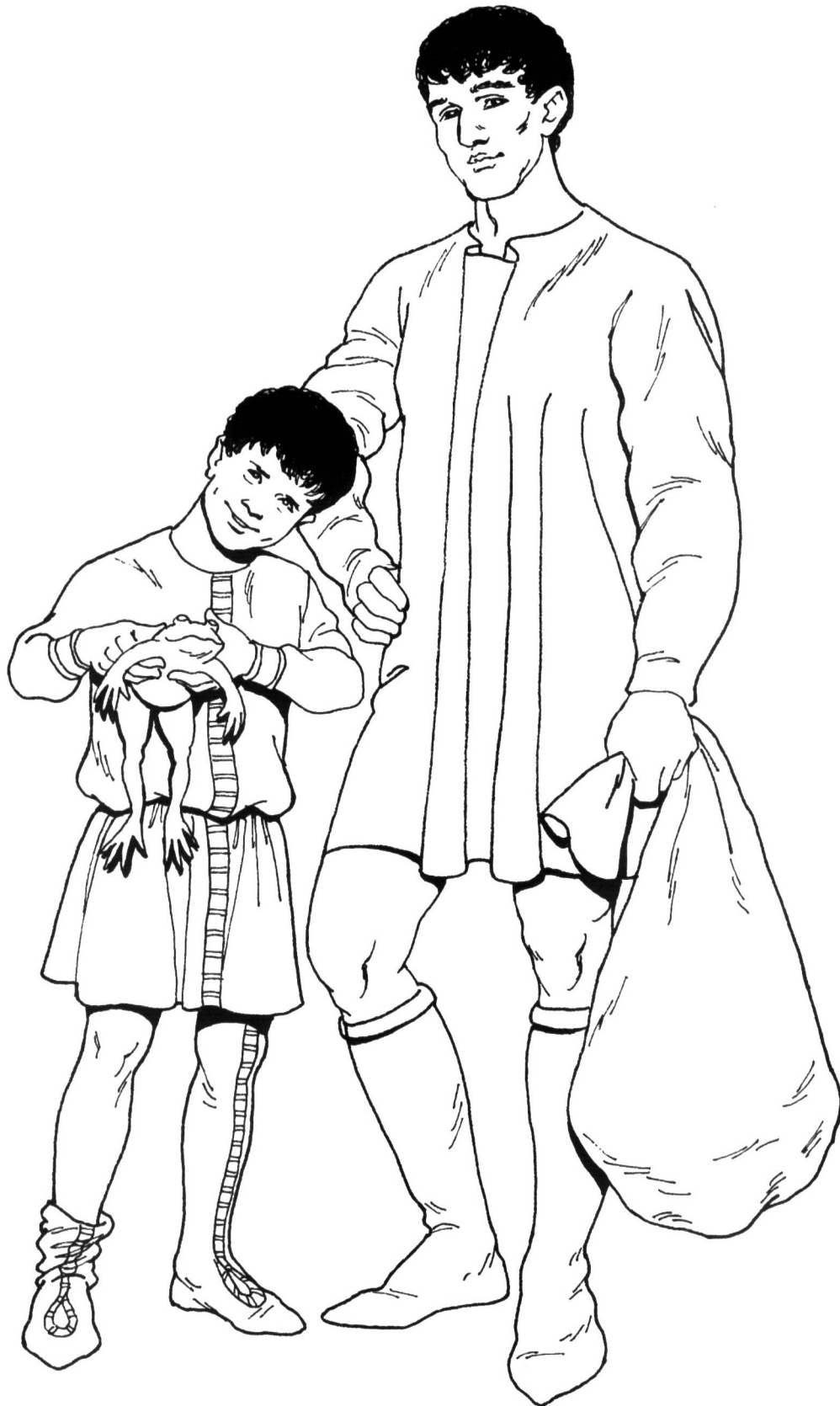


**Fourth-century Byzantine Woman and Civil Official**

**Left:** The woman is wearing a brightly colored long stola decorated with gold embroidery over a long-sleeved tunica. Her palla, falling from a diadem, would have been constructed of sheer linen or silk. **Right:** The

man, a civil official, wears a short, light-colored tunica with multicolored embroidery. His mantle of dark material has a decorative tablion. He wears light-colored stockings and brightly colored soft leather boots.





#### Fourth-century Early Christian Commoners

The father and son depicted here wear short linen camisas. **Left:** The boy's camisa was probably his "dress-up" wear; the vertical stripe appears on matching stockings. **Right:** The father's light-colored camisa

is worn for work, doubling as an undergarment when he dresses up in an over-tunica. His boots—*calcei*—are made of soft leather. When working in the fields, he probably dispensed with stockings.



#### Fourth-century Byzantine Couple

In the early years of the Byzantine empire, men did not always wear stockings. **Left:** The man's tunic has embroidered trim. He wears leather thong sandals. **Right:** The woman wears a brightly colored dalmatic

with a multicolored, geometric-patterned, embroidered trim and a matching head scarf. Women's shoes were typically red throughout most of the Byzantine period.





**Fourth-century Royal Couple**

**Left:** He wears a brocaded silk tunica under a dark cloak, fastened with a fibula. He has on dark stockings

and shoes. **Right:** She wears a pale silk camisa under a long tunica of brightly colored silk and a dark mantle.



**Fourth-century Churchgoer and Lady of Rank**

**Left:** This religious woman wears a palla with fringed edging and embroidered detail over a stola. **Right:** The

lady of rank wears a dalmatic with embroidered detail. She also wears a palla.





#### Fourth-century Byzantine Couple

**Left:** The man wears a short, light-colored tunic over dark trousers. His cloak, cut to free the arm, is held with two fasteners. **Right:** The woman wears a loose

dalmatic-style tunic over a light-colored camisa. Her tunic and palla are embroidered in bright colors.



#### Two Fourth-century Shepherds

**Left:** This shepherd wears a short medium-colored tunica with embroidered decorations over a light-colored camisa. He wears long stockings bound to the leg, as

well as ankle-high leather boots. **Right:** The young man is dressed in a long-sleeved short tunica in a medium color and has thrown a dark mantle over his shoulder.

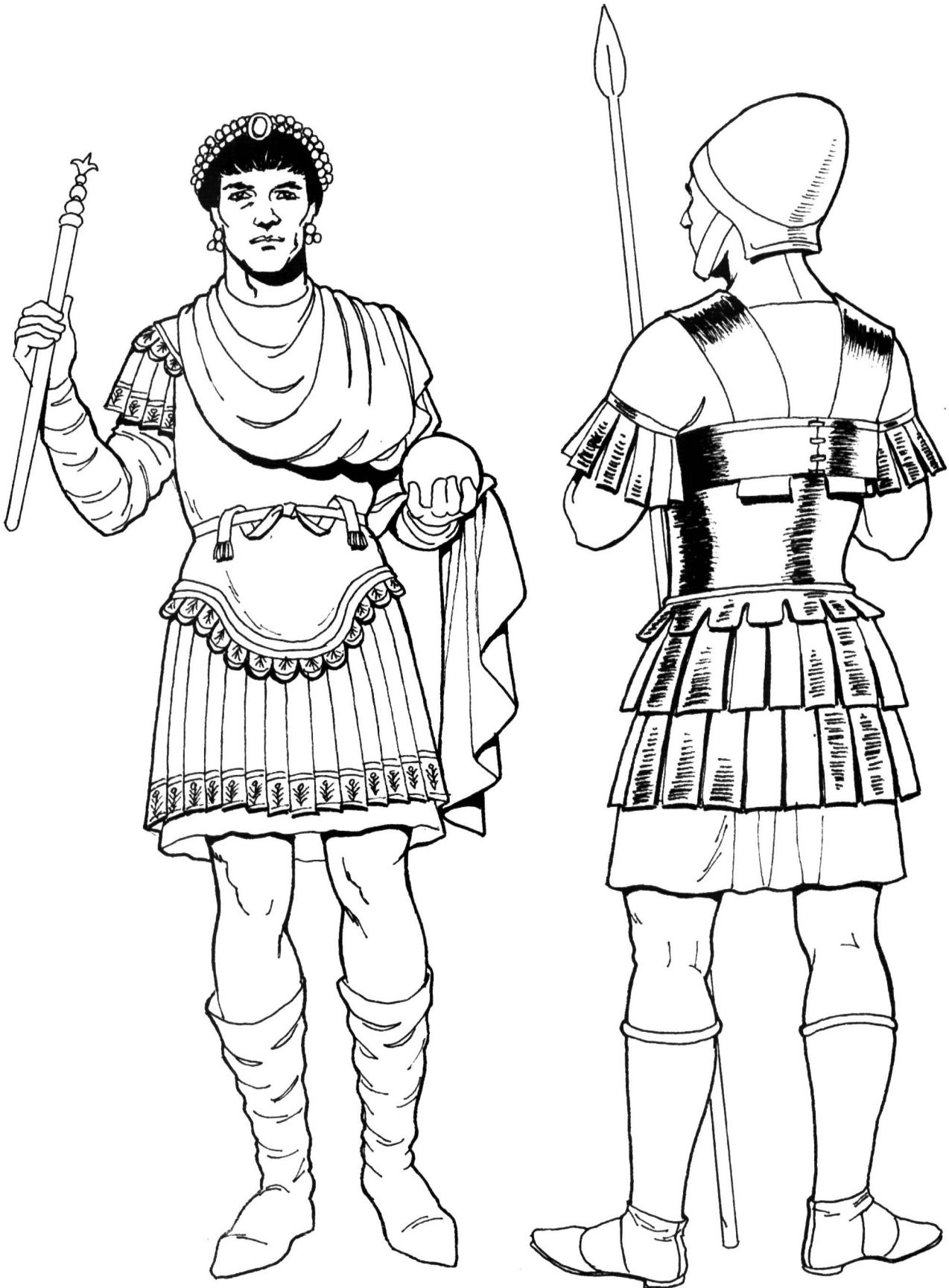


#### Fourth or fifth-century Roman Warriors

Shown here are an officer and a foot soldier. **Left:** The officer has a tooled-metal helmet and lorica (body armor). His sleeves and skirt are of tooled leather as well, and his trousers are made of pony skin. He wears

a brightly colored wool mantle and leather boots. **Right:** The foot soldier wears a short-sleeved woolen tunic over a linen camisa and wool trousers. He wears leather boots and a metal helmet.





### Emperor Arcadius and Warrior

**Left:** Emperor Arcadius (ruled 395–408) is shown here dressed in a white camisia, worn under a woolen, silk-embroidered tunica and a polished metal lorica. He

wears soft leather boots over bare legs. **Right:** The warrior wears a linen camisia, leather lorica, skirt, and arm bands. He has on wool stockings and leather shoes.



#### Fifth-century Byzantine Couple

**Left:** The woman wears a long-sleeved linen camisia under an embroidery-trimmed dalmatic. Her slip-on shoes have a geometric design as well. **Right:** The man

wears a linen camisia, cloth hose with ties, and soft leather boots dyed a bright color.



### Emperor Arcadius and Serving Girl

**Left:** Emperor Arcadius is dressed in a light-colored tunica trimmed in gold and multicolored embroidery. His mantle is dyed a rich royal purple and has a gold-embroidered lorium; it is fastened with a large fibula.

**Right:** The serving girl is dressed in a brightly colored jupe with colored embroidery trim, worn over Persian-style trousers with embroidered front panels. Her felt hat matches the trousers in color.





### Galla Placidia and Emperor Valentinian III

Galla Placidia was the half-sister of Emperor Arcadius and the mother of Emperor Valentinian III (he ruled the western Roman empire from 425 to 455, after the division of the empire into east and west). **Left:** Galla Placidia wears a *camisia* with jeweled sleeves under a long,

brightly colored silk tunic and a *palla* of royal purple. **Right:** Her son, Valentinian III, is wearing a brocaded tunic, as well as a brocaded mantle fastened with a *fibula*. His stockings and slippers are brightly colored.



**Fifth-century Man of Rank and Woman of Faith**

**Left:** The man wears a brightly colored tunica under a mantle of contrasting color. His stockings and boots are also crafted in jewel-like colors. **Right:** The woman

is dressed in a light-colored camisa covered by a dark circular cloak and light-colored mantle.



### Fifth-century Evangelist and Warrior

**Left:** The evangelist is dressed in a dark tunica with light trim worn under a dark mantle with an embroidered cross. **Right:** The warrior wears a metal lorica

over a leather apron and white camisia. He has leather guards on his upper arms and wears leather shin guards over his soft leather boots.





**Sixth-century Men of Rank**

Two men of rank, both wearing brightly colored silk tunics. The man on the left wears a tunic with pleats

in the back, over a long camisia. The man on the right wears a ceremonial toga over his long camisia.



### Sixth-century Noble Couple

**Left:** The nobleman is dressed in a short mantle worn over a tunic with a decorative apron. His tight-fitting trousers are made of brocade and are, like his tunic and mantle, heavily trimmed with embroidery. His

Phrygian cap is made of brightly colored felt. **Right:** The noblewoman wears an embroidered dalmatic over a long camisa. Her flowing silk palla is the same color as her camisa.

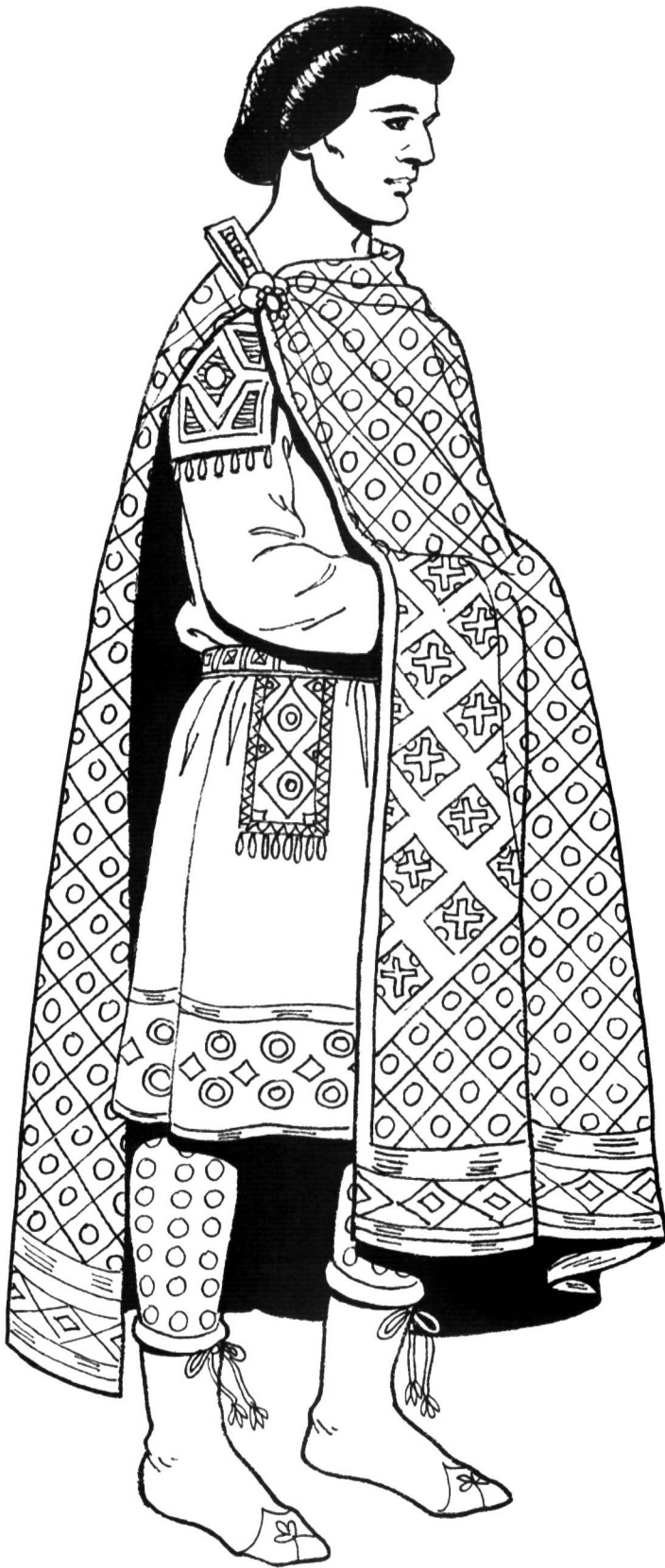


### Empress Theodora

Shown here are two costumes attributed to Theodora. In her day, she was considered to be the most beautiful, as well as the most powerful, woman in the world. **Left:** Theodora wears a patterned stola over a jeweled, embroidered camisia, topped by a jeweled collar and

belt. Her palla is made of sheer silk edged with tear-drop pearls. **Right:** The empress wears a semi-circular palla, edged with pearls and decorated with an embroidered religious tablion. Her coif and collar feature large pearls and precious stones.

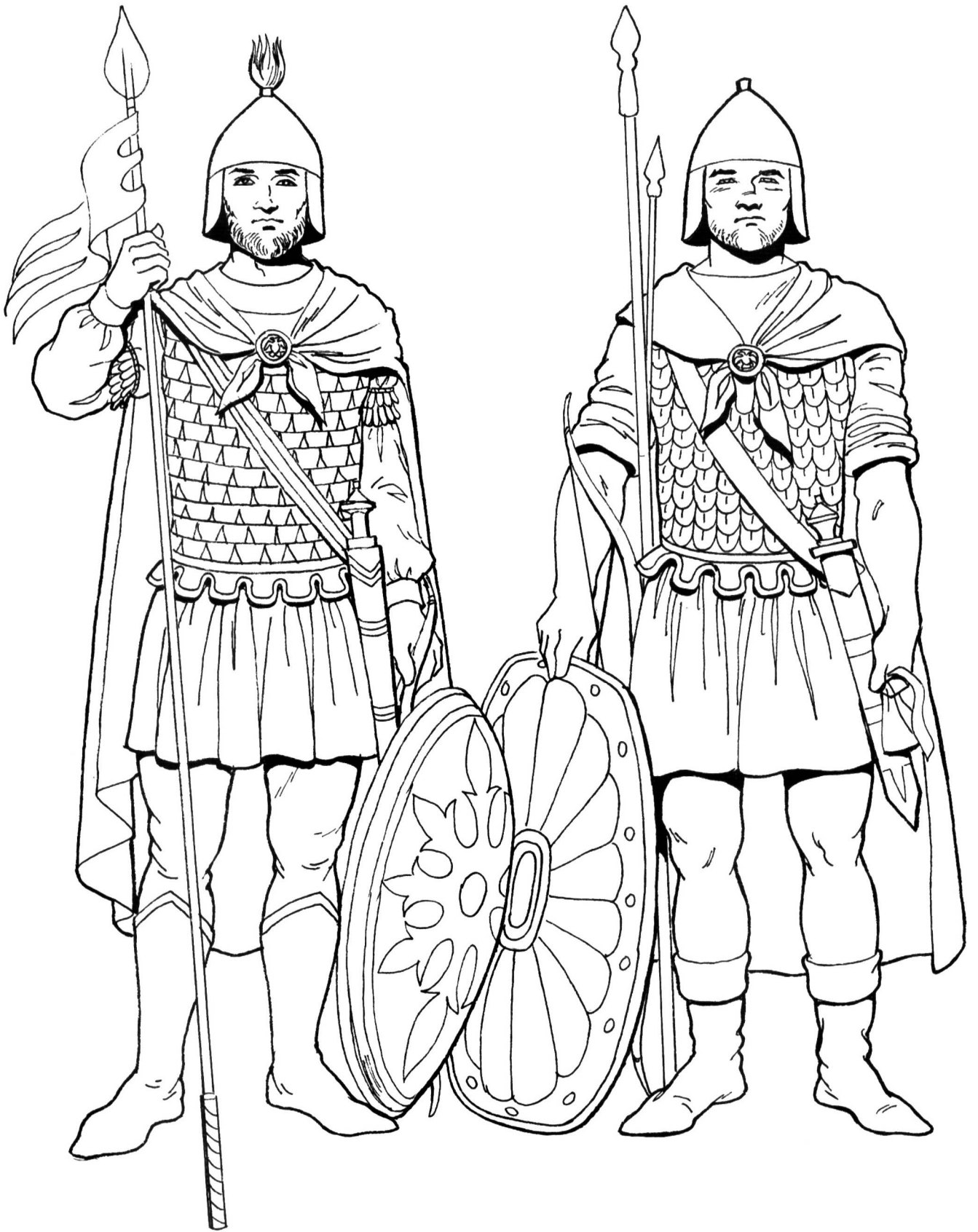




#### Sixth-century Courtiers

A courtier couple at Emperor Justinian's court. **Left:** The man wears a heavily brocaded mantle with a tablion over a brightly colored tunica, which is decorated with multicolor embroidery. His hose are patterned, and his boots are of brightly colored soft

leather. **Right:** The woman wears a long, patterned tunica with embroidered patches. Her palla is also made of patterned, brocaded silk. On her head she wears a light-colored rolled-brim turban.



### Seventh-century Cavalryman and Foot Soldier

A cavalryman and a foot soldier show the subtle differences in military costume. The cavalryman wears long, fitted sleeves with leather arm bands. His cloak is shorter and he wears hose, whereas the foot soldier is

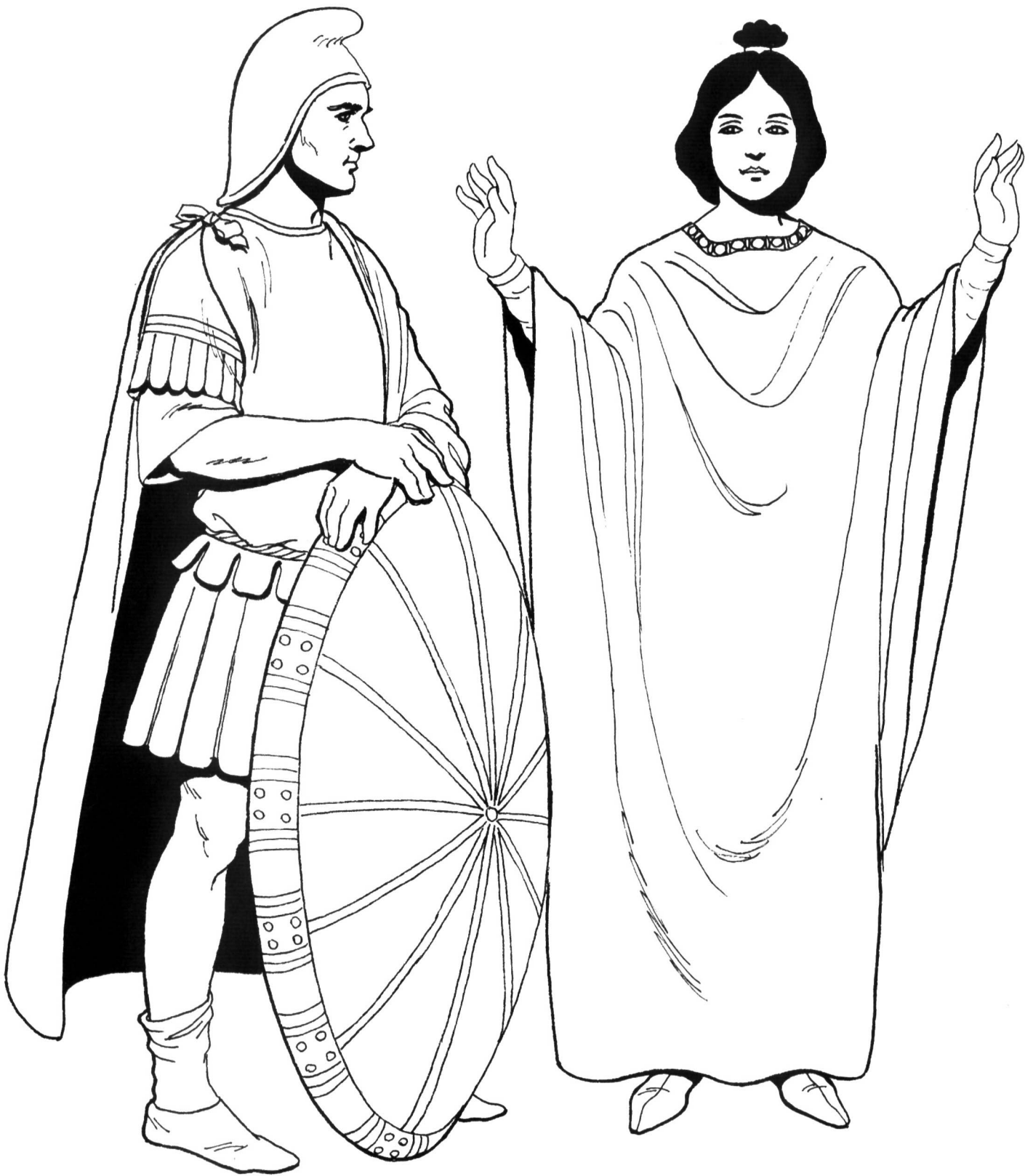
bare legged; the cavalryman's shield is smaller than the oblong one carried by the foot soldier. Their helmets are generally the same, but the cavalryman has a feather crest.



### Seventh-century Court Performer

This dancing girl is performing the dance of Salomé at the court. Her straight-lined, somewhat fitted tunica is trimmed with fur at the sleeves and skirt edge. The

gown is decorated with semi-precious stones. Under the gown she wears a long-sleeved camisa.



**Seventh-century Warrior and Townswoman**

**Left:** The warrior wears a dark wool cloak and a dark felt cap with light edging. He wears a leather tunic and skirt, bare legs, light-colored socks, and dark

shoes. **Right:** The townsman wears a light-colored camisa under a pale cloak with embroidered neckline. She wears soft red leather shoes.





### Seventh-century Courtier and Priest

**Left:** The courtier wears a brightly colored short tunic with embroidered sleeves over his light-colored camisia and cloth leggings; an embroidered purse hangs from his belt. His mantle has a richly embroidered border

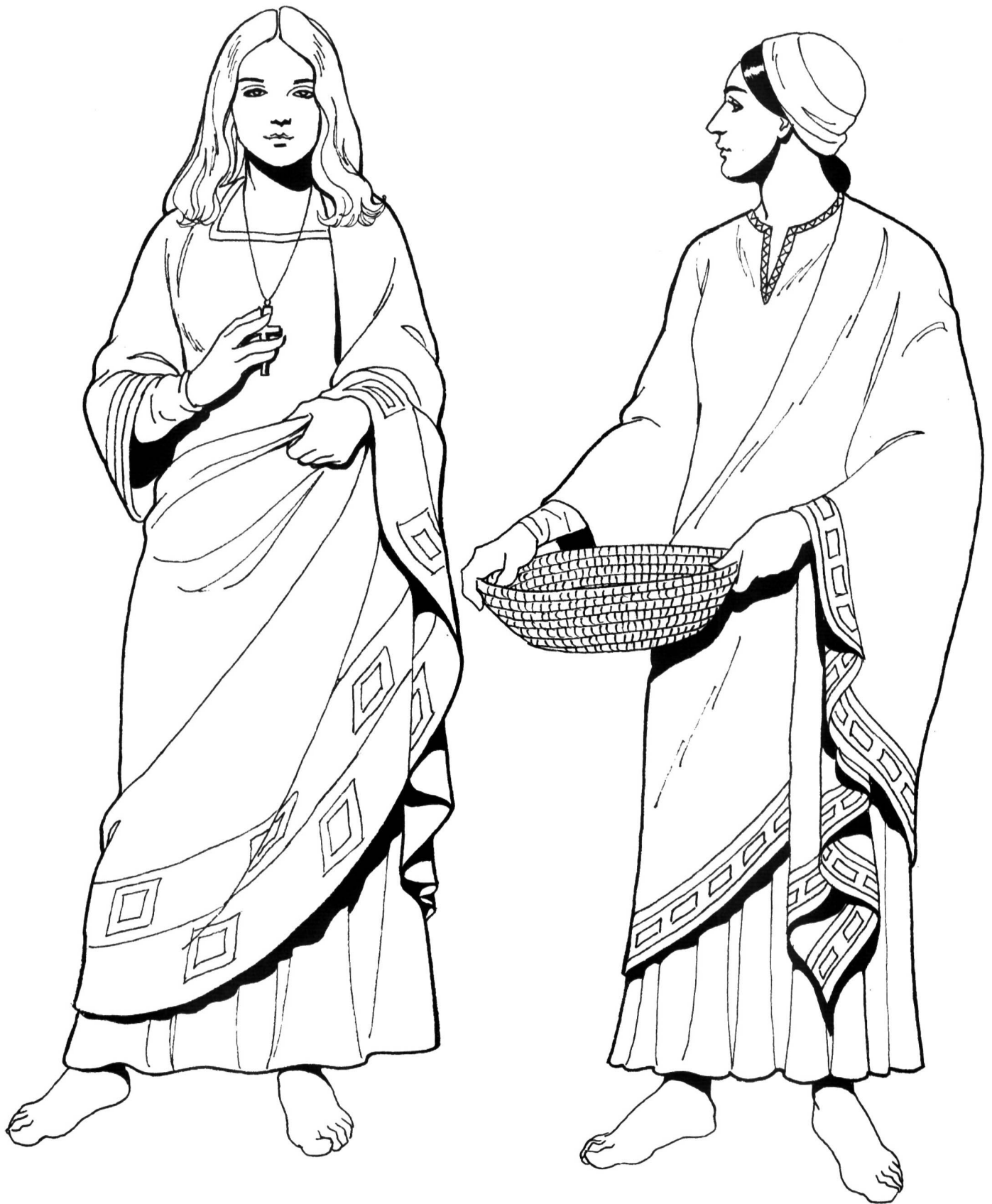
and tablion and is fastened with a fibula. He wears tall leather boots with open toes. **Right:** The priest wears a long camisia under his tunic; the circular mantle is topped by a lorum embroidered with crosses.



### **Eighth-century Townswoman and Foot Soldier**

**Left:** The townswoman wears a plainly cut, natural-colored dalmatic-style tunic over her linen camisa. Her hair is bound in a linen coif with a woolen cap. **Right:** The foot soldier wears a mail lorica with leather strips for skirt and shoulder guards over his linen

camisa. His legs are bare, and he wears leather high-topped sandals. His lorica has leather shoulder straps, which are held down by a band of cloth wrapped around the chest. He also has on a short cloak, and he wears a metal helmet.



### **Eighth-century Townswomen**

Two townswomen are shown here wearing long dalmatic-style tunicas over their camisas, as well as pallas

with embroidered edging. These garments would have displayed muted colors derived from natural dyes.



### Ninth-century Commoners

Both of these ninth-century men wear short tunics with embroidery trim over loose cloth hose. The man on the left wears a short cloak; his leather-soled shoes are secured to the leg with a wrapping of leather ban-

delettes. The man on the right wears leather boots and hose tied with fabric garters. Again, their costumes would be made of subdued colors derived from natural herbal dyes in shades of tan, soft green, and pale yellow.





#### Tenth-century Priest

This Byzantine priest wears a dark pallium decorated with white panels and black crosses over his brocaded tunic and long camisia. The ecclesiastical pallium was

cut long in the back so it could be draped over the arms in the front, as shown here.



### Emperor Romanus II and Empress Eudokia

These images of Emperor Romanus II (ruled 959–963) and his first wife, Empress Eudokia, are derived from a late eleventh-century ivory carving, once thought to depict Romanus IV and his wife, Empress Eudoxia.

Here, the emperor and empress wear splendidly ornate costumes embroidered with pearls. Their crowns are embellished with ornamental pendants.



#### Members of the Court of Otto III (tenth century)

Otto III, a German warrior-king (ruled 996–1002), conquered Byzantium and became emperor. His tastes were less ornate than those of his predecessors, and for a while Byzantine costumes resembled Germanic medieval garb. Here, a man and woman of rank from

Otto's court wear robes of simple, barely embellished design. The man's cloak is dark; his pale tunic has jeweled, gold-embroidered trim. The woman wears a dark robe with gold banding and a light-colored palla draped over the shoulder and wrapped about the waist.



### Emperor Nicephorus III and his Empress

After the reign of Otto III the Greeks regained the empire, and their taste for lavish decoration was reestablished. Emperor Nicephorus III (ruled 1078–1081) and his empress are shown wearing gold brocade coronation robes with embroidered trim. A

multicolored jeweled lorium is wrapped across the emperor's chest and hips. The empress has a jeweled collar and jeweled woman's version of the lorium wrapped around her hips.





### Eleventh-century Royal Robes

The empress's dark gown is adorned in the front with a light-colored decorative panel. Multicolored embroidery enhances the ensemble. The emperor is wearing his military apparel, consisting of a dark cloak worn

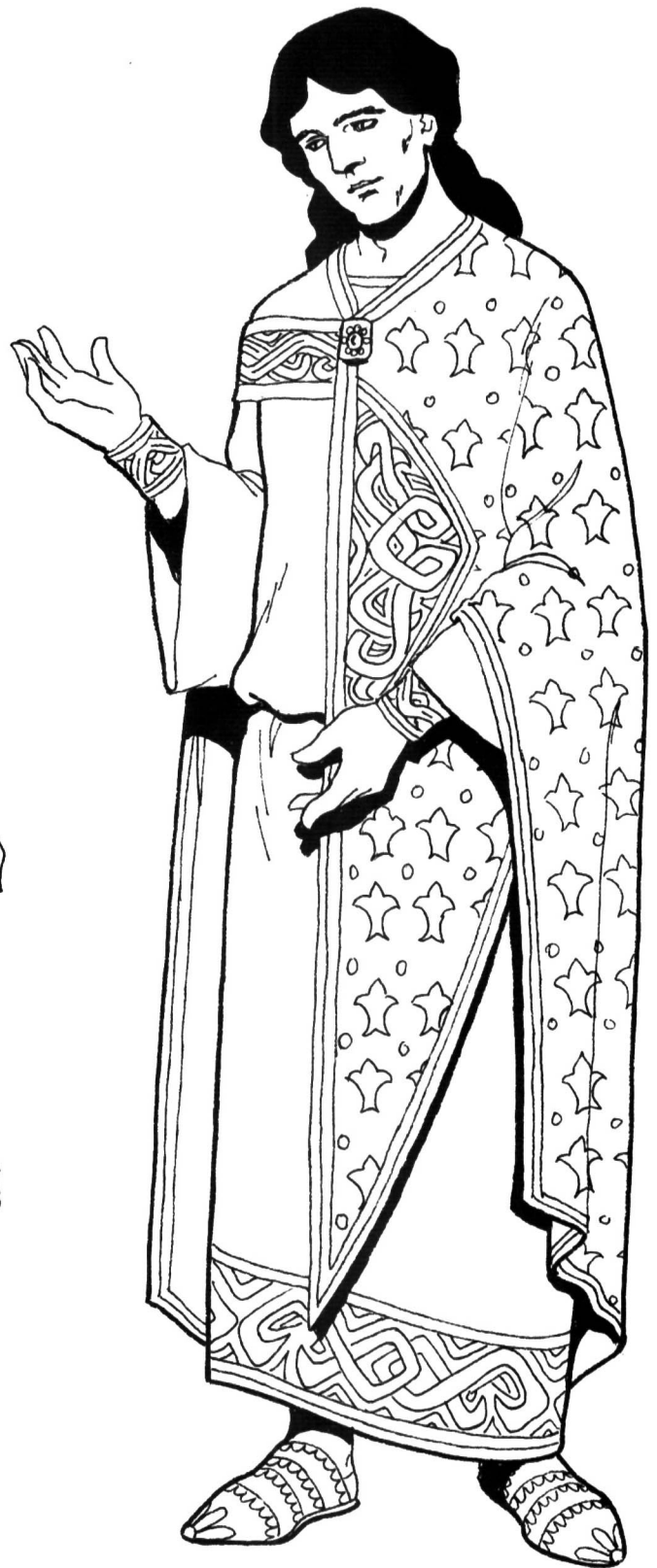
over a white, long-sleeved camisia, a metal lorica, a short tunica with embroidered trim, and cloth stockings. His boots are leather, studded with jewels.



### Eleventh-century Upper-class Woman

The women of the upper classes were rarely seen in public; nevertheless, the robes that they wore at home were constructed of fine fabrics and were richly jeweled and embroidered. On the left, the woman is depicted

almost entirely covered by her palla, a garment required when she left the home. The palla was generally of a very dark color, whereas the gown would have displayed brighter, more jewel-like tones.



### Twelfth-century Princess and Court Dignitary

**Left:** This Byzantine princess wears a dark embroidered and jewel-trimmed camisia with a light-colored short tunic, also heavily embroidered and jeweled. Her elaborate belt has decorative panels. **Right:** The court

dignitary wears a white tunic with embroidered trim under his dark brocaded mantle, which features a gold-embroidered tablion in the form of a triangle.

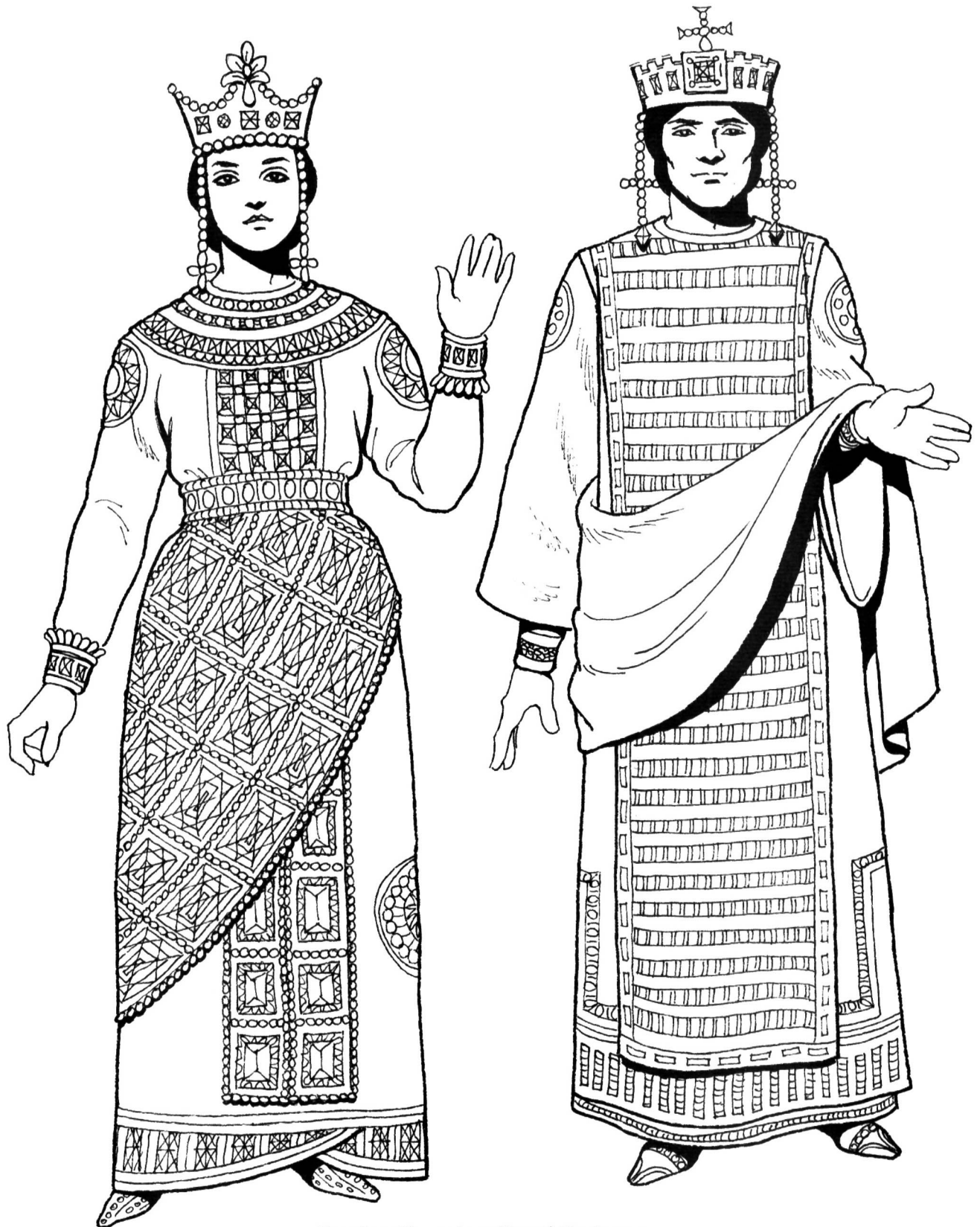


#### Twelfth-century Merchant and Monk

**Left:** The merchant wears a short shirt (*juppe*) with embroidered sleeve cuffs and a light-colored belt. Under the *juppe* he wears a short tunica, Persian-style trousers with a multicolored embroidered panel, and

colorful medium-height stockings and leather shoes. **Right:** The monk's garments consist of a dark mantle, a light-colored short tunica with embroidered medallions, dark cloth stockings, and leather shoes.





#### Fourteenth-century Royal Costumes

By the fourteenth century, the woman's tunic had evolved into a *gunna*, or gown, and the palla had taken the form of a sash worn around the hips. However, the fabrics remained opulent, and were elaborately embroidered and studded with pearls and jewels. Male attire had also been simplified to a gown, often

enhanced by a richly embroidered front panel and a train hanging from the back and carried across the arm in front. The gown shown here has dalmatic sleeves and is worn over a shirt. Both the man's and the woman's gowns are made of dark silks enhanced with bright gold and multicolored embroidery.



#### Fourteenth-century Admiral and Secretary

**Left:** The late-Byzantine admiral wears a brocaded robe with straight, fitted sleeves; colored leather shoes; and an embroidered crown showing his position at court.  
**Right:** His secretary is dressed in a light-colored below-

the-knee tunic with fitted sleeves, embroidered at the hem and on the arms. He wears a short, dark cloak and dyed tall leather sandals with dark hose.



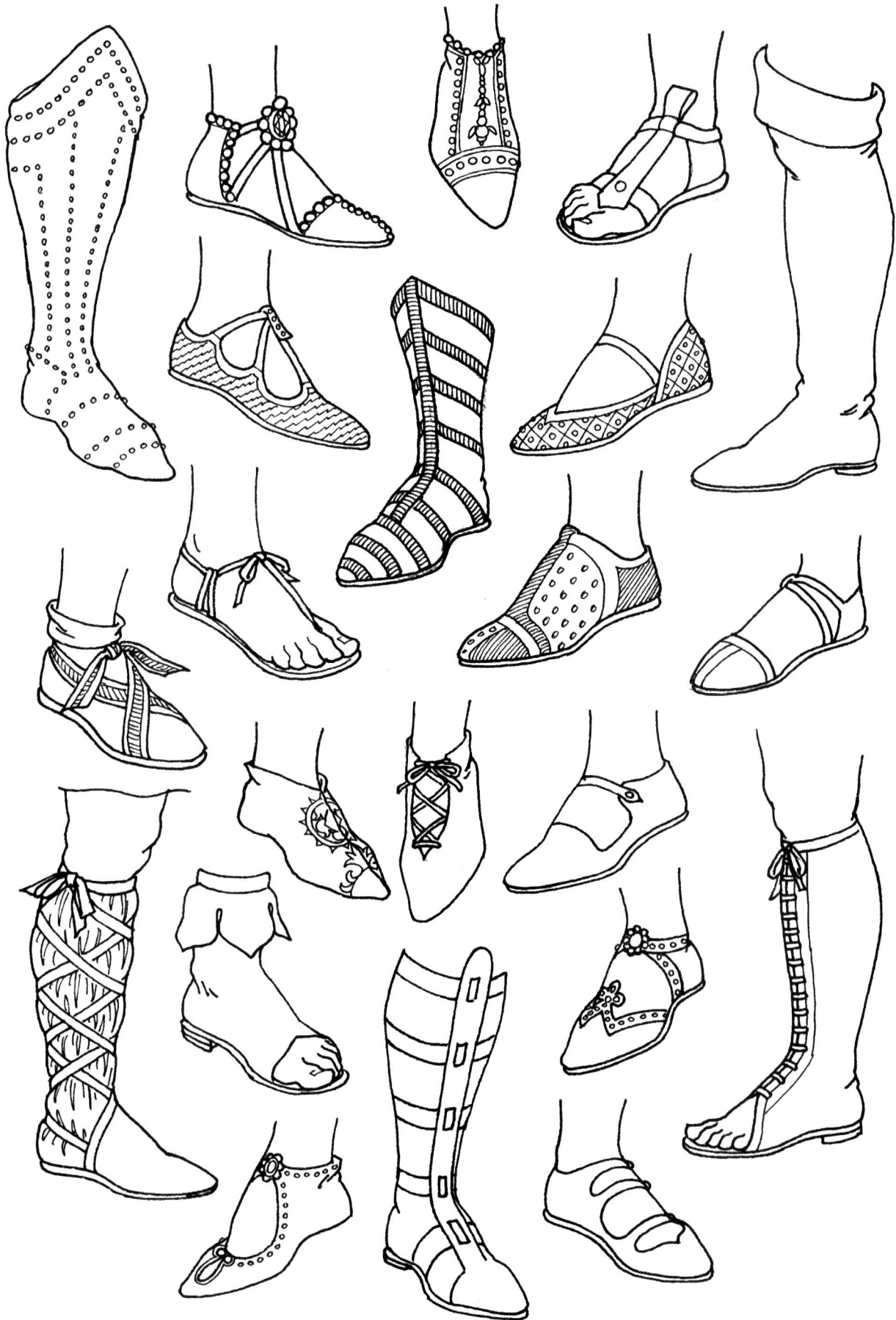
**Women's Hairstyles of the Byzantine Empire**

Women's hairstyles, coifs, crowns, and jewelry worn during the Byzantine era.



**Men's Hairstyles of the Byzantine Empire**

Men's hairstyles, hats, and decorative apparel worn during the Byzantine era.



**Footwear of the Byzantine Empire**

Various shoe and boot styles worn by both men and women during the Byzantine era.





Emperor Justinian and Empress Theodora, page 23.





# Byzantine Fashions

Tom Tierney

An exotic blend of east and west, clothing styles in the Byzantine Empire were rich in color, fabric, and ornament. This carefully researched and scrupulously rendered coloring book by Tom Tierney features more than 80 Byzantine garments, as depicted in ancient mosaics and sculptures.

Clothing styles from all classes are represented—from simple 4th-century tunics worn by early Christian commoners and the body armor of 5th-century Roman warriors to a pallium decorated with crosses worn by a priest of the 10th century, and the finely brocaded robes of Emperor Constantine.

Here also are examples of royal wedding garb, heavily embroidered with jewels; a shepherd in a short tunic, long stockings, and leather boots; a court dancer wearing a brocaded silk gown with bell sleeves; as well as a lavishly attired court dignitary, a merchant, and a naval officer. Informative captions accompany each finely detailed illustration.

Original Dover (2001) publication. 45 black-and-white illustrations. 5 color illustrations on covers. Captions. 48pp. 8¼ x 11. Paperbound.

Free Dover Full-Color Children's Book Catalog (59071-2) available upon request.

**Front Cover:** Emperor Constantine and his mother, Helena; page 4.

**Above, left:** Eleventh-century Court Dancer, page 39.

**Above, right:** Tenth-century Priest, page 34.

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