

Late Roman Card Descriptions- Spades

Joker1 Romulus Augustus, Western Roman emperor (475-476)



Romulus Augustus is the one name many associate with the fall of the Roman Empire being the last Roman emperor. However, the teenage Romulus was only the last emperor of the Western Roman Empire which was abolished in 476 as following this the Roman Empire would still live on in the east as the “Byzantine Empire” for almost a thousand more years. Now ever since 395, the Roman Empire was permanently split in half between east and west which had their own emperors wherein the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire was the more stable half compared to the Western Roman Empire based in Ravenna which was facing economic decline and barbarian invasions on all sides.

Romulus meanwhile was born in around 460 in the province of Pannonia (today's Hungary) which was at the frontier of the Western Roman Empire, though little is known about Romulus' family's origins and ancestry except that they were Roman citizens of Pannonia and most possibly of Pannonian descent. Among his family members, it is only Romulus' father Orestes, a Roman citizen of Pannonia who is well documented being a military officer in the Western Roman army and prior to that a secretary of Attila the Hun, the ruler of the Huns until the latter's death in 453. By the time Romulus was born, the Western Roman Empire was already at its decline and facing a great amount of political

instability wherein between his birth in 460 and his rise to power in 475, the west had seen a change of emperor 5 times. Nothing too is recorded about Romulus until he came to rule the declining Western Roman Empire in 475 following the deposition of the short-lived Western Roman emperor Julius Nepos (r. 474-475). In his reign, Nepos appointed Romulus' father Orestes as a patrician and *Magister Militum* (Master of Soldiers) and therefore tasked Orestes to lead an army to quell a rebellion of Western Rome's Visigoth and Burgundian *Foederati* (allied troops) in Gaul. Orestes however desiring power for himself betrayed the emperor's orders and marched into Ravenna in October of 475 with his army forcing the emperor Nepos to resign which he did by escaping Italy by boat across the Adriatic Sea to Dalmatia where he would continue to rule as emperor in name only.

Rather than making himself emperor after deposing Nepos, Orestes instead chose to have his 15-year-old son be crowned as his puppet emperor. Although it remains unclear why Orestes had his son crowned and not himself, this is most possibly because by this time, the Western Roman emperor did not really hold any real power anymore as instead political power- as seen in recent years- was now held by the *Magister Militum* whereas the emperor was simply a figurehead. As emperor, Romulus was now known as "Romulus Augustus", although due to his young age, he was often known as *Augustulus* meaning "little Augustus", and true enough as emperor he was simply his father's figurehead as Orestes was really the one in charge of the empire. True enough, very little is recorded about Romulus' one-year reign that there are no mentioned laws that he passed as well as no recorded policies or even inscriptions, therefore leaving the impression that he was a shadowy and inconsequential figure. The only major event that is recorded about his reign was when the barbarian *Foederati* troops in Italy led by their chief Odoacer- who also previously served Attila together with Orestes- rebelled against Orestes as they demanded land in Italy which Orestes refused to give. As a result of this, Odoacer and his barbarian *Foederati* troops clashed with Orestes and his troops in a short civil war battle which ended with Orestes defeated and fleeing, however Orestes was later found and executed.

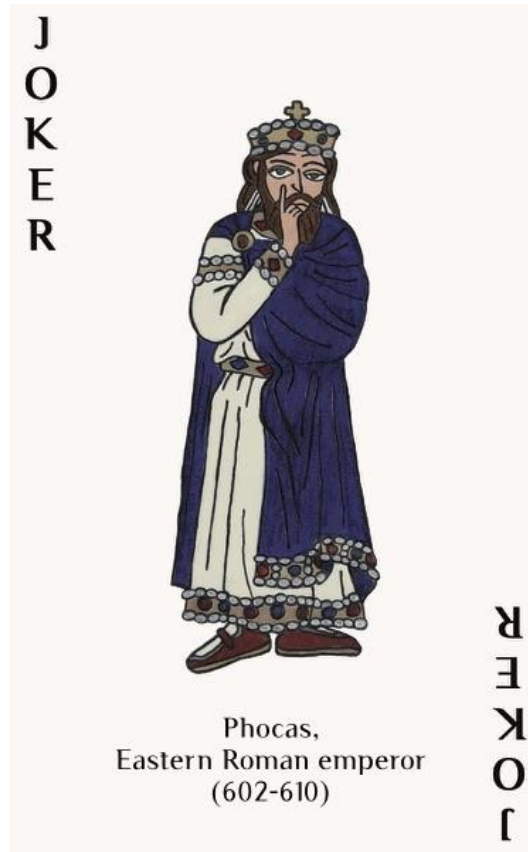
Without any more resistance, Odoacer and his barbarians marched into Ravenna and captured it on September 4 of 476, and once in Ravenna, Orestes' brother Paulus who was in charge of defending it was slain in battle. With both his father and uncle gone, Romulus had no more protection, thus he was left with no other choice but to surrender to Odoacer. Romulus was thus captured by Odoacer's men and here ended his short reign as he surrendered his crown to Odoacer who however out of pity spared Romulus due to his young age. Rather than taking the crown to make himself the Western Roman emperor, Odoacer sent it to the Eastern Roman emperor Zeno (r. 474-475/ 476-491) in Constantinople as a symbol that the Western Roman Empire had been abolished and thus the Eastern Roman Empire was the only Roman Empire left and its emperor the only Roman emperor. Odoacer thus instead crowned himself as "King of Italy" whereas what was left of the Western Roman Empire ruled by Romulus which simply just consisted of Italy and parts of today's Switzerland, Austria, and Slovenia now became Odoacer's Kingdom of Italy.

Nothing much now is known about Romulus following his deposition in 476, except that he was allowed to live out his life peacefully in retirement with an annual pension of

6,000 solidi while exiled at a castle at the harbor of Naples known as the *Castellum Lucullanum*. There are only a few instances wherein Romulus' life in exile was recorded which included one time in the 480s or 490s wherein he had founded a monastery dedicated to St. Severinus of Noricum at the same castle he was exiled to. Although Romulus had already been deposed as Western Roman emperor whereas the Eastern emperor Zeno had recognized the fall of Western Rome and Odoacer as his vassal, the former emperor Julius Nepos was still ruling in name from Dalmatia but only until his assassination in 480 as after this, Dalmatia was absorbed into Odoacer's kingdom. On the other hand, it is not known when Romulus had died, although it is most likely certain that he was still alive up until 511 as the new King of Italy and Odoacer's successor Theodoric the Amal (r. 493-526) had written a letter to Romulus concerning his pension sometime between 507 and 511.

In this illustration, the last Western Roman emperor Romulus Augustus is depicted as a boy aged 15-16 which is how old he was when he ruled as Western Roman emperor. Here, his attire was based on the attire worn by Roman emperors in the 5th and 6th centuries, particularly inspired by the one worn by the 6th century emperor Justinian I the Great (r. 527-565) seen on his mosaic at the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy. Here, Romulus appears to be wearing the *Chlamys* or the large purple cloak worn by emperors which has a golden square section at the center known as a *Tablion* and is fastened at his right shoulder by a brooch known as a *Fibula* while inside his cloak is an ornate white and gold tunic. Romulus here also appears to be wearing the skin-tight imperial pants and the red shoes reserved for emperors in which both were also based on Justinian's mosaic portrait. The crown now that Romulus wears here is a standard late Roman *Diadem* crown studded with jewels.

Joker2 Phocas, Eastern Roman emperor (602-610)



For those studying Eastern Roman history, Phocas is always remembered as the cruel and incompetent usurper emperor who led the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire to a downward spiral until being miraculously overthrown in 610 by Heraclius. Now, nothing much is known about Phocas' early life and background except that he was born in 547 as he was said to be aged 55 when becoming emperor in 602 and that his family were likely of either Thracian or Cappadocian Greek in origin. It was only at the age of 55 when Phocas as a centurion which was a middle-ranking position in the army was first mentioned being a charismatic spokesman for the Eastern Roman troops stationed at the Danube frontier who were dissatisfied with the orders given to them by the emperor Maurice (r. 582-602) to defend the border against Avar and Slav raids. Here, Maurice tasked these troops to stay across the Danube River border during winter while also reducing their salary due to the dire economic situation the empire was in. Being no longer satisfied with the outrageous orders given to them by the emperor all while the centurion Phocas had been championing their cause, the soldiers thus rallied behind Phocas and proclaimed him as emperor by raising him on a shield at the Danube frontier.

From here, they marched south directly to Constantinople to overthrow Maurice and his regime. By the time Phocas and his troops have arrived at the capital in November of 602, the people as well as the Senate now rallied behind him too and so did the Patriarch of Constantinople Cyriacus who crowned Phocas as emperor outside the city walls whereas Maurice and his family fled by boat across the Bosphorus to Chalcedon on the Asian side of the city. Maurice and his family despite attempting to escape were still caught by Phocas'

forces and thus Maurice and his 6 sons were sentenced to death by being beheaded, and afterwards their bodies were dumped into the Bosphorus Sea whereas Maurice's wife the empress Constantina and daughters were sent to a monastery wherein they were later killed for attempting to conspire against Phocas. The execution of Maurice however led to the late emperor's ally the Sassanid Empire's ruler Shah Khosrow II (r. 590-628) to declare war on the Romans and so by 603 the Sassanids launched a full-scale invasion on Eastern Roman territory and succeeded in occupying the eastern provinces all while the Eastern Roman *Magister Militum per Orientem* (Master of Soldiers of the East) Narses defected to the Sassanids.

Phocas however now as emperor did not care about the external threats the empire was facing which were mainly the Sassanids invading the east and the Avars and Slavs now once again raiding the Balkans due to the lack of troops to defend these said areas. Rather than putting his attention to these external threats, Phocas due to being a usurper with no legitimate claim to the throne put all his attention into consolidating his rule by executing anyone loyal to Maurice and his regime that true enough, a lot of the empire's competent generals were either put to death or exiled while the same general Narses who defected to the Sassanids was summoned to Constantinople by Phocas and burned alive. After getting rid of the generals and ministers loyal to Maurice, Phocas then replaced them with his relatives such as his brothers Domentziolus and Comentiolus and nephew Domentziolus to ensure full loyalty to him. On the other hand, Phocas still kept some powerful men from Maurice's regime such as the general Priscus who he appointed as the Commander of the *Excubitors* (Palace Guards) while Priscus too was married to Phocas' daughter Domentzia as a way to secure Phocas' legitimacy. However, to really secure his legitimacy, Phocas put all his attention into arresting, torturing, and even killing not only those who conspired against him but to even those who said the slightest thing against him as despite being crowned emperor, he lacked the support of the Roman aristocracy who couldn't accept him as emperor due to his lowborn provincial origins.

True enough, Phocas' reign was dominated by purging that he had ignored the external threats the empire was facing to the point that the Sassanid armies had already occupied most of Asia Minor all the way to the Bosphorus by 607. In the meantime, Eastern Roman held Italy too was under attack by the Lombards which Phocas ignored as well, though Phocas had actually remained in good terms with the pope Gregory I the Great and with the latter's successors following Gregory's death in 604 that Phocas even declared Rome as the "head of all churches". Due to maintaining friendly relations with the Papacy, Phocas in 608 was awarded with the erection of a triumphal column in honor of him known as the Column of Phocas found in the Roman Forum in Rome. On the other hand, Phocas who had a long beard set a new trend for Roman emperors by introducing this said long beard which almost all Roman (Byzantine) emperors would have from here until the fall of the empire in 1453.

In the meantime, all while Phocas was busy purging those who conspired or said the slightest things against him, it had turned out that his son-in-law Priscus who was seemingly loyal was in fact not loyal to Phocas at all and that he had been writing to the *Exarch* (governor) of Africa Heraclius the Elder who was a loyal general of the late Maurice

to rebel against Phocas. Heraclius the Elder and his son Heraclius the Younger thus declared rebellion in 608 by first making themselves consuls in Carthage in opposition to Phocas and Constantinople and also cutting off the grain supply from Carthage to Constantinople. In 609, the son Heraclius launched his invasion of Egypt with his cousin Nicetas therefore further cutting grain supply to Constantinople which thus turned most of the population in the capital against Phocas. By 610, Heraclius the Younger and his fleet captured Thessaloniki and from there launched their invasion of Constantinople to finally overthrow the usurper Phocas. True enough by the time Heraclius the Younger reached Constantinople, the Excubitors led by Priscus had already betrayed Phocas and thus they brought Phocas in chains to Heraclius' ship where Phocas was executed by Heraclius himself on October 5 of 610. Due to Phocas ignoring the threat of the Sassanid invasion in the east and instead focusing on purging to consolidate his power, Heraclius (r. 610-641) now as emperor was left with an almost extinct empire low on funds with the Sassanids overrunning the eastern provinces, though it would be Heraclius that would later save the empire from this near-extinction.

In this illustration, Phocas appears to be wearing the standard attire worn by Roman emperors from the 4th-7th centuries which consists of a large purple cloak known as a *Chlamys* which here is studded with jewels at the bottom and fastened at the right shoulder by a jeweled brooch known as a *Fibula* while inside it he wears an ornate white tunic studded with jewels. The outfit Phocas is wearing here which also includes his shoes was based on Byzantine coins of this era depicting emperors and their attire as well as on the famous mosaic of Emperor Justinian I the Great (r. 527-565) at the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy. The crown Phocas wears here was based on the type of crown he is depicted to be wearing in his coins which is topped by a cross. Just as Phocas appears in his coins with long hair and a long beard- the new trend he introduced- this illustration depicts Phocas this way in a pose where his fingers are held close to his face as if he is thinking.

S-A Late Roman Jeweled Necklace, 6th Century



Jeweled Necklace,
6th century

This illustration depicts a recreation of a Roman (Byzantine) necklace dating back to around 600AD found in Egypt which is found today at the British Museum in London, UK and remains surprisingly intact. This gold necklace consists of an intricately carved round gold pendant with 2 sapphires, 2 emeralds, and 4 pearls. The gold chain of the necklace now includes pearls and emeralds found at the ends of each gold chain whereas it is fastened by beaded discs. For this illustration, the necklace's chain was shortened as compared to the original one in the British Museum which consists of 8 sets of gold chains, the one in this illustration only has 4 sets of gold chains.

S-2 Bagaudae Insurgent, 5th Century



The *Bagaudae* were groups of peasant insurgents in the Late Roman Empire which arose during the years of the Crisis of the 3rd Century (235-284) and had persisted until the Fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476, especially in the far parts of Roman Gaul and Hispania where Roman authority was weak. The word “Bagaudae” is probably Gallic in origin which means “fighters” as they were true enough armed peasant insurgents and some being runaway slaves or legionnaires from the army as well that acted as bands of brigands looting and pillaging the Western Roman countryside. With Roman imperial troops busy on all fronts defending the empire or fighting civil wars during the Crisis of the 3rd Century, the threat of the Bagaudae especially in Gaul and Hispania became a major problem until the crisis period had ended as here, with the external and internal problems of the empire settled, the imperial troops could now deal with these armed insurgents.

In 286 with the crisis over, the threat of the Bagaudae in Gaul was crushed by the Caesar Maximian who was here the junior emperor of Diocletian (r. 284-305). Although the Bagaudae were defeated by Maximian, they would resurface during the middle of the 4th century during the reign of Maximian’s grandson Constantius II (337-361) wherein the Bagaudae insurgents had attacked Roman Gaul together with the invading Germanic Alemanni people going as far as attacking larger towns and walled cities. By the 5th century, the Bagaudae still remained a threat especially in Gaul and Hispania again wherein this time they would at times ally themselves with invading barbarian tribes while at times the Romans would ally with invading barbarians making them *Foederati* (federate troops) to battle the Bagaudae insurgents as seen in the 5th century when the Western Roman general

Flavius Aetius crushed the Bagaudae in Armorica (Brittany) with the help of his barbarian allies.

Now as the Bagaudae were basically armed peasant insurgents, they obviously did not have high quality weapons, equipment, and outfits unless they were former legionnaires that would use the weapons and equipment they used when they were in the army. Sometimes, the Bagaudae insurgents would use the weapons and equipment which they stole from Roman soldiers they had slain. In this illustration, this particular Bagaudae insurgent wears a standard dark blue late Roman tunic with embroideries, long trousers, leather boots, and a cloak over his attire; the outfit he wears here thus hints that he is based in a location with a colder climate which could most possibly be Northern Gaul or particularly Armorica where the Bagaudae insurgents were strong. This insurgent here also appears to be wearing a standard late Roman flat cap known as a *Pileus* which were also worn by the *Limitanei* (border guards) in the Late Roman Empire, while for his weapons this insurgent wields a standard late Roman longsword known as a *Spatha* which is seen sheathed.

S-3 Romano-British Soldier, 5th Century



Ever since the Roman invasion of Britain in 43AD under the emperor Claudius I (r. 41-54AD), the island of Britain except for the northern regions (Scotland) was a thriving Roman province with a multi-racial population of Romans, native Celts, and immigrants

from other parts of the Roman Empire. During the Roman occupation of Britain, a new kind of culture had emerged in the island that was a fusion of Roman and native Celtic culture, and during this time the Latin language had spread across Britain while Christianity too had arrived there during the 3rd century, though many natives of Britain despite learning to speak Latin still chose to keep their Celtic culture. This new culture formed was thus known as the Romano-British culture whereas the people who lived in Roman Britain which were Roman citizens were known as the Romano-British.

In the meantime, Roman Britain was also at a dangerous position being an easy target for barbarian raids and invasions whether by the Picts coming from the north or by Saxon, Frankish, or Hibernian (Irish) pirates from the sea that by the 4th century these attacks on Britain became more and more frequent that for the Romans, keeping Britain under their control became a liability. Roman Britain too was apparently a frequent staging ground for Roman military rebellions and usurpers with the notable ones being that of Magnus Maximus in 383 and Constantine III in 407 wherein both declared rebellion with their troops in Britain and from there sailed into Gaul invading Roman territory. Following the departure of Constantine III and his legions from Britain, the Romano-British without much military protection anymore were left to fend for themselves against the increasing Saxon raids from the east and from the Picts in the north. True enough in 410, the Western Roman emperor Honorius (r. 395-423) ordered all Roman troops in Britain to pull out to defend Italy and other parts of the Western Roman Empire, and thus from here on Roman rule in Britain had ended. Most of what happened now after the Roman legions withdrew from Britain remains mostly shrouded in mystery, thus it was most likely during these times when legendary figures such as King Arthur ruled. Although nothing much about Britain is recorded from when the Romans withdrew in 410 to when St. Augustine came to Christianize the island in 597, the Romano-British culture still remained wherein Latin was still spoken among some people and the Christian faith still practiced among some people as well, although during this time the island had been invaded by the Saxons who gradually began to occupy most of it over the course of decades, though a number of Romano-British people would still resist against the Saxon expansion in Britain.

This illustration here shows a Romano-British soldier from Britain during the 5th century after the Roman departure, and being Romano-British, his attire shows a mix of late Roman and local Celtic elements. The kind of helmet he wears known as a “ridge-helmet”, his scaled armor, *Spatha* longsword and its sheath, the tunic beneath his armor, and his oval shield with the *Chi-rho* or initials of Christ in Greek are the Roman elements he wears whereas his plaid pattern trousers and heavy blue wool cloak are the local Briton elements in his attire. The overall look of this Romano-British soldier was based on various illustrations found online and from outfits of reenactors portraying late Roman troops including the Romano-British.

S-4 Sassanid Cataphract Cavalryman, 4th Century



As the primary rival empire and enemy of the Romans from the 3rd-7th centuries, the Sassanid Persian Empire just like the Romans had a powerful standing army which had the organized structure of the ancient Achaemenid Persian Empire and a cavalry model from their predecessor, the Parthians. The Sassanid standing army was created by Ardashir I (r. 224-241), the first Sassanid ruler or *shah* and founder of the Sassanid Empire, and this military system that he founded would be in use by the Sassanids until their empire fell in the 7th century with the Arab invasion of Persia. Now in the Sassanid army, the cavalry was the most influential element, especially the fully armored Cataphracts known in Persian as the *Savaran* which consisted of highly trained and disciplined Sassanid noblemen.

When in battle, the Sassanid cavalry adopted tactics from their neighbors being the Romans, Arabs, and Turks while at the same time, the Romans in the 3rd century adopted the cavalry tactics as well as having a Cataphract cavalry unit in the army from the Sassanids as back then, the Romans who mostly fought with infantrymen when battling the Sassanid Persians which mostly consisted of cavalry had to adapt to the fighting styles of the Sassanids in order to achieve an even fight with them. In the 4th century, the Sassanid shah Shapur II (r. 309-379) reformed the army by adopting a heavier and more effective cavalry with armor covering their entire bodies thus making them look like moving iron statues.

The illustration here depicts this kind of Sassanid cavalryman from the time of Shapur II wherein the attire and look of the soldier is based on several Sassanid silver

plates which depict images of cavalrymen as well as on the images of Sassanid soldiers seen on reliefs carved into stone within what was once Sassanid territory, most notably the rock relief at Taq-e Bostan in Iran which depicts the Sassanid shah Khosrow II (r. 590-628) riding on his favorite horse Shabdiz. In this illustration, the Sassanid cavalryman is almost entirely covered in a suit of chainmail from his eyes down to his thighs whereas the section of the chainmail protecting his entire face leaving only the eyes exposed is attached to his helmet which here is a standard Sassanid semi-sphere helmet with a plume sticking out of it. In his body, he is seen wearing a chainmail shirt and beneath it a Persian style blue tunic whereas his lower arms are protected by gold gauntlets and as for his legs he wears high-cut ornate leather boots and white trousers. The armor this soldier is wearing also includes a few accessories which includes a gold chain for the chest and a red leather belt studded with gold, which therefore hints he is from the Sassanid nobility as the materials in his armor happen to be expensive. As for his weapons, this soldier has 2 swords one seen in front sheathed which is a Sassanid Persian style sword while the other one is hidden behind him with only the tip of its sheath seen at his right. At the same time, this soldier wields a bow as his other weapon which is also seen sheathed while his right hand holds a quiver for his arrows; the bow and arrows therefore hints that he is also a horse-archer which was a unit the Sassanid army specialized in.

S-5 Eastern Roman Comitatus, 6th Century



During the 6th century, the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire was the only Roman Empire left standing which had a strong professional army consisting of infantry and cavalry, though the 6th century Roman army was still far from what the army of Imperial Rome once was with the legions, cohorts, and alae. Instead, during the 6th century there were 6 classifications of troops which consisted of the guard troops stationed in the capital Constantinople, the *Comitatenses* or the field army which took the place of the Ancient Roman legions, the *Limitanei* which were the lightly equipped border guards of the empire, the *Foederati* or allied barbarian troops fighting for the Romans, foreign allies hired to fight for the empire, and lastly a new military unit known as the *Bucellarii* which were the bodyguard troops of generals.

The soldier in this illustration is supposed to be a 6th century *Comitatus* (plural: *Comitatenses*) legionnaire during the reign of Emperor Justinian I the Great (527-565). By the time of Justinian however, the *Comitatenses* were no longer known by this Latin name but by the Greek name *Stratiotai*, and as regular infantrymen, they were mostly recruited from lands within the empire such as Thrace, Illyria, and the mountains of Isauria in Asia Minor. The *Comitatus* soldier in this illustration was based on several illustrations of 6th century Eastern Roman soldiers and here he is seen wearing the late Roman *Spangenhelm* helmet which has a plume sticking out from above and a piece of mail attached to it behind to further protect the soldier's neck while his armor consists of a chainmail shirt supported by a leather chest harness and a leather belt across the waist. Part of the soldier's armor too are white leather tassels protecting his thighs and upper arms known as *Pteruges* which is part of a padded vest worn beneath the mail armor, while beneath his armor and the vest he wears a red late Roman style tunic and brown trousers, and protecting his lower legs are the Byzantine style greaves known as *Podopsella*. As for his weapons, this soldier is seen with a late Roman longsword or *Spatha* drawn while the style of his oval shield was based on one of the illustrations of late Roman shields from the document known as the *Notitia Dignitatum* (The List of Offices).

S-6 Imperial Excubitor, 6th century



One of the well-known elite bodyguard units in late Roman history, more particularly for the Eastern Romans were the *Excubitors* which were literally the main imperial guard force sworn to protect the emperor and the imperial palace. The name of their unit is Latin for “those out of bed” or simply “sentinels” and from the 5th to 7th centuries they were an active military unit exclusively in charge of guarding the Eastern Roman emperor and the imperial palace while the commander of this unit being the *Comes Excubitorum* was a very powerful position in the empire as he was someone always close to the emperor and true enough some of these people of this position achieved the imperial throne due to having this position as seen with Justin I (r. 518-527) who prior to being emperor was the commander of the Excubitors and so were the emperors Tiberius II Constantine (r. 578-582) and Maurice (r. 582-602) who prior to being emperors held this position too. Although at times, the commander of the Excubitors was always a relative of the emperor as a way to ensure the full loyalty of the Excubitors.

The elite bodyguard unit of the Excubitors were founded in 460 by the Eastern Roman emperor Leo I the Thracian (r. 457-474) wherein the first recruits were the warlike Isaurians from the mountains of Southern Asia Minor while Leo’s purpose to recruit them was to balance out the mostly Germanic elements in the Eastern Roman army. Originally, the entire force of the Excubitors consisted of just about 300 men wherein in the early years almost all recruits were Isaurians, but over the decades they were of different ethnicities from within the empire, though they would only be stationed within Constantinople and not anywhere else. The Excubitors ended up replacing the old imperial

guard unit known as the *Scholae Palatinae*- which was founded in the 4th century- as the imperial bodyguard force that would even join the emperor in battle as infantry troops if needed while the old Palatini force was demoted as ceremonial troops used for parades. True enough, the Excubitors although being a palace guard force went to battle as the unit protecting the emperor as seen in the campaign of Emperor Maurice against the Avars in Thrace in 598 and in the campaigns of Emperor Heraclius (r. 610-641) against the Sassanid Persians from 622-628.

By the end of the 7th century, the Excubitors just like the Palatini before them also became demoted to parade troops, though in 760 under the emperor Constantine V (r. 741-775), the Excubitors returned as fighting troops and no longer as palace guards but were this time integrated into the new elite imperial army known as the *Tagmata* which Constantine V had founded while a new unit known as the *Vigla* replaced the Excubitors as the imperial bodyguard force. Although part of the elite *Tagmata* force, the Excubitors still did not lose their significance as in fact one emperor being Michael II the Amorian (r. 820-829) prior to becoming emperor was the commander of the Excubitors under Emperor Leo V the Armenian (r. 813-820) while the Excubitors were present too in numerous battles such as the Battle of Pliska in 811, Battle of Boulgarophygon in 896, and the Battle of Anchialos in 917 in which all saw Eastern Roman defeats to the Bulgarians. The last mention of the Excubitors fighting in battle was at the Battle of Dyrrhachion in 1081 where the Eastern Romans were defeated by the Normans, and after that the Excubitors are not mentioned anymore.

Now, this illustration depicts an Eastern Roman imperial Excubitor most likely from the 6th century as this illustration is based on existing illustrations of Excubitor palace guards, and almost all details in this illustration were based off on the existing modern recreated illustrations of an imperial Excubitor as true enough there is no existing image from the Byzantine era depicting an Excubitor in full armor. As a palace guard force, the Excubitors most likely wore an ornate looking uniform with a lot of fancy details, thus this one seen here appears to wear an expensive purple tunic beneath his armor as a way to indicate that he is in charge of guarding the emperor and the palace. This Excubitor's helmet meanwhile appears to be of the classic "Attic" style helmet which is open-faced and above it is a horse-hair crest which was always seen in the helmets of Roman imperial bodyguards like the Praetorian Guard of Ancient Rome. Although it is not clear on what kind of armor the Excubitors wore, for this illustration, he wears gold scale armor as a way to indicate its prestigious position guarding the palace and its riches whereas it is supported at the chest area by a harness while leather tassels (*Pteruges*) are attached to it both at the upper arms and thighs. The illustration this one was based on shows that the tassels on his thighs have 4 layers with different colors being blue, red, yellow, and white, and true enough this colorful combination as well as his bright blue trousers is to show off his position of guarding the emperor. When it comes to what weapons the Excubitors wielded, historical records do not really mention anything much except that they held maces and as they were bodyguards intended to guard the palace, they were definitely infantry troops. The Excubitor in this illustration appears to be an infantryman, and although he doesn't hold a mace, he holds an axe which appears to look like a ceremonial one- which is what the Excubitor in the illustration this was based on was holding- while

his secondary weapon is a dagger which is seen sheathed. As for his shield, the one in this illustration appears to be ceremonial too which shows the initials of Christ in Greek or the *Chi-rho* painted on it and jewels encrusted on the shield's borders, and this particular shield seen here was based on the ceremonial shields seen in the mosaic of Emperor Justinian I the Great (r. 527-565) from the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy held by what appears to be a palace guard, although it is not clear if the guard holding this kind of shield in the mosaic is an Excubitor or not.

S-7 Alaric I, King of the Visigoths (395-410)



Alaric is well-known in history as the Visigoth king with an intense anger towards Rome that he sacked Rome in 410 as well as being the first King of the Visigoths, the people that would later invade Hispania and establish their kingdom there. Alaric- whose name in Germanic means "ruler of all"- was born in around 370 in Peuce Island at the mouth of the Danube River into the Black Sea in today's Romania to a noble Thervingi Gothic family which under Alaric later on would be the Balt Dynasty, although little is known about his family except that they were barbarians that migrated into Roman territory and that Alaric was an Arian Christian. He began his career as a soldier under the Goth leader Gainas who was leading Gothic *Foederati* (allied) troops for the Romans, although later on Alaric would lead bands of his own barbarian troops to battle Roman troops which was how he came across Roman imperial authorities. In 391, Alaric and his bands of barbarians terrorized Roman Thrace but were defeated by the half-Roman half-Vandal general Flavius Stilicho,

and although defeated Alaric and his men were recruited into the Roman army to fight as *Foederati* which were basically defeated barbarians forced to fight for the Romans.

By this time, the Eastern Roman emperor Theodosius I (r. 379-395) was engaged in a civil war against the Western Roman usurper Eugenius (r. 392-394) who was supported by the Frankish-Roman general Arbogast who here betrayed Theodosius I. Needing the support of barbarians to ensure a victory against Eugenius and Arbogast, Theodosius agreed to recruit Alaric and his barbarians to his army, and thus with Alaric joining forces with Theodosius and Stilicho, the army of Eugenius and Arbogast were defeated at the Battle of the Frigidus (in today's Slovenia) in 394 whereas Eugenius was executed and Arbogast after being defeated killed himself. Alaric in the meantime survived the battle but lost 10,000 of his men there as they were ordered to be in the frontlines charging straight at the enemy, and despite securing a victory for Theodosius, Alaric received very little recognition from the emperor as this was possibly due to Theodosius seeing Alaric as a troublemaker but also because Alaric and his Goths were still not Roman citizens but just allies. True enough, ever since Theodosius I settled a treaty with the invading Goths in 382, the Goths were only to be settled within Roman territory and mostly at the border areas as they were only to be allies and not citizens.

In January of 395, Theodosius I had died after ruling the entire Roman Empire alone for just 4 months and thus he divided the empire between east and west wherein his older son Arcadius took the east and younger son Honorius took the west wherein both were under the guardianship of the general Stilicho. It was at this point too when the disgruntled Alaric began his rebellion against Rome for how he and his men were simply dismissed after the Battle of Frigidus and for being denied the rank of *Magister Militum* (Master of Soldiers) which was Stilicho's rank that Alaric so wanted. It was here too in 395 following Theodosius I's death when Alaric went rogue declaring himself King of the Visigoths, and seeing the weakness and division in the Roman Empire due to Theodosius' death, Alaric took advantage of this and began a pillaging spree in the Balkans and Greece which was under the Eastern Roman Empire wherein Alaric and his Goths would go as far south as pillaging Athens. In response to Alaric having gone rogue by pillaging Greece, Stilicho who here was in charge of the Western Roman Empire sent an army to Greece to deal with Alaric which however was not successful as the Western emperor Honorius forced Stilicho to send some of his troops back to Italy while those that remained under the command of Alaric's former commander Gainas went to Constantinople where he murdered the Eastern emperor Arcadius' guardian Rufinus and became the new *Magister Militum* of Thrace while the man behind Arcadius' rule now was the eunuch Eutropius. In 397, Eutropius declared his rival in the west Stilicho as a public enemy and as part of doing this, he gave Alaric what he wanted by making him *Magister Militum* of Illyria and with this new rank, Alaric obtained large amounts of gold and followers.

With Eutropius however falling from power in 399 by being executed, Alaric had lost his source of power and therefore went rogue again, thus in 402 he suddenly marched west and invaded Italy. It was here when the Western Roman capital moved from Milan to Ravenna which was presumed to be safer in case of attacks such as this one by Alaric, therefore the Western emperor Honorius fled to Ravenna while Stilicho was left to defend

Italy from Alaric. Here, Stilicho won two major victories against Alaric's forces, first at Pollentia and then at Verona, and being defeated Alaric fled Italy. After 402, Alaric had gone into hiding, although at this point he would still continue pillaging the Balkans but not as seriously. It would only be in 407 when Alaric would return in full force this time planning another invasion of Italy from his base at Noricum (today's Austria) where he would demand a tribute of 4,000 pounds of gold from the Western Roman Senate to buy off his full-scale invasion. The Senate though refused to pay off Alaric, but at the end to avoid this invasion, Stilicho agreed to it and paid off the 4,000 pounds of gold which led to Stilicho losing support from the Senate who now believed he was conspiring with Alaric not once but twice, as first in 402 he allowed Alaric to escape Italy and here he now agreed to pay off Alaric. In the meantime in 408, the Eastern Roman emperor Arcadius had died whereas in the Western empire, Honorius now under the influence of his advisor Olympius now viewed Stilicho as a traitor and thus ordered Stilicho's execution. With Stilicho dead, Honorius was now fully under Olympius' influence and thus Olympius had Honorius declare Alaric as a public enemy once again while also stripping him off his title of Magister Militum and following this, Olympius had the families of the barbarian Foederati troops in Italy massacred, which led to the angry Foederati troops travelling north to Noricum and joining forces with Alaric in an act of revenge against Rome.

With 10,000 Foederati having defected to Alaric, they now headed south to Italy to avenge their slain family members whereas Alaric too this time had a more personal reason to invade Italy as now he wanted to get back at the emperor for making him a public enemy. In 408, Alaric thus invaded Italy again this time attacking the cities of Aquileia, Concordia, Altinum, Cremona, Bononia, Ariminum, and Picenum, and rather than choosing to attack the Western Roman capital Ravenna, Alaric instead chose to head south and attack Rome itself. Soon enough, Alaric and his forces laid siege to Rome surrounding all 13 gates and blockading the Tiber River in order to starve out the population to the point of surrendering. Alaric when blockading Rome was given an offer by the Senate for peace which Alaric refused, and after being blockaded within Rome for some time, the starving citizens finally agreed to pay a large ransom to Alaric while also agreeing to Alaric's demands in releasing 40,000 Goth slaves within Rome, thus when these demands of Alaric were met, his siege of Rome ended though with these slaves released they joined Alaric therefore increasing the size of his army. Although Alaric lifted his siege of Rome, he would only leave the city alone once he was once again granted the title of Magister Militum by Honorius which Honorius refused therefore leading Alaric to once again lay siege to Rome in 409.

This time, in order to get the title he wanted, Alaric proclaimed the Western Roman senator Priscus Attalus as his puppet emperor to rival Honorius, though Honorius despite now having a rival emperor still did not give into Alaric's demands. Alaric together with Attalus then marched to Ravenna this time to demand Honorius to step down, but with Honorius still not agreeing to said terms and more so not willing to negotiate, Alaric now seeing no more use for Attalus as his puppet emperor deposed him. With negotiations with Honorius failing, Alaric marched to Rome one more time and this time with the intention to sack it out of his own anger towards Rome, and this time he got his wish when Goth slaves within the city possibly opened the gates for him. On August 24 of 410, Rome was sacked

for the first time in over 800 years- the last time was in 390 BC by the Gauls- and here the pillaging of Rome by Alaric's men lasted for 3 days. Here, the homes of the wealthy were plundered, buildings were burned, and Pagan temples destroyed, though surprisingly Alaric spared the churches, but at the end great amounts of loot were taken and many civilians were slain. Although the city of Rome survived the sack, it would never recover again, therefore Pagan authors say that the sack of Rome was the result of the empire becoming Christian while others viewed it that Rome was something of the past whereas its sacking had to happen to put an end to it as the new center for the empire was now Constantinople.

As for Honorius, when hearing of Rome having fallen to Alaric, he feared the worst misinterpreting it as his favorite pet chicken named Rome having been killed, however when finding out that it was the city that had fallen and not his chicken, he was relieved. Meanwhile, when Alaric sacked Rome he took with him Honorius' half-sister Galla Placidia who would later be married to Alaric's second-in-command and brother-in-law Athaulf, and once he sacked Rome Alaric proceeded south to ravaging Southern Italy. Here, Alaric intended to capture Sicily for his Goths and from there head to North Africa and capture it, however this never happened as before reaching Sicily Alaric fell ill and died later in 410 at the age of 40. Although Alaric had died, the Goths would continue to be ruled under the dynasty he founded being the Balt Dynasty whereas Alaric would be succeeded by his brother-in-law Athaulf who would then eventually lead the Goths into Gaul and establish the Visigoth Kingdom there. The dynasty founded by Alaric would rule the Visigoth Kingdom of Gaul and later Hispania until 531 while the Visigoths would rule Hispania until it fell to the Arabs in 711.

This illustration of Alaric was based on several portraits of him made centuries after his time which depicts him wearing a basic style crown on his head, scale armor, and a cloak. In this illustration, Alaric has a basic jeweled crown or *Diadem* on his head to indicate he is the King of the Visigoths while he too has blond hair to highlight his Germanic heritage. Alaric in this illustration wears Gothic style scale armor and over it a red cloak, while beneath his armor is a Gothic style green tunic. For his weapons, Alaric here is seen with a Gothic style sword sheathed and an axe next to it while a large leather belt holds these weapons up. As for his boots, he wears barbarian style fur and leather boots held together by leather straps.

S-8 Equites Cataphract, 4th Century



The Cataphracts which in Latin were known as the *Equites Cataphractarii* were the most heavily armored units in the Roman cavalry, first in the Imperial Roman army and then in the late Roman army. The term “Cataphract” derives from the Greek word *Kataphraktos* meaning “completely covered”, and the Romans were recorded to have been using this kind of heavy cavalry force since the reign of Emperor Hadrian (117-138), though it is also suggested that these heavy cavalry units have been in use even as far back as 67AD as recorded by the Jewish-Roman historian Josephus who mentions that they have been used in battle then. Although the Romans had been using cataphract cavalry troops from as early as the 1st century AD, the first time the cataphracts were recorded as an organized force known as the *Equites Cataphractarii* was during the 2nd century as part of the auxiliary cavalry regiment stationed at the province of Moesia Inferior along the Danube frontier which therefore implies that the cataphracts were developed to be used against the Sarmatian threat beyond the Danube as the Sarmatians too fought primarily using heavy cavalry.

Other than continuously battling the Sarmatian horsemen, the Romans during the 2nd century were primarily at war with the Parthian Empire in the east which like the Sarmatians also primarily used heavy cavalry when fighting wars, thus the Romans in order to evenly match the Parthians had to develop a cavalry force similar to the Parthians, hence the cataphracts were born. By the 3rd century, most of Rome’s enemies mainly fought using cavalry such as the Sassanid Persians which replaced the Parthians, the Sarmatians again, and then the Goths who appeared invading the Danube border from the north. Due

to their enemies mainly using cavalry troops, the Romans in the 3rd century adapted to the situation by increasing the cavalry troops in their army to the point that their once primarily infantry army became one heavily based on cavalry, and this included the use of the heavy armored cataphracts. Before the turn of the 4th century however, the cataphract regiments were apparently few in number, though in the late Roman army from the 4th century onwards they became more numerous especially in the eastern provinces as here the army was engaged in constant war with the mostly cavalry army of their enemy, the Sassanid Empire.

In the late Roman army, there were 19 recorded units of Cataphracts wherein one belonged to the elite *Schola* regiment of the imperial horse guards, one being a regiment of horse archers, and the rest being part of the field armies. When in battle, the cataphracts specialized in shock action making them be like an ancient version of tanks, though since the armor for both the horse and soldier were heavy, they would easily tire out in battle making them vulnerable to counter-attacks while the heavy armor especially for the horse could overheat him and the horse at hot climates. In battle, the cataphracts usually fought in close formations as if their said formations broke, individual cataphracts were vulnerable to be attacked by lighter-armed troops. As for their appearance and equipment, Roman cataphracts were modelled after the Parthian cataphracts wherein both horse and rider were almost completely armored either wearing chainmail or scale armor while their main weapon was a long lance known as a *Contus* and their secondary weapon the late Roman longsword or *Spatha*.

The mounted cataphract in this illustration is supposed to be a 4th century late Roman one with his appearance and that of his horse's based on the description of how cataphracts of this age looked like by the soldier historian Ammianus Marcellinus (330-400) and the emperor Julian (r. 361-363). The cataphract here is supposedly one that fought against the Sassanids during Emperor Julian's campaign against them in 363 which ended with a Roman defeat with Julian himself slain in battle. The cataphract here wears a full set of mail armor (*Lorica Hamata*) from head to toe only leaving his face exposed while his helmet has a purple crest which indicates he is an officer which is shown by his purple cloak as well. Meanwhile, the soldier's armor here is studded with metal plates in his torso while his arms and legs have extra protection in the form of overlapping laminar armor known to the Romans as *Manica*. Although Roman cataphracts wielded a long lance as their primary weapon, this one here instead of holding a lance holds the late Roman style dragon banner with a metal head known as a *Draco* which was a military standard used by the late Roman cavalry whereas the bearer of it was known as a *Draconarius* which the soldier in this illustration is. As for his weapons, this cataphract soldier is seen with his *Spatha* longsword sheathed while over it is a plain red oval shield. As the cataphracts were also described to have fully armored horses, this one here is riding on one wherein the horse is almost entirely covered in scale armor (*Lorica Squamata*).

S-9 Ambrose of Milan (339-397)



The 4th century Bishop of Milan Ambrose, also known as St. Ambrose is a well-known Church father and theologian who was famous for not only being a Church leader and spiritual figure but a political leader as well. On the other hand, he is also famous for his literary works which he wrote in Latin making him one of the few Church fathers who wrote in it, the musical hymns he composed, and for being the teacher of the more famous Church father and theologian St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430). Ambrose now was born as Aurelius Ambrosius in Trier which was part of Roman Gaul in 339 to a Christian Roman family as the youngest of 3 children- he had an older brother Satyrus and an older sister Marcellina- whereas his father was the Praetorian Prefect of Gaul. At some point in Ambrose's early life, his father had died and so he with his mother and siblings fled from Trier to Rome where Ambrose would be educated in literature, law, and rhetoric. When grown up, Ambrose followed in his father's footsteps and entered public service wherein in 372, he became the governor of the province of Aemilia-Liguria in which its capital was Milan where Ambrose would be based in from here on.

In 374, the Arian Christian bishop of Milan Auxentius had died which led to a heated debate in the church over his succession which was so heated that the governor Ambrose had to intervene by entering the church, and once he was in the church the crowds suddenly proclaimed him as the new Bishop of Milan. Despite knowing very little about Christian theology although already a baptized Nicene Christian, Ambrose became Bishop of Milan once his position was confirmed by the Western Roman emperor Gratian (r. 367-383). Now as bishop, Ambrose began adopting an ascetic lifestyle wherein he gave his

money away to the poor and donated his land, although when becoming bishop he suddenly became a hardline Nicene Christian strongly opposing the heretical branch of Arian Christianity, thus most of Ambrose's time as bishop would see him in a struggle against Arianism which was still a major religion in both Western and Eastern Roman Empires all while the ancient Pagan faith still remained, and as bishop Ambrose also saw it as his duty to crack down on the last vestiges of the old Pagan faith. Being based in Milan which was the seat of the imperial court in the west, Ambrose had often been in interactions with the emperors first being Gratian and following the latter's death in 383 with Gratian's half-brother Valentinian II (r. 375-392), and at times with the Eastern Roman emperor Theodosius I (r. 379-395). During the reign of Gratian, it was recorded that Gratian and Ambrose were close to each other whereas Ambrose even served as Gratian's spiritual advisor, and it was true enough Ambrose who advised Gratian in 382 to remove the Altar of Victory as it was a Pagan symbol.

Following Gratian's death in 383 during the civil war against the usurper Magnus Maximus, Ambrose would now advise Gratian's half-brother and successor as Western Roman emperor Valentinian II, though Ambrose would always be at odds with Valentinian's mother Justina who was an Arian Christian. One instance of Ambrose's influence over Valentinian II and his strong anti-Arian policy was seen when he turned down the demands of the Arians in Milan to be given two churches in the city in which Ambrose advised Valentinian to refuse the demands. The Arians however still persisted in demanding that a church be given to them to which Ambrose still refused to the point of barricading himself in Milan's cathedral as the *prefect* (mayor) of the city was already bound to arrest him for refusing to give the church to the Arians, though at the end Ambrose due to his popularity was not arrested. In Valentinian II's reign, he sent Ambrose to dissuade the usurper Magnus Maximus which he was successful at least in delaying Maximus' invasion of Italy in 384, although the second time Ambrose tried to dissuade Maximus it was unsuccessful and Maximus invaded Italy anyway in 386 even taking Milan, although Ambrose still kept his position as bishop despite the emperor Valentinian II fleeing to Constantinople. The usurper Magnus Maximus however was later defeated and executed by the Eastern emperor Theodosius in 388 and following this, Theodosius would remain in Italy until 391 to reestablish Valentinian II's control there wherein he placed the Roman-Frankish general Arbogast to watch over Valentinian II.

During this time, Ambrose had been occupied with writing his theological works and hymns and during this whole time, Augustine of Hippo had been learning under him whereas Ambrose here helped convert him to Nicene Christianity. Meanwhile, it was during Theodosius I's time in Italy in 390 when he ordered the Massacre of Thessaloniki by sending his Goth *Foederati* (barbarian allied troops) to quell an uprising in Thessaloniki that followed the people's murder of the barbarian commander there. Although Theodosius changed his mind in terms of his orders, it was too late as these said troops had already massacred the people of Thessaloniki who were behind the murder of the barbarian commander. When hearing of the massacre Theodosius "ordered", Ambrose was outraged at this that he forced Theodosius himself to do a public act of penance wherein Ambrose banned Theodosius from setting foot inside a church for months to make up for his sins, to which Theodosius complied. Eventually, Theodosius was allowed into communion once

again, although to fully make up for his sins Ambrose further advised Theodosius to be more extremist on cracking down on the old Pagan faith, and true enough at this point Theodosius' anti-Pagan policies were more extremist that he put an end to the Olympic games, closed down Pagan temples, banned centuries old Pagan traditions, and declared that Pagan holidays be turned into work days.

In 392, the Western emperor Valentinian II was dead allegedly by suicide due to the betrayal of his barbarian general Arbogast while Arbogast here proclaimed a man named Eugenius as his new puppet emperor, and together despite both Arbogast and Eugenius being Nicene Christians, they supported the cause of the Pagans that were persecuted by Theodosius. For Theodosius, he immediately acted on this by marching west again to Italy to deal with Arbogast and Eugenius, and this time he won another civil war defeating them at the Battle of Frigidus in 394 in today's Slovenia all while Ambrose at this time had left Milan for Bologna and then to Florence for safety reasons. By the time Arbogast and Eugenius were dealt with- wherein the former committed suicide and the latter was executed- Ambrose had returned to Milan and so did the victorious Theodosius I who now ruled the entire Roman Empire alone, for at least 4 months as in January of 395 he died. At Theodosius' death, the Roman Empire was to be permanently split between east and west among his sons Arcadius who now ruled the east and Honorius ruling the west. At Theodosius' funeral which was held in Milan, Ambrose gave the eulogy, though just 2 years later (397) Ambrose himself would die at the age of 58. Today, Ambrose's legacy still lives on through the hymns he created which are still used in Christian services while he too is credited for developing an antiphonal chant known as the "Ambrosian Chant" named after him. In Western Christianity, he is identified as one of the 4 traditional Doctors of the Church together with Pope Gregory the Great, Augustine of Hippo, and Jerome. Ambrose too is considered a saint in the Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodoxy, Anglican Church, and various Lutheran denominations while he too happens to be the patron saint of Milan and of beekeepers; his feast day is on December 7, which was the date of his consecration as Bishop of Milan in 374.

The illustration of Ambrose of Milan seen here was based on a mosaic depicting him from the Basilica of Sant' Ambrogio in Milan, Italy. Here, Ambrose is seen in the attire worn by late Roman bishops which consists of a floor-length white tunic with black trimmings, over that a simple brown liturgical vestment in the form of a mantle known as a *Chasuble* with a cross embroidered at the chest area, and over that another liturgical vestment known as an *Omophorion* which is in the form of a white scarf with black crosses embroidered into it. On his left, Ambrose here appears to be holding what seems to be a Bible or a Gospel book wherein its cover is studded with jewels while the shoes he wears here is the kind of sandals worn by religious leaders. Just as the mosaic at this said church in Milan depicts him, Ambrose here is seen to not be wearing any headgear like a bishop's miter which many paintings from later centuries depict him wearing.

S-10 Zeno, Eastern Roman emperor (474-475/ 476-491)



Very few Roman emperors have witnessed such pivotal turning points in world history the way the emperor Zeno did in the 5th century as it was during Zeno's reign when the Roman Empire had ceased to exist in the west leaving the Eastern Roman Empire based in Constantinople as the only Roman Empire, hence it was here in Zeno's reign where it could be said that the "Byzantine Empire" began at least as the half of Rome that survived. Now, Zeno himself was in fact originally someone seen as an outsider by the Greek speaking Roman citizens of Constantinople and his birthname was not even Zeno but *Tarasikodissa*. He was born in around 425 in the mountainous region of Isauria in Southern Asia Minor as the son of an Isaurian chieftain, and the Isaurians which were the people he belonged to were rough and warlike mountain people seen by the Greek and Latin speaking city people of the empire as "internal barbarians" despite these Isaurians having been Roman citizens for centuries and Orthodox (Chalcedonian) Christians, basically because the Isaurians neither spoke Greek nor Latin and lived in tribal societies. *Tarasikodissa* and his Isaurian warriors first came into the orbit of the imperial court in Constantinople in around 465 when he at this point happened to be a tribal leader of the Isaurians and here, he was recruited by the emperor Leo I the Thracian (r. 457-474) into the imperial army.

At this point in history, the armies of both Eastern and Western Roman Empires were heavily dominated with Germanic barbarian elements wherein its senior commanders were of Germanic barbarian origins and so were a lot of troops while some of these Germanic commanders even held influence over the emperor's rule such as the *Magister Militum* (Master of Soldier) Aspar in the Eastern Roman Empire who was the

power behind Leo I. As emperor, Leo I came to realize that he did not want to be under the control of a barbarian general, thus he came up with a plan to slowly eliminate Aspar which began with Leo recruiting the Isaurians into a military unit that would be fully loyal to him as Leo believed the tough Isaurian mountain men to be fiercely loyal. Leo I then used these Isaurian recruits by creating a new military unit known as the *Excubitores* which were the imperial bodyguard force while their leader Tarasikodissa immediately became a close ally of Leo, and to appear more acceptable to the mostly Greek speaking people of Constantinople, the chieftain Tarasikodissa changed his name to the Greek "Zeno" which would be his official name from here onwards. To fully seal an alliance, Leo married off his 17-year-old daughter Ariadne to the 42-year-old Zeno in either 466 or 467, and in 467 Zeno and Ariadne's son Leo named after his grandfather was born. Zeno then rapidly rose up the ranks in the imperial army eventually earning the position of Magister Militum which Aspar held and as Magister Militum, Zeno campaigned across the empire against enemy raids and had been assigned to different parts of the Eastern Roman Empire including Thrace and Antioch.

Back in Constantinople, Leo I finally got rid of Aspar and his influence in 471 when Leo and his loyal Isaurian bodyguards hatched a plot which resulted in the murder of Aspar thus eliminating the Germanic influence in the army. Zeno then took Aspar's place as the most senior Magister Militum being the *Magister Militum Praesentalis* while Leo I on the other hand did not have much longer to live and thus in 474 Leo I died at the age of 73 and was succeeded by his grandson being Zeno's and Ariadne's 7-year-old son Leo II which Zeno was not all happy about as he believed he was destined to succeed his father-in-law. As a child though, Leo II could not fulfill his duties as emperor and so just a month after he was crowned, his father Zeno had to be crowned as co-emperor by the request of Ariadne and her mother Verina, and thus it would be really Zeno that would be in charge of running the empire. Before the year 474 ended, Leo II died possibly from an outbreak of a local plague in Constantinople and back then with the child mortality rate very high, it was very likely for young children like Leo II to die and it did not matter if the child was a lowborn peasant or even the emperor himself. Zeno then succeeded his son as emperor which makes him have the rare case of being a father succeeding his son as a ruler, and now as the sole emperor, Zeno's first act was to conclude peace with the Eastern Romans' long-time enemy which was the Vandal Kingdom of North Africa, but despite his success here, the new emperor Zeno was not seen as acceptable again by the people of Constantinople especially the elite as they could not accept a provincial like him who they saw as a "barbarian" as their emperor especially since the Isaurian troops under Zeno had been behaving so badly by getting drunk in public and going as far as looting homes in Constantinople and randomly beating people up in the streets.

After just 2 months in power, Zeno's mother-in-law Verina and her brother Basiliscus hatched a plot to overthrow Zeno in early 475, though Zeno had already been informed of the plot and so he fled Constantinople in the middle of the night with his wife Ariadne, a few loyal Isaurians, and the imperial treasury for his homeland of Isauria. With Zeno gone, Basiliscus usurped the throne despite Verina wanting her lover Patricius as emperor, but instead Patricius was executed and Basiliscus proved to be a very incompetent ruler who became even more unpopular than Zeno. In his short reign (475-

476), Basiliscus permitted Constantinople's people to massacre the Isaurians out of revenge, raised the taxes to such high levels as Zeno fled with the treasury, supported the Monophysite sect of Christianity which was seen as heretical, and when a fire broke out Basiliscus did not seem to care about it. The fire in Constantinople was the last straw for the people and thus Basiliscus drastically lost his popularity whereas the people thought of restoring Zeno all while the Isaurian general Illus who Basiliscus sent to hunt down Zeno defected to his fellow Isaurian Zeno and together they marched back to Constantinople where the people opened the gates for Zeno. Basiliscus was then banished together with his wife and son to Cappadocia where they all died possibly due to starvation in 477 as they were locked up in a cistern but as Zeno returned to power in 476 he received the shocking news of the fall of the Western Roman Empire wherein the last Western Roman emperor the teenage Romulus Augustus (r. 475-476) surrendered to his barbarian general Odoacer who refused to rule as emperor but simply as "King of Italy".

Odoacer then sent Romulus' crown to Zeno in Constantinople as a symbol that there is no more Western Roman emperor and that Zeno is the only Roman emperor wherein Odoacer was a vassal of his. Zeno thus recognized the dissolution of the Western Roman Empire but at the same time, the former Western Roman emperor Julius Nepos (r. 474-475) who was exiled in Dalmatia also requested Zeno for Eastern Roman troops to take back Italy from Odoacer and restore the Western empire but Zeno refused and just recognized Nepos as emperor in name only as well as his small holdings in Dalmatia. Nepos now never achieved his goal to take back Italy as in 480 he was assassinated by his own troops and with no more authority in charge of Dalmatia, Odoacer annexed it to his Kingdom of Italy all while Zeno although back in power was dealing with opposition against him left and right again because many did not accept Zeno as their emperor for his Isaurian origins while many were also discontent with the government especially due to the lack of funds the empire was having at this time and the fall of Western Rome which was not prevented by the Eastern Roman emperor. One challenger to Zeno's rule was the Ostrogoth general Theodoric Strabo in Thrace who went rogue following the murder of his master Aspar in 471, and Strabo on the other hand even supported the late Basiliscus' revolt back in 475 while in 479 Strabo supported the rebellion of the aristocrat Marcian- who was also an in-law of Zeno being the husband of Ariadne's sister Leontia- against Zeno. Marcian's revolt however failed right before Zeno was almost overthrown as the Isaurian garrison led by Illus came right in time to defeat Marcian thus sending Marcian and his brothers into exile. In the meantime, Theodoric Strabo was still up in arms against Zeno and so Zeno fought back by making an alliance with the Ostrogoth king in the Balkans Theodoric the Amal and with a new Nomadic people raiding the Balkans which were the Bulgars. The Bulgars Zeno hired however were defeated by Strabo's rebel army while Theodoric the Amal used Zeno's offer for alliance to pillage Thrace. Strabo's rebellion though ended in 481 when Strabo who intended to march to Constantinople accidentally fell off his horse into a spear and died while Strabo's men joined forces with Theodoric the Amal, and Zeno not wanting another conflict chose to simply keep the Amal as an ally even giving him the title of "Magister Militum" and in 484 the title of "honorary consul".

Another enemy Zeno had to deal with was his own mother-in-law Verina who he had imprisoned at a fortress in the mountains of Isauria under the watch of Zeno's trusted

Isaurian general Illus, though Zeno's wife Ariadne pleaded to have her mother released but the request was refused by Illus and in return both Ariadne and Verina hired an assassin to kill Illus. The attempt on Illus' life however failed and only succeeded in wounding Illus by cutting off an ear, and now blaming Zeno for plotting his murder, Illus declared rebellion against Zeno in 484 holding himself up in the same Isaurian fortress Verina was imprisoned in, and it was also here in 484 when Verina died in prison. Knowing that Zeno was not seen as legitimate because of his Isaurian origins, the Isaurian Illus did not proclaim himself emperor but instead made a general named Leontius as his puppet emperor while Zeno sent an army to attack Illus which at first failed. Zeno tried again in 485 to crush Illus' rebellion, this time sending his new ally the Ostrogoth king Theodoric the Amal to Asia Minor, and at the end this attempt partially succeeded wherein Zeno's brother Longinus who was held hostage by Illus was released and returned to Constantinople wherein he would begin a military career.

In the meantime, Zeno had to deal with other issues such as the first schism with the pope in Rome which began in 482 due to a decree Zeno issued known as the *Henotikon* which allowed toleration towards the Monophysite heretics which was an act that angered the pope while in 484 Zeno brutally crushed a rebellion of the Samaritan Jews in Palestine who revolted against Zeno's policy of forcing them to convert to Christianity. Meanwhile, Zeno too began seeing the King of Italy Odoacer as a threat especially due to Odoacer first being in correspondence with the rebel Illus and annexing Dalmatia to his kingdom which Zeno saw as an act to stage an invasion of the Eastern Roman Balkans while Zeno too started seeing Theodoric the Amal as a potential danger, and true enough the Amal made an attempt to capture Constantinople in 486 going as far as cutting off the city's water supply. To settle off the problem of Theodoric the Amal, Zeno concluded an agreement with him which was for the Amal to invade Odoacer's Italy which Zeno saw as a solution to get rid of the two barbarians Theodoric and Odoacer, and so in 488 the Amal headed for Italy wherein he would successfully seize it from Odoacer in 493 when Theodoric himself killed Odoacer at a dinner in the palace at Ravenna whereas the victorious Theodoric became "Theodoric the Great".

Back in the empire, Zeno finally managed to destroy Illus' revolt in 488 wherein Zeno's loyalist forces managed to capture both Illus and Leontius and thus both rebel leaders were beheaded. Now that the rebellion of Illus was over, Zeno would finally be able to rule in peace and with no more major conflicts, Zeno in 488 as well recognized the independence of the Church of Cyprus from the Church of Antioch all while also maintaining peaceful relations with the Sassanid Empire in the east. Zeno then died in 491 at the age of 66 either due to epilepsy or dysentery, and although he was still not very popular at the time he died, Zeno at least died bringing stability to the Eastern Roman Empire after so many years of chaos and had died while still in power without being overthrown again. According to legend, Zeno was buried alive by the people when seeing him have an epileptic seizure, though this is highly unlikely and this was written in the 12th century which however shows that even so many centuries after his time, Zeno was still seen as an unpopular emperor. Following Zeno's death, his wife Ariadne chose his successor by marrying the finance minister Anastasius as after their son Leo II's death in 474 the couple had no children afterwards. It would turn out that the new emperor

Anastasius I was the right choice for Ariadne to marry as he was a highly competent financial genius that grew the empire's economy to greater levels all while further restoring stability. Without Zeno's strong rule in stamping out all rebellions against imperial rule and the strategic financial policies of his successor Anastasius I, then perhaps the golden age the Eastern Roman Empire had under Emperor Justinian I the Great (r. 527-565) may not have happened.

This illustration of the emperor Zeno was not really based on any historical sources except for his facial features, hairstyle, and imperial crown or *Diadem* which were based on the profile of Zeno as seen in his coins which depicts him having a long straight nose and a bowl-shaped haircut like how he is seen in this illustration. In this illustration, instead of wearing imperial robes, Zeno is seen wearing a late Roman version of imperial armor which was based on recreated pieces worn by late Roman army reenactors. The armor Zeno wears here consists of a breastplate made of gold scales and leather accessories attached to it which are painted purple to indicate his role as emperor. The tassels (*Pteruges*) as well have some purple linings also to indicate his role as emperor the way his large purple mantle over his armor does which is fastened by an ornate jeweled brooch known as a *Fibula* at his right shoulder. Beneath his armor, Zeno wears a red tunic with gold trimmings, the purple stockings to indicate him as an emperor, and the red shoes which also indicates his position. The red shoes Zeno is seen wearing here was based on the full-body mosaic of the 6th century Emperor Justinian I the Great at the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy which shows Justinian wearing this kind of red shoes wherein only he wears it therefore showing only emperors wore these kinds of shoes. For this illustration, Zeno does not wear imperial robes but imperial armor to show him as a tough warrior emperor. To further depict his ruthlessness and courage as emperor, Zeno holds a sword in which the one here is the late Roman longsword or *Spatha*, and true enough Zeno was a rare exception in his time being an emperor that went to battle due to his reign being frequently challenged by usurpers whereas many emperors before and after him just stayed in the palace.

S-J Theodosius II, Eastern Roman emperor (408-450)



The 5th century emperor Theodosius II is one of the longest reigning Eastern Roman (Byzantine) emperors with a sole reign of 42 years (408-450), though even before that he has already been associated as a co-emperor thus making him be an emperor for literally his entire life. Theodosius was born in 401 in the Eastern Roman capital Constantinople as the son of the Eastern Roman emperor Arcadius (r. 395-408) and his wife the empress Aelia Eudoxia, and at only 9-months-old in 402 Theodosius was proclaimed by his father as his co-*Augustus*, therefore making him be the youngest to bear the imperial title in Roman history. Theodosius was thus named after his grandfather, Arcadius' father Emperor Theodosius I the Great (r. 379-395) who was the last emperor to rule a united Roman Empire. In 404, Theodosius' mother Aelia Eudoxia died while in 408 his father the emperor Arcadius suddenly died, thus at only age 7, Theodosius II succeeded his father as the senior Eastern Roman emperor. Due to his young age, Theodosius II was under the regency of the *Prefect* (mayor) of Constantinople Flavius Anthemius who administered the government at this time and supervised the construction of Constantinople's mighty Theodosian Walls that was named after the young emperor.

Apparently, before his death Arcadius appointed the Sassanid *shah* (ruler) Yazdegerd I (r. 399-420) as Theodosius' guardian, however Yazdegerd never met Theodosius in person, instead Yazdegerd sent a Persian tutor named Antiochus to Constantinople to raise and educate the young Theodosius. By 413, the prefect Anthemius had completed the construction of his masterpiece being the massive triple-layered walls of Constantinople while Theodosius was still a child, though shortly after Anthemius had

disappeared from historical records, therefore beginning 414 Theodosius' older sister Pulcheria stepped in becoming his regent and even being proclaimed as *Augusta* (empress), and throughout his reign she would be the one influencing him. In 420, with the death of the Sassanid shah Yazdegerd I and with Christian persecutions in the Sassanid Empire, the Eastern Romans declared war on the Sassanids which reached an inconclusive end in 422 as the Romans were forced to accept peace as the Huns began invading the empire, therefore the war ended with neither side having any gains. During this time in 421, Theodosius married Aelia Eudocia who was a woman of Athenian Greek origins and in 422 their daughter Licinia Eudoxia was born.

In 423, Theodosius' uncle the Western Roman emperor Honorius (r. 395-423) had died and was succeeded as Western emperor by his secretary Joannes all while Honorius' half-sister Galla Placidia and her young son Valentinian fled to Constantinople to seek aid from Theodosius II to take back the Western Roman throne from Joannes who was seen as a usurper. After some time, Theodosius II finally decided to declare war on Joannes who he did not recognize as Western Roman emperor, and so Theodosius II sent Galla Placidia and Valentinian back to Italy with an army under the barbarian general Aspar in 425. This attempt to take back the throne succeeded wherein Joannes was captured and executed and Valentinian III installed as Western Roman emperor, and to seal the alliance with Theodosius II, Valentinian was to be married to Theodosius' daughter Licinia Eudoxia wherein they would marry in 437.

Historians now often see Theodosius II as a weak leader pushed around by his sister Pulcheria, wife Aelia Eudocia, his eunuchs most especially the minister Chrysaphius, and the barbarian general Aspar who would heavily influence him in his later reign, although often times Theodosius was actually in control of the government making his own decisions. One example of how Theodosius acted on his own terms was when he founded the University of Constantinople in 425, although it was most likely possible that his wife who was an intellectual encouraged him to establish this university. Theodosius II though remains famous for having commissioned a codification of laws issued by Roman emperors since Constantine I the Great (r. 306-337) in 312; this codification was commissioned in 429 but it was not completed and published until 438 wherein it became known as the *Codex Theodosianus* which would be the basis for the law code commissioned by Emperor Justinian I (r. 527-565) in the following century known as the *Corpus Juris Civilis*. One thing Theodosius II had also put a lot of his attention to was religion that he frequently attempted to resolve doctrinal controversies over the natures of Christ, and here just like his father and grandfather before him, Theodosius was strongly pro-Orthodox (Nicene) that he passed several laws against Jews, Pagans, and heretics. In 431, Theodosius II was famous for convening the Council of Ephesus which affirmed the title of *Theotokos* (Mother of God) and condemned Nestorianism which was a sect founded by the former Patriarch of Constantinople Nestorius.

At the same time as well, Theodosius II had also been dealing with external threats to the Eastern Roman Empire namely the Vandals who had already invaded Roman North Africa and the Huns whose threat was now expanding in the north and already invading Eastern Roman territory, although throughout Theodosius II's reign the Huns were being

paid off to not invade the empire. Things however changed in 433 when Attila and his brother Bleda came to rule the Huns and unified them, and under their rule they demanded the tribute paid to them by the Eastern Roman emperor doubled to 700 pounds in order to increase their army. On the other hand, Roman North Africa together with its capital Carthage fell to the Vandals under their king Genseric (r. 428-477) in 439, and here both the Eastern emperor Theodosius II and Western emperor Valentinian III sent an army and fleet to Carthage in an attempt to take it back, though this attempt failed but they were still able to rescue a number of Roman citizens who were fleeing the Vandal occupation.

In the meantime, Theodosius' wife Aelia Eudocia had strong influence over him from 439-441 until an incident happened with the story of the Phrygian apple according to the 6th century historian John Malalas. It is said that here, Theodosius received an apple from a man which he sent to his wife as a present, and in return his wife gave it as a present to Paulinus who was a friend of hers and of Theodosius, though Paulinus returned the apple to Theodosius seeing that it was only fit for an emperor. When receiving the apple back, Theodosius was suspicious and therefore believed that his wife was having an affair with his friend Paulinus, thus Theodosius had Paulinus executed while his wife was banished to Jerusalem. Eventually in 443, the couple Theodosius and Aelia Eudocia separated once Eudocia decided to live a monastic life in Jerusalem where she would die in 460.

In 443 as well, the Huns under Attila once again invaded Eastern Roman territory seeing that Roman troops there were busy defending the Mediterranean against the Vandals, and here Attila defeated and destroyed a Roman army in battle outside Constantinople and brutally sacked cities in the Balkans such as Naissus (Nis) and Sirmium, though after Theodosius agreed to pay triple the tribute this time, the Huns retreated back to their homeland north of the Danube. Apparently, Theodosius II at this time had been heavily influenced by his eunuch minister Chrysaphius to pay off the Huns with this large amount of tribute. The Huns however still not satisfied with the tribute money returned to attacking Eastern Roman territory in 447 where they decisively defeated a Roman army at the Battle of Utus in Thrace while in the meantime, 2 earthquakes- one in 447 and the other in 448- greatly damaged Constantinople's new land walls. Constantinople now would have fallen to Attila if the rival Blue and Green factions of Constantinople hadn't competed with each other on repairing the city walls, and thus by the time Attila arrived before Constantinople's walls in 448 they were good as new that there was no way Attila and his massive army could attack it especially since they only had horses and no siege weapons. Constantinople here too was saved thanks to the few brave Isaurian troops from the mountains of Asia Minor under the Isaurian general Zeno that were skilled skirmishers, as here from above the walls they were able to scare away the Huns by throwing javelins at them from high above. When failing to capture Constantinople, Attila fled back to his homeland north of the Danube never to threaten the Eastern Romans again, as this time he would go on to threaten the much weaker Western Roman Empire.

Theodosius II at least lived long enough to see Attila no longer threaten his empire that in 449 he held another Church council again at Ephesus to discuss the same issues as those in the first Council of Ephesus in 431, though in the following year (450), Theodosius had died at the age of 49 on July 28 as a result of a riding accident wherein he fell off his

horse. Due to having no sons with his wife, Theodosius was briefly succeeded by his older sister Pulcheria who ruled as empress for a few months before marrying the military officer Marcian who was proclaimed as emperor by the late Theodosius' influential barbarian general Aspar to be Aspar's puppet emperor, and shortly after the couple Marcian and Pulcheria came to power in 450, the eunuch Chrysaphius was executed. Up to this day, Theodosius II for his role in promoting the Nicene Christian faith as emperor is venerated as a saint in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

This illustration of Theodosius II depicts him as an adult emperor wherein his appearance was based on both coins which depict him and other illustrations of late Roman emperors in ceremonial attire. The upper part of Theodosius' body here was based on his appearance in the coins that depict him, most especially his headpiece which like in the coins depicting him consists of a *Diadem* style crown around his head studded with pearls and other jewels while attached to his crown is a semi-sphere golden helmet with ceremonial ornaments above it including a crest and peacock feathers while attached to the crown at the bottom are strings with pearls at the bottom of it known as a *Pendilia*. The armor that Theodosius wears here which consists of a Classical Roman style breastplate as ceremonial armor with tassels or *Ptergues* underneath it both in his upper arms and thighs was also based on the attire he is seen wearing in his coin, although this illustration has the addition of a purple cloak over his ceremonial armor. The armor Theodosius II is seen wearing here is most definitely a ceremonial one worn during parades and celebrations in Constantinople as he true enough never went to battle personally in his reign. Now, beneath his armor Theodosius here is seen wearing a white tunic embroidered with gold silk for the trimmings while his pants are most likely orange stockings and his boots on the other hand are most likely ceremonial ones. The weapon now that Theodosius is holding here is a ceremonial spear which was also seen as something he was holding in the coins depicting him while the face of Theodosius here which features a short beard was based on his bust seen in the Louvre Museum in Paris, France.

S-Q Empress Theodora (500-548)



Not one of but possibly THE MOST influential and most remembered Eastern Roman (Byzantine) empress is Theodora from the 6th century, the wife of the most influential Eastern Roman emperor Justinian I the Great (r. 527-565). Theodora who came from humble origins was most possibly born in Eastern Roman Cyprus in 500, though some sources say she was born in the region of Paphlagonia in Asia Minor or in Syria, but wherever she was born in, she was of Greek descent and a native Greek speaker. Theodora's father Acacius who was a bear trainer for the Green circus faction died when she was very young while her mother who was a dancer and actress presented her 3 daughters wherein Theodora was the middle one to the rival Blue circus faction, and from here on Theodora would be a strong supporter of the Blue faction.

Theodora then grew up to be an actress and dancer like her mother wherein there happens to be some scandalous acts written about her, such as one from the *Secret History* by the historian Procopius which says Theodora performed sexual acts on stage. Some sources, most notably Procopius even accuses the young Theodora of being a prostitute, however back then actresses were considered to be at the bottom of society being equivalents of prostitutes compared to today's world where actors and actresses are well respected celebrities. Theodora later fell in love with a Syrian official named Hecebolus who was assigned as the governor of Libya thus bringing Theodora with him, but there he abandoned her thus leading to Theodora finding herself in Alexandria where she happened to convert to the Monophysite sect of Christianity which was seen as heretical.

When back in Constantinople, she met the future emperor Justinian in around 524 who here was the well-educated patrician Flavius Petrus Sabbatius, and the nephew of the reigning emperor Justin I (r. 518-527). Although Petrus was already a powerful patrician at this point, he too was of humble origins being at birth a peasant from the Balkans, and although Petrus who was 42 here wanted to marry the 24-year-old Theodora, there was an existing law that forbade men of patrician status from marrying actresses. Petrus however had his uncle the emperor Justin I reverse this law which he did, and thus Petrus and Theodora married on the condition that Theodora repented from her old ways of being an actress. Just 3 years later in 527, Justin I died and Petrus at the age of 45 succeeded as Emperor Justinian I with Theodora as his empress, and as empress Theodora who had good political instincts advised her husband Justinian many times. Theodora played a crucial role in saving Justinian's position in 532 when massive rioting known as the Nika Riot broke out in Constantinople's streets and when Justinian contemplated fleeing the city the moment the mob proclaimed a man named Hypatius as their emperor, Theodora persuaded Justinian and the court that it would be better to die than lose the throne. Justinian thus listened to Theodora and about 30,000 of the rioters were massacred by imperial forces led by the generals Belisarius and Mundus with their proclaimed emperor Hypatius executed in the process too.

Following the disastrous Nika Riot of 532, Justinian and Theodora focused on rebuilding all the landmarks of Constantinople that were destroyed in the riot at a much grander scale compared to how they were before they were destroyed. In the meantime, the same historian Procopius also says that as empress, Theodora was obsessed with court ceremony to the point that she always tried to make herself feel more superior to those who asked favors from her and her husband that whenever officials came to them, they would have to first wait in a small and stuffy room and when meeting the emperor and empress, they would have to lie face down in front of them. Theodora too had plotted against a number of officials in Justinian's government such as the finance minister John of Cappadocia who ended up exiled in 541 while Theodora a number of times too tried to sabotage Justinian's top general Belisarius who she was jealous of.

Other than that, Theodora as empress as a Monophysite openly supported the Monophysite sect of Christianity that she even appointed a number of Monophysite bishops to different cities in the empire despite Justinian being strongly Chalcedonian Orthodox Christian, though this showed that the imperial couple had in a way united the rival Orthodox and Monophysite sects of Christianity. On the other hand, Theodora had also managed to somewhat create a succession plan for Justinian by marrying Justinian's nephew Justin to her niece Sophia, while Theodora too was also influential in convincing Justinian to pass laws to protect women's rights and laws that also gave more rights to prostitutes and divorced women over property.

During the time the devastating plague hit Constantinople and the whole empire in 542 known as the "Plague of Justinian" wherein Justinian too was victim of it, Theodora ran the empire for him when Justinian fell into a coma. Justinian soon enough recovered and ran the empire again with Theodora at his side, but in 548 tragedy struck as Theodora died at the age of 48, most likely from some kind of cancer. Justinian and Theodora never had

any children together and with Theodora's death, Justinian was greatly heartbroken for a long time that he vowed to never married again, and true enough by the time Justinian died in 565 he had no children and was instead succeeded by his nephew Justin II (r. 565-578) who was married to Sophia, the niece of Theodora.

This illustration of Theodora is very much based off on her mosaic image from the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy which was created possibly when she was still alive. Just as she is seen in that famous mosaic, Theodora in this illustration wears a circular shaped gold crown studded with gems and with 3 long strains of pearls or *Pendilia* on opposite sides sticking out from the crown, a golden jeweled collar known as a *Superhumeral* over her shoulders, a long and large purple mantle with gold embroidery, and a long and loose white tunic beneath it. Just like in the San Vitale mosaic too, Theodora in this illustration also has large eyes and black hair folded upwards with golden accessories attached to it, which possibly attaches her folded hair to the crown. The major difference though between Theodora in this illustration and in the mosaic is that Theodora in this illustration shows more movement wherein the inner side of her mantle is visible and so is the lower part of her white tunic which has gold trimmings and a number of jewels at the bottom unlike in the mosaic where Theodora's inner tunic is barely visible as in the mosaic both her hands are facing the left and holding a golden chalice. In this illustration, Theodora is not holding anything except for her left hand holding her cloak while in the mosaic the purple mantle of Theodora is decorated with ornate golden figures at the bottom which are supposed to be the "3 Magi", though in this illustration this design at the bottom of her cloak was omitted. The San Vitale mosaic too shows Theodora wearing golden shoes, though this illustration shows her wearing red ones.

S-K Heraclius, Eastern Roman emperor (610-641)



Heraclius is someone who may be remembered as the emperor who ruled for so long, although his reign wasn't entirely as long as it seemed being only 31 years but these 31 years saw so much happening including a long war with the Sassanid Persians, empire-wide conflicts, war with a new enemy being the Arabs, and the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire's transition from Latin to Greek linguistically and culturally. Heraclius the Younger was born in Eastern Roman Cappadocia in 575 where it is said that his family was of Armenian origins, although it remains uncertain so it is most likely that he is of Cappadocian Greek origins as he was a native speaker of the Greek language. Heraclius the Younger was the eldest son of the general Heraclius the Elder - who was a top general of the emperor Maurice (r. 582-602) - and his wife Epiphania while the couple also had 2 other children being another son named Theodore and a daughter named Maria. During the 590s when the emperor Maurice finished his war with the Sassanid Persian Empire in the east, he appointed Heraclius the Elder as the *Exarch* (semi-autonomous governor) of North Africa based in Carthage, and here Heraclius the Elder moved his entire family to Carthage where they were to live out the rest of their days until fate would so happen to turn their lives around.

In 602, the emperor Maurice was overthrown and executed by the uneducated centurion Phocas who then seized power as emperor provoking the Sassanid *shah* (ruler) Khosrow II (r. 590-628) to invade the Eastern Roman Empire as an act to avenge Maurice who was his ally. Aside from Khosrow II, Heraclius the Elder also chose to avenge the late Maurice and so he and his son Heraclius the Younger in 608 renounced their loyalty to

Phocas and declared themselves as consuls in Carthage and minted coins bearing their names and images. Thus the rebellion of Heraclius the father and son began wherein by declaring Carthage independent from Phocas' rule, they were to cut the grain supply to the capital Constantinople in order to starve the population as a way to turn them against Phocas. Heraclius the Younger's cousin Nicetas then launched an invasion of Egypt in 609 to further cut the grain supply to Constantinople as Egypt was the empire's bread-basket which was successful therefore allowing Heraclius the Younger to sail for Thessaloniki and then to Constantinople itself by 610. By the time Heraclius the Younger arrived in Constantinople, it was over for Phocas as Phocas was now betrayed by the *Excubitors* (palace guards) under his son-in-law Priscus who switched support to Heraclius and brought Phocas in chains to Heraclius' ship. As Phocas was brought to Heraclius' ship, Heraclius asked him "is this how you have ruled, wretch" while Phocas replied "and will you rule better?", and following this the enraged Heraclius had Phocas executed at the spot. Following this incident, Heraclius the Younger was crowned as the new Eastern Roman emperor by the Patriarch of Constantinople Sergius I while Heraclius' wife Fabia Eudokia was crowned as his *Augusta* (empress) and back in Carthage Heraclius' father Heraclius the Elder after receiving the good news that the usurper Phocas had been usurped and taken care off, he died.

Now the empire Heraclius came to rule was a highly troubled one as the Sassanid Persians had already invaded Asia Minor going as far as the Bosphorus right across Constantinople while due to Phocas' neglecting the northern frontier being the Danube River, the Balkans were overrun by the Avars and Slavs all while Italy was now almost completely lost to the Lombards except for the south and the major cities, and Roman held Hispania almost entirely lost to the Visigoths that by 624 the Visigoths took back all of Hispania from the Eastern Romans. Meanwhile, in 612 the empress Fabia Eudokia gave birth to their son with Heraclius who would be the future emperor Constantine III although shortly after giving birth she died, thus Heraclius had to remarry, and so in 613 Heraclius married his niece, his sister Maria's daughter Martina which was considered incestuous thus making this marriage highly unpopular leading to Heraclius losing his popularity.

By this time as well, the Sassanids had already overrun Roman Syria wherein the top Sassanid generals Shahrbaraz and Shahin had captured Antioch, then in 614 Palestine and Jerusalem itself had fallen to the Sassanid troops commanded by Shahrbaraz wherein the relic of the True Cross was captured by them thanks to the Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem feeling oppressed by imperial rule opening the city to the Sassanids who they saw as their saviors. From 617-618, the Sassanid forces under the command of Shahrbaraz again then proceeded into Eastern Roman Egypt which then completely fell to the Sassanids in 619 following their capture of Alexandria. At this point with the Sassanids now taking over the eastern provinces and being just right across the strait from Constantinople, Heraclius had contemplated giving up and moving the capital to Carthage where he was based in before being emperor, though the patriarch Sergius convinced Heraclius to stay. Here, with Eastern Rome's economy in ruins, Heraclius to raise funds to later lead a counter-attack against the Sassanids was forced to devalue the currency and melt down Church treasures which the patriarch agreed to as it would mean saving the empire. In the meantime, the Avars have also gone deep into raiding the Balkans that

Heraclius was forced to conclude peace with their khan, but in the process of making peace, the khan set a trap to ambush and kidnap Heraclius which Heraclius barely escaped with his life, and thus following this, peace was never concluded with the Avars.

It was only in 622 when Heraclius decided to finally come out of Constantinople and personally lead his troops against the Sassanids to push them out of the empire; and here to raise the morale of his troops, Heraclius convinced his troops that this war was a holy war which lifted their spirits as they knew here that they were going to battle against the enemies of their faith. As he left Constantinople, Heraclius left behind the patriarch Sergius and the patrician Bonus to be in charge of the capital while he was away but also to protect his son and heir Constantine all while Heraclius brought along with him his wife Martina to his campaign where during those years she would give birth to a number of her children with him. Heraclius' first campaign against the Sassanids here was in Armenia where he won a decisive victory first over the army of a Persian-allied Arab chief and following that against the Sassanid forces led by Shahrbaraz in Cappadocia, and later he would further crush the Sassanid armies led by the generals Shahin and Shahraplakan. In 623, Heraclius crossed into Albania which was in Sassanid territory (today's Azerbaijan) in order to hunt down Khosrow II himself, and when there Heraclius in his search for the relics the Sassanids stole came across one of the Sassanid's holy fire temples which he burned down in an act of revenge for the Sassanids capturing the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. Following this in 624, Heraclius made an alliance against the Sassanids with the nomadic Khazars north of the Caucasus while at the same time he scored more victories against the Sassanids which therefore enabled him to regain Armenia and later Mesopotamia which he regained in 625 where during a battle, Shahrbaraz was caught off-guard forcing him to barely escape with his life.

Meanwhile, Sharbaraz who escaped decided to make an alliance with the Avars under the same khan that tried to capture Heraclius years ago to attack Constantinople considering that it was left undefended with their emperor and most of their troops away. In 626, the Sassanids with their Avar and Slav allies laid siege to Constantinople- which was bravely defended by Patriarch Sergius, Bonus, and young Constantine III- wherein the Avars and Slavs laid siege to the walls, although without ships to transport them across the Bosphorus, the Sassanids under Shahrbaraz were stranded on the Asian side thus prolonging the siege to the point that the Eastern Roman navy and reinforcements came right in time to break the siege. With this siege failing due to the lack of communication between the Avars and Sassanids but also because of alleged divine intervention wherein the Virgin Mary saved the city by creating a massive wave, the Sassanids were forced to retreat while the Avars did the same never to return again, although they left behind their Slav allies in the Balkans to stay. Furthermore, a Sassanid army under the general Shahin was defeated by Heraclius' brother Theodore, and due to his defeat the humiliated Shahin possibly killed himself, all while in 626 Heraclius remained inactive as he let his Khazar allies battle the Sassanids for him.

However in 627, when the Khazar allies deserted Heraclius following the death of their khan, Heraclius resumed leading his troops in person once again all while Khosrow II began growing disappointed in Shahrbaraz for his defeats that Khosrow decided to order

Shahrbaraz's execution. However, the letter giving orders to execute Shahrbaraz was intercepted by the Roman troops who then gave the letter to Shahrbaraz, and therefore this led to Shahrbaraz defecting to the Romans, thus the tide of war had changed. Later on in 627, Heraclius and his troops proceeded to launch an invasion of Sassanid Mesopotamia, this time targeting the Sassanid capital Ctesiphon itself. During this campaign, Heraclius defeated a large Sassanid army under the general Rhahzadh at the Battle of Nineveh killing Rhahzadh in battle, and following this he proceeded to sack Khosrow's palace of Dastagird as the bridges to Ctesiphon were cut off. Due to the many defeats the Sassanids had faced in this war, Khosrow II grew highly unpopular with the army and aristocracy that in 628 they overthrew him in a coup and replaced him as shah with his son Kavad II, and thus Khosrow was executed which thus ended the great war that had been going on since 602. As the new shah, Kavad II had decided to sue for peace and so he and Heraclius made a deal wherein the borders of both empires would revert to how it was before the war started in 602, therefore no one would have had any gains or losses here, although a number of treasures that the Sassanids stole including the relic of the True Cross was returned to the Eastern Romans which Heraclius would return to Jerusalem in 629.

Once Heraclius had finished off the Sassanids once and for all in war, he returned to Constantinople having a triumphal parade and due to his victory, his popularity was at an all-time-high while he too took for himself the Persian title "King of Kings", though Heraclius would end up styling himself as *Basileus* which was Greek for "emperor" thus no longer using the Latin "Augustus" which therefore hints the transition of the Eastern Roman Empire from a Latin to a Greek state. In the meantime, following the war, Heraclius would restore imperial rule to the provinces that just recently fell to the Sassanids all while the Sassanids due to their defeat were plunged into a state of civil war and political instability, though both empires would not see a new threat rising from the south which were the Arabs now having united under the new faith of Islam founded by the Prophet Muhammad. Apparently, as early as 629 the Arabs had already attacked Roman territory in today's Jordan, although this was a small skirmish wherein the Romans defeated the Arabs, but just a few years later following the death of Muhammad in 632, the Arabs would expand in full force ready to invade both the Eastern Roman and Sassanid Empires.

Beginning 634, the Arabs now as the Rashidun Caliphate invaded the Roman Levant capturing lands that the Romans just gained back from the Sassanids just some years ago while Heraclius being too old to lead the army himself assembled a large army under the command of the Armenian general Vahan to counter-attack the Arabs. This large Roman army and the Arab forces under their general Khalid Ibn al-Walid would then clash at the massive Battle of Yarmouk in 636 in Syria which would result in a decisive Arab victory with the Eastern Roman forces annihilated. Following this, the Arabs rapidly expanded into the Levant capturing Antioch and many other cities, and by 637 they would come before Jerusalem itself. Here, the Patriarch of Jerusalem fearing that the Arabs might do the same thing to the True Cross what the Sassanids did years earlier shipped it back to Constantinople while also agreeing to peacefully surrender Jerusalem to the Rashidun caliph Umar. Now with the Levant lost to the Arabs this time, this was the end of Roman rule over the Levant and so Heraclius decided that the empire's new eastern frontier would

be the Taurus Mountains in Asia Minor while shortly after taking the Levant, the Arabs then proceeded into Egypt.

In his last years, Heraclius had grown extremely paranoid to the point of fearing water that a bridge with high railings had to be made for him to cross the Bosphorus while Heraclius too had been obsessed with producing a new doctrine known as *Monothelism* to unite both the Orthodox and Monophysite Christians, but this was never produced as the author of this doctrine Patriarch Sergius died in 638. By this point too, the old Heraclius had been heavily under the influence of his wife Martina who convinced him in 638 as well to make their son Heraklonas his co-emperor despite Heraclius' other son with his first wife being Constantine III already being his co-emperor. At around this point in time too, Heraclius' illegitimate son John Athalarichos had taken part in a plot to overthrow his father and seize the throne, though his plot was eventually uncovered and thus John's hands and nose was cut off before he was sent into exile never to return again. Heraclius would then die in February of 641 at the age of 65 from illness whereas by this time as well, the Arabs had already taken over most of Egypt while Heraclius would be succeeded by his eldest son Constantine III who would only rule for a few months due to his sudden death in May of 641. Following this, Heraklonas under the regency of his mother Martina would rule the empire for a few months as well until a loyalist army of the late Constantine III overthrew them and replaced Heraklonas with Constantine III's son and thus Heraclius' grandson the 11-year-old Constans II (r. 641-668). By the time Heraclius died, the Eastern Roman Empire had more or less already transitioned from a culturally and linguistically Latin to a Greek state.

The illustration of Emperor Heraclius here which was based on several present day illustrations depicting him depicts him most possibly during the time of his Sassanid campaign in the 620s as he is still very much younger here with black hair. The crown Heraclius wears here was based on the crown from his image on the coins depicting him, although unlike in his coins, this illustration shows a stash of peacock feathers attached to his crown. The face of Heraclius in this illustration was based on his facial appearance from his coins which shows him having a large beard and a long straight mustache. The outfit he wears here meanwhile includes a padded vest studded with metal bolts with tassels (*Pteruges*) attached to it below while beneath this vest which serves as a kind of armor is a purple tunic indicating him as an emperor and over the vest is a purple cloak also to indicate him as emperor especially when in the battlefield. On his left side, he is seen holding a sheathed dagger while on his right he is holding a chalice possibly to celebrate his victory over the Sassanids. He is also seen wearing red stockings and the red imperial boots which emperors of this time wore in battle.