

Historical Figures of the Byzantine Empire Playing Cards

Descriptions- Diamonds

D-A Gold and Lapis Lazuli Necklace, 7th Century



Today, there are many well preserved items of Byzantine era jewelry which mostly belonged to the Byzantine nobility, particularly women. One of the most well-preserved examples is a gold and lapis lazuli necklace found at the Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine collection in Washington DC, USA. This particular necklace dating back to the 7th century is made of alternating gold and lapis lazuli beads with a lapis lazuli pendant in the shape of a shell with a gold border. On the lapis lazuli pendant is a sculpture of the Ancient Greek goddess of beauty Aphrodite made of gold where she is seen in the pose which refers to her birth where she rose from the sea, and here the lapis lazuli background behind her is supposed to represent the sea.

As the Greek goddess of beauty, the golden sculpture of Aphrodite here depicts the full physique and beauty of her body expressed by her semi nudity wherein a cloth covers only one leg of hers, while at the same time she is also seen arranging her hair. Although this necklace was crafted in the 7th century when Christianity was already very dominant in the Byzantine Empire, it hints that people still had not yet forgotten their Pagan roots from

Ancient Greece, hence crafting an item of jewelry depicting a Pagan goddess barely clothed. When recreating this necklace for this illustration, the only additions were the two gems at the bottom part of the necklace coming out from the three golden chains, as in the original piece, two gems are missing and in order to recreate them, it was depicted wherein one of the only existing gem hanging from the golden chains is seen.

D-2 Byzantine Skoutatos Soldier, 9th-12th centuries



In the Middle Ages, the Byzantine Empire was known for having a professional army of infantry and cavalry soldiers recruited within the empire while some units in the Byzantine army were either recruited from lands beyond the empire's borders or paid to fight their wars as mercenaries. With the Byzantine Empire as a medieval military superpower from the 9th to 12th centuries, it had a lot of soldiers recruited from within its borders wherein these soldiers specialized in certain functions. The Byzantine Empire in these said centuries had a powerful heavy cavalry force which were the famous Cataphracts but it also featured a highly capable heavy infantry force which was large in number and effective in the battlefield. One type of heavy infantryman from the Byzantine Empire which was a native recruit from the empire that is mentioned in sources is known as a *Skoutatos* (plural: *Skoutatoi*) which in Greek means "shield bearer", and this said type of infantry unit was most prominent in the Macedonian Dynasty era of Byzantium (867-1056). The Skoutatos infantry soldier seen in this illustration most likely comes from either

the 10th or 11th centuries during the Macedonian Dynasty era, but not later than the 12th century or earlier than the 9th century.

As an infantryman, a Skoutatos' primary weapon was a long spear known as a *Kontarion*, although in this illustration his primary weapon appears much shorter than how a *Kontarion* would have looked like, so instead his primary weapon seen here is a Byzantine javelin known as an *Akontia*. The secondary weapon of this soldier is a sword which here is the standard Byzantine double-edged straight sword known as a *Spathion*, which here is seen sheathed and hidden behind his shield. The name of this unit being "Skoutatos" derives from his shield known as a *Skouton* wherein the one in this illustration appears to be a long kite-shaped shield which is rounded above and pointed at the bottom, and this was a standard type of shield used by Byzantine infantrymen. As the Skoutatoi were a large infantry unit that consisted of thousands of soldiers empire-wide, their arms and armor may appear to look rather mass-produced, hence there was nothing so fancy about them.

For his armor, the Skoutatos soldier in this illustration wears a simple lamellar cuirass as his body armor which consists of overlapping scales sewn to each other and fastened in front by leather straps while leather tassels known as *Ptergues* are attached to the armholes of his armor to provide some protection for his upper arms. The type of helmet this soldier is seen wearing is the conical-shaped one known as a *Kranos* which was a commonly used one by Byzantine soldiers, although the unique feature of this soldier's rather simple helmet are the leather tassels attached to it below which gives his neck some extra protection. Other than his lamellar body armor, this soldier does not appear to have any more protection as right beneath his body armor is not an extra layer of chainmail but already his long-sleeved and knee-length red tunic. This soldier appears to be wearing a pair of the knee-high Byzantine leather boots known as *Hypodemata* with his white trousers tucked into it whereas he is not seen wearing any pair of gloves. The appearance of this Skoutatos infantryman was based off on a number of modern-day recreated illustrations of Byzantine infantrymen with a complete set of arms and armor, though the primary source for the appearance of this soldier is the Byzantine fresco of Joshua from the Hosios Loukas Monastery in Greece made in either the 12th or 13th centuries which is true enough one of the best-preserved images from the Byzantine era showing the arms and armor of a Byzantine infantry soldier.

D-3 Sebastokrator, 12th century



The Byzantine Empire was known for having numerous court titles and positions wherein some of these titles were just prestigious in name but had no real function except to keep a family member of the emperor content in order for him to not stir up trouble. One such court title that commanded a lot of respect but did not really have a practical function was that of *Sebastokrator* which was a new imperial court title created by the Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081-1118) to honor his older brother Isaac Komnenos basically so that he had an important title so that he may not cause trouble for his younger brother who became emperor. The name of this title “Sebastokrator” is Greek for “August Ruler” which derives from two other titles being *Sebastos* which is the Greek equivalent of the Latin *Augustus* meaning “venerable” and *Krator* which is Greek for “ruler”, hence it became “Sebastokrator” when put together. The daughter of the emperor Alexios I which was the historian Anna Komnene (1083-1153) true enough mentions in her works that this title was just made so that her father could make her uncle Isaac feel more content by having an important title, while at the same time Anna also says that the title of “Sebastokrator” was second only in rank to the title of the emperor himself. The holder of this title did not appear to be passed down through a series of succession the way the title of emperor was passed down from an emperor to his son, rather it was a title awarded by the emperor to a member of his family whether it was his younger son, brother, cousin, or even a general close to them, thus there would be moments when no one held this title.

Although after Alexios I’s older brother Isaac (died 1104) who was first to hold this title, several other male members of the ruling Komnenos Dynasty held this title too such

as Alexios I's son also named Isaac who was the younger brother of Anna Komnene and Alexios I's successor John II Komnenos (r. 1118-1143), John II's son also named Isaac, and later on Alexios Angelos who was the older brother of the emperor Isaac II Angelos (r. 1185-1195/ 1203-1204) who became Emperor Alexios III in 1195 after overthrowing and blinding his younger brother Isaac II until losing the throne in 1203 when the army of the 4th Crusade arrived in Constantinople. Although by 1163, the title of Sebastokrator was no longer second in rank to the emperor which was due to the emperor Manuel I Komnenos (r. 1143-1180) who was the son of John II and grandson of Alexios I creating a new title which was that of *Despotes* which became the second most powerful after the emperor and would usually be held by a son or brother of an emperor. Following the temporary dissolution of the Byzantine Empire which was a result of the 4th Crusade's capture of Constantinople in 1204, the title of Sebastokrator became not only exclusive for the Byzantines but rather something used as an honorary title by members of the ruling family not only in the post-1204 Byzantine successor states which were the Empire of Nicaea, Empire of Trebizond, and Despotate of Epirus, but also in the Latin Empire formed by the forces of the 4th Crusade which ruled over Constantinople for the next 57 years (1204-1261), the 2nd Bulgarian Empire, and the Serbian Kingdom which became the Serbian Empire in 1346. Following the reconquest of Constantinople from the Latins by the Byzantines of the Empire of Nicaea in 1261 with the reestablishment of the Byzantine Empire afterwards, the title of Sebastokrator was still in use by members of the ruling dynasty which from 1261 onwards was the Palaiologos Dynasty, although from here on this title was already prominently used in Serbia and Bulgaria. The last known holder of the title of Sebastokrator was the 14th century Byzantine noble Demetrios Kantakouzenos who was the grandson of the Byzantine emperor John VI Kantakouzenos (r. 1347-1354), and in the last years of Byzantium in the 15th century before the end of the empire in 1453, this title does not appear anymore in the records.

Now, according to various Byzantine sources from the 12th and 13th centuries, blue was the color associated with the rank of Sebastokrator, thus a holder of this title wore blue stockings and blue shoes as part of his ceremonial attire. The Sebastokrator in this illustration is not a specified one as there were numerous holders of the title, although the attire of the one seen here was based on a 14th century source which describes the attire of a Sebastokrator which included a distinct type of red and gold hat known as a *Skiadion* and an ornate red and gold tunic with a mantle over it. The attire of the Sebastokrator in this illustration was based off on the 14th century Byzantine manuscript known today as the *Lincoln Typikon*- which is now mostly faded- depicting the 13th century Byzantine Sebastokrator Constantine Palaiologos- who was the younger half-brother of the emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (r. 1261-1282). In this particular manuscript which shows Constantine Palaiologos and his wife Irene, Constantine is seen wearing something very much like what this illustration features which is a purple mantle embroidered with gold double-headed eagle patterns- which was the symbol associated with the Byzantine Empire- within golden circles and beneath it an ornate red tunic embroidered with gold patterns. Although blue was the color associated with the Sebastokrator in which his shoes were, the one seen here instead wears black leather boots without the imperial double-headed eagle symbol in it despite the sources mentioning that the Sebastokrator's shoes had the double-headed eagle symbol on it. The image of Sebastokrator Constantine

Palaiologos from the said manuscript though does not show him wearing the Skiadion hat but rather a golden jeweled headpiece that looks somewhat like a crown, whereas the Sebastokrator in this illustration wears a Skiadion hat with a gold metal frame and some embroideries wherein the red cloth is attached to it. The hat seen in this illustration was based off on the mosaic of the 12th century Sebastokrator Isaac Komnenos- the son of Alexios I- from the Chora Monastery in Constantinople which he was a notable patron of, and this mosaic which is although now mostly faded shows him wearing this kind of tall hat with a gold frame and red cloth above it. The facial features of the Sebastokrator in this illustration more or less resembles that of Isaac Komnenos from this said mosaic, thus if this illustration was to depict a specific Sebastokrator, the one intended for this one was this said Isaac Komnenos.

D-4 Stratopedarches of the Tzakones, 13th century



The Byzantines were known for using a wide variety of titles and ranks whether for the imperial court or in the military, and in the military, there were countless positions that had actual names. One such high-ranking Byzantine military position was that of *Stratopedarches* which is Greek for “Master of the Camp”, and this title had apparently been in use by the Ancient Greeks since the 1st century BCE. This title however had been first used officially as a rank in the army by the 10th century in the Byzantine Empire, wherein the first official holder of this title as an actual military position as the commander of a

camp was the eunuch Peter in 967 who received this said title of “Stratopedarches” from the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963-969). During the 13th century when the Byzantine Empire had been in exile as the Empire of Nicaea for 57 years (1204-1261) while Constantinople had fallen to the army of the 4th Crusade, the rank of Stratopedarches had evolved wherein there became a rank above it which was that of *Megas Stratopedarches*, which literally translated to “Grand Master of the Camp”. This new rank was instituted in 1255 by the Byzantine emperor of Nicaea Theodore II Laskaris (r. 1254-1258) for his chief minister and close friend George Mouzalon who was by birth a commoner, and thus giving him this position further advanced his political and military career to the disgust of the aristocrats. The emperor Theodore II however did not rule long as in 1258 he met his end at the young age of 36 whereas days after his death his closest advisor and general George Mouzalon was killed in Theodore’s funeral in a plot hatched by Theodore’s rival the aristocrat Michael Palaiologos who soon enough became emperor and in 1261 recaptured Constantinople from the Latins and reestablished the Byzantine Empire.

Under the new emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (r. 1261-1282) and the restored Byzantine Empire, the ranks of Stratopedarches and Megas Stratopedarches still remained while a 14th century source known as the *Book of Offices of pseudo-Kodinos* even mentions that with Byzantium under the Palaiologos Dynasty- which was its last ruling dynasty- there were 4 different ranks of Stratopedarches wherein one was a cavalry commander, another one being the commander of the specialized crossbowmen unit, another being the commander of the Christianized Turk contingent in the late Byzantine army, and lastly the commander of the marine forces known as the *Tzakones*. Now, during the reign of Michael VIII, a new Byzantine marine force was created known as the “Tzakones” or *Lakones* as they came from the region of Laconia in Southern Greece (in the Peloponnese Peninsula). This new unit was a new special force in the Byzantine army especially since by the second half of the 13th century the famous Varangian Guard that once protected the Byzantine emperor had disappeared or rather was reduced into insignificance. According to the same source of pseudo-Kodinos, the Tzakones were divided into two groups wherein one served as marines fighting in battles especially if they were naval ones, and the other division being a palace guard force the way the Varangians were before whereas the Tzakones palace guard force were described to be wearing distinctive blue cuirasses with two white lions in the chest area seen facing each other while they held maces (*Apelatikia*) as their main weapons. The Stratopedarches of the Tzakones meanwhile was not really in charge of supervising the Tzakones soldiers guarding the palace in Constantinople but in supervising the Tzakones soldiers deployed to various fortresses across what was left of the empire as garrison troops.

The soldier seen in this illustration is a Stratopedarches of the Tzakones from the late 13th century in charge of commanding the marines in a fortress. The attire of this soldier here however is almost entirely hypothetical and is based on imagination of the appearance of a late Byzantine era officer and on several illustrations depicting late Byzantine era military units. The person in this illustration too is not named but just generically labelled as a “Stratopedarches of the Tzakones” as there was no notable person who held this title, and in fact no notable person held the rank of Stratopedarches from the

13th century onwards until the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453. Now, the attire of this soldier consists of a late Byzantine era kettle-shaped helmet which was based off on a Byzantine fresco of St. Mercurius in Ohrid, Macedonia which dates to around 1295 which is around the exact same era this soldier is from. The helmet seen on this said fresco is almost exactly the same type as the one seen here which is shaped like a kettle while the facial features of this soldier too somewhat resembles that of St. Mercurius in the fresco. The type of armor this soldier is seen wearing consists of a gold scale cuirass with decorative tassels or *Pteruges* sticking out of it both at the bottom and at the armholes which have no protective function as instead the additional metal scales known as *Kremasmata* which here is seen protecting the upper arms and thighs which is attached to the armor does the job of protection. The soldier too wears the classic Byzantine gauntlets for the arms known as *Cheiropsella* and greaves for the legs known as *Podopsella* and beneath his scaled armor cuirass is a tunic that is blue which is the color associated with the Tzakones, and over the armor a red cloak. Meanwhile, the item that defines this soldier as an officer is the type of sword he uses which here is a somewhat Western-style longsword and not the standard Byzantine straight sword known as a *Spathion* or curved saber known as a *Paramerion* as apparently in the late Byzantine era, a Western style longsword or broadsword were usually only used by commanders and not by common soldiers. The overall type of armor, helmet, and cloak over it was based on the armor types seen in frescos of Byzantine military saints found in what were once Byzantine churches today, and although these frescos of military saints are good reference points to study Byzantine arms and armor especially for the late Byzantine era, a lot of these frescos depicting military saints are not entirely accurate as they tend to depict armor in a more fanciful and imaginative way rather than showing what it actually looked like in the said period of time.

D-5 Empress Anna of Savoy, 14th century



In the late Byzantine era, one empress that had a crucial role influencing the empire itself by being hands-on in the affairs of the state was the foreign-born Anna of Savoy who was the empress-consort of the emperor Andronikos III Palaiologos (r. 1328-1341) and following that the empress-regent for their young son John V. Anna was born in the County of Savoy in Northern Italy in 1306 as the daughter of the Count of Savoy Amadeus V and his second wife Maria of Brabant. Nothing is known about Anna until she was betrothed to the Byzantine prince Andronikos Palaiologos in 1325 wherein at this time, Andronikos was leading his faction in the Byzantine civil war against his grandfather the emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (r. 1282-1328). Andronikos and Anna married in 1326, and this marriage's purpose was to make an alliance with the County of Savoy to raise funds for the young Andronikos to defeat his grandfather. In 1328, the grandfather Andronikos II surrendered and abdicated as his grandson Andronikos with an army entered Constantinople and was thus crowned as Emperor Andronikos III with his wife Anna as his empress. Anna did not really seem to have a significant role when her husband was emperor beginning 1328 as the spotlight at this time was really on him and his ambitious campaigns to restore the Byzantine Empire to a decent power in the Balkans after over 40 years of decay under his grandfather, and the one who was responsible for these campaigns and projects of Andronikos III was his closest friend and top general John Kantakouzenos. During the time her husband Andronikos III was emperor and prior to that co-emperor, Anna gave birth to 3 children with him- the first one being their daughter Maria born in 1327, then their first son John in 1332 who was named after his father's

closest friend and general and was to be emperor in the future, and lastly another son named Michael born in 1337.

Although Andronikos III ruled through a somewhat bright spot during the 14th century when it seemed like there was no more hope for Byzantium wherein territories in Greece that had been lost in the past were recovered, he met a sudden end in 1341 due to malaria. Andronikos III true enough made the fatal mistake of not naming his successor before his death and more so never even named his eldest son John as his co-emperor to secure his claim to the throne, therefore following Andronikos' untimely death his hard work would be undone as the empire would fall into a succession crisis. Andronikos III's eldest son John V Palaiologos was only 9-years-old at the time his father died and thus he had to rule with a regent, which in this case was his mother Anna of Savoy, however the late Andronikos' top advisor and general John Kantakouzenos too felt that he had every right to be emperor as he ran the administration for the late emperor. In the meantime, the Serbian king Stefan Uros IV Dusan seeing weakness in Byzantium due to Andronikos III's death launched an invasion of the Byzantine Balkans in which Anna sent Kantakouzenos to quell it, and with Kantakouzenos away, Anna being convinced by the Patriarch of Constantinople John XIV and the politician Alexios Apokaukos- who here was the richest man in the empire- but also by her own greed for power declared Kantakouzenos as a public enemy which then began what would be a bloody civil war. Kantakouzenos meanwhile had the army with him and the support of the generally conservative landed aristocracy which were mostly the military elite from the countryside in Thrace, and thus with their support he was proclaimed emperor later in 1341. Anna on the other hand had her own faction which consisted of the common people in the major cities like Constantinople and Thessaloniki or generally the more progressive people, the merchants, and the Italian naval republics of Venice and Genoa as well as two powerful men in the empire being the patriarch and Alexios Apokaukos.

Soon enough foreign allies too supported either faction in the Byzantine civil war that began in 1341 wherein the 2nd Bulgarian Empire to the north under Tsar Ivan Alexander allied with the faction of Anna and her son John V in exchange for being given the city of Philippopolis by the Byzantines, while some of the Turkish Beyliks of Asia Minor notably the Beylik of Aydin allied with Kantakouzenos. At first, the faction of Anna and her son was on the winning side of the war wherein Apokaukos who was in charge of their army and fleet managed to successfully defend Thessaloniki against the attacks by Kantakouzenos and his Turkish allies. Stefan IV Dusan of Serbia would then also ally with John Kantakouzenos, and with the powerful Serbian Kingdom as an ally it had seemed that Kantakouzenos' side was winning until both Kantakouzenos and Dusan had a disagreement that made them enemies with each other whereas Dusan agreed to switch his support to the empress but at the end did nothing to help her and her faction but instead used his victories in the civil war to annex most of Northern Greece into his kingdom. Eventually, Dusan after rapidly annexing his lands due to taking part in the civil war, he was crowned as the first Serbian emperor in 1346 wherein the Serbian Kingdom had transformed into the Serbian Empire. Although it may have seemed that the empress Anna's faction in the civil war was winning especially since Dusan turned against Kantakouzenos all while his Turkish allies abandoned him, she would soon be in a desperate position when running out

of funds that in 1343 she pawned Byzantium's crowned jewels to the Republic of Venice for 30,000 ducats just to raise money. Anna's efforts however were in vain as in 1345, the man in charge of commanding her faction in war being Alexios Apokaukos was lynched to death by political prisoners in the new prison he just built, and with him dead there was no more military leader in the empress' side.

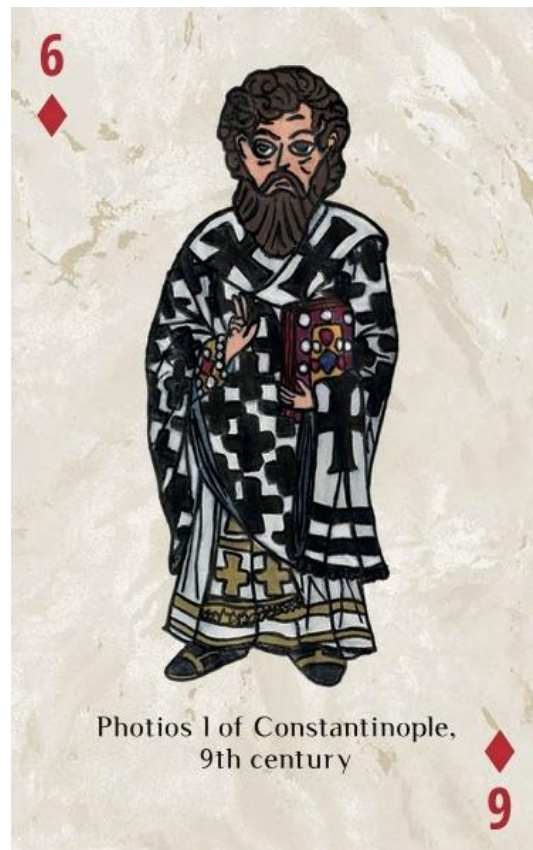
The tide of the war had now turned in favor of Kantakouzenos who by 1346 sealed an alliance with the rising power of the Ottoman Beylik in Northwest Asia Minor under Orhan Bey which allowed Ottoman Turkish troops to be transported into the Balkans, and to seal this alliance Kantakouzenos married off his young teenage daughter Theodora to Orhan who was already in his 60s here. With the Ottomans as his ally, Kantakouzenos had managed to surround Constantinople and starve its people into submission until the people tired of being under a blockade opened the city's gates to Kantakouzenos and his forces in early 1347, therefore the faction of the empress Anna and her son John V had lost. The victorious general John Kantakouzenos was then crowned as the new emperor John VI, although he was still honorable enough to make an agreement with the young emperor John V wherein John VI would be the senior emperor and John V a junior co-emperor for 10 years and after these 10 years, both John V and John VI would rule as equal co-rulers until the older John VI's death, while to seal the deal John VI married off his other daughter Helena to John V.

Anna on the other hand, despite being an enemy of the new emperor John VI was still allowed to remain in the palace without facing the consequences, except that she was no longer permitted to have an active role in running the empire. Anna however still wanted to hold real power, and so in 1351 she left Constantinople for Thessaloniki wherein she actually held her own court in the city going as far as issuing decrees in her name at least only for the city, and even controlling the city's mint while in Thessaloniki, Anna was also a patron of hospitals for the poor. Anna though lived long enough to see her son John V take back the throne for himself in 1354 from John VI Kantakouzenos in just one night, however Anna continued to remain in Thessaloniki where she died in 1365 at the age of 59 long before seeing the empire plunged into a depressing and pitiful state which her son John V would rule over until his death in 1391 possibly due to suicide after all the stress and humiliation he faced when ruling a dying empire.

This illustration of the 14th century Byzantine empress Anna of Savoy was almost entirely based off on a 14th century miniature portrait found in the State Library of Wurttemberg in Stuttgart, Germany which shows two panels in the same page, the one in the left depicting the Byzantine emperor Andronikos III Palaiologos and in the right his wife Empress Anna of Savoy. The attire worn by Anna in this illustration is more or less exactly the same one seen in the portrait which consists of what is a late Byzantine era empress' crown which is tall in height; contains a lot of jewelry including sapphires, rubies, and pearls; and has several pointed triangles at the top, and attached to it at the bottom are stands of jewels known as a *Pendilia*. Beneath her crown which covers her hair is a veil which appears to be in the same maroon color as her dress whereas the bottom part of the veil too just as it appears in the 14th century portrait has jewelry sewn into it. The dress of Anna in this illustration just like the one in the portrait this was based on is a long

shapeless dress with wide sleeves, gold trimmings, a gold collar known as a *Superhumeral*, and a long and wide golden central area also with jewels sewn into it. On the dress itself are orange embroideries of flower patterns, while at the bottom is a large golden border again with jewels sewn into it, the same way the sash wrapped around her waist and held by her left arm appears. The empress here also appears to be wearing gold shoes, while on her right hand she holds an imperial scepter topped with a jeweled cross. This illustration depicts Anna of Savoy most definitely during the time she was the empress-consort for her husband the emperor Andronikos III as after all the portrait this illustration was based on shows Anna next to her husband the emperor which therefore hints it is a portrait depicting the imperial couple. Overall, this portrait found in the Wurttemberg State Library in which this illustration was based on is a very useful reference to know what the attire of a late Byzantine era empress was.

D-6 Photios I of Constantinople, 9th century



Byzantium was known to have played such an important role in the history of Christianity and in making it a dominant world religion, therefore there were many figures in Byzantine history that were responsible for the spread of Christianity. One such individual from Byzantium who played a very crucial role in the spread of the Christian faith was the 9th century Patriarch of Constantinople Photios I also known as “Photios the Great” or St. Photios who is in fact regarded as the most powerful and influential Church

leader in the history of Constantinople's Church after Patriarch St. John Chrysostom from the early 5th century. Now, despite Photios having played such an important role in Church history, he surprisingly began out his life with secular origins born in 810 in Constantinople to a noble family, and although he wanted to be a monk, he was educated to be someone in the government. Due to receiving such excellent education, Photios later on worked in the imperial palace first as the captain of the palace guard or *Protospatharios* and later as an imperial secretary, and it was during his time as an imperial secretary where he travelled to Baghdad in an embassy to the caliph.

Photios though ended up getting involved in the affairs of the imperial court and the state itself when power shifted in the imperial government wherein the powerful eunuch minister Theoktistos was killed in 855 and Theodora being the empress-regent he supported was banished, and the one responsible for Theoktistos' death and Theodora's exile was Theodora's brother Bardas who the young emperor being Theodora's son Michael III (r. 842-867) wanted as his close advisor instead of being under the control of his mother and the powerful eunuch. With Theoktistos and Theodora gone, the emperor Michael III's uncle Bardas was now basically in charge of the empire, and it was Bardas that spotted Photios' political and diplomatic talent as well as his intellect. At this time, Bardas had happened to not be in good terms with the current Patriarch of Constantinople Ignatios who did not permit Bardas from even entering the Hagia Sophia, thus Bardas and Michael III devised a plot to force Ignatios out of his position as patriarch wherein the one to replace him would be the imperial secretary Photios who Bardas saw as the right person for the job of Patriarch of Constantinople. Photios on the other hand had no religious background, and neither was he ordained as a priest before being offered the position of patriarch in 858, and so in order to become the patriarch, Photios was forced to become a priest and within only 4 days the old religious scholar Ignatios was fired with the newly ordained Photios replacing him as patriarch.

Photios' appointment as Patriarch of Constantinople however still had consequences as in 859 when the pope in Rome, Nicholas I heard of the removal of Ignatios who was his ally and the promotion of Photios who had no religious background, the pope questioned its legitimacy thus beginning a schism over the issue of whether the Patriarch of Constantinople should be appointed by the pope or the Byzantine emperor while both Photios and the pope also had differences when it came to religious beliefs, hence this schism became known as the "Photian Schism" named after Photios whose appointment was basically the cause of it. Eventually, this schism between the Churches of Rome and Constantinople evolved into what could be a "cold war" on religion which involved a race on who would be first to convert the Slavs of Eastern Europe, whether it would be Rome or Constantinople, similar to the "Space Race" in the 20th century cold war. Here, Photios proved that as patriarch he was not only a religious scholar but a strong and decisive political leader by ensuring he would win the race to convert the Slavs by appointing the Macedonian brothers Methodius and Constantine (later known as Cyril) as the chief missionaries to convert the Slavs as both brothers knew the Slavic language and therefore it would be much easier to convert them by using the native language of those they would convert. The missionary brothers were first sent to the court of the Bulgarian Empire under their ruler Boris I, and true enough later on in 864 this ruler Boris I converted to Orthodox

Christianity which thus put Bulgaria itself under the Byzantine sphere of influence therefore giving the Byzantines an upper hand in this said race. Cyril and Methodius also travelled to the Khazar Khanate in the Crimea where they too managed to convert many of its inhabitants to Byzantine Orthodoxy, then following that in 862 they travelled to as far as the Moravian Kingdom in Central Europe where they did not just convert a few people but the entire nation. The way in how the brothers managed to successfully convert the people in Bulgaria, Serbia, Moravia, and the Khazars to Orthodox Christianity was by translating the Bible into a language that these people would understand which became Old Church Slavonic, whereas the Latin Church headed by the pope did not permit the Bible to be translated from Latin while they too did not allow any religious services or even prayers to be in any language except for Latin, which is why the Latin Church lost in this said "race". The brothers Cyril and Methodius true enough not only spoke to their converts in the latter's native language, but they too devised a new alphabet so that the Slavic people who spoke in different dialects could understand something in common, and thus this alphabet back then was known as the Glagolitic alphabet which today is known as the Cyrillic alphabet named after St. Cyril, the younger missionary brother.

Back in Constantinople, Photios was known to have in a way defended the city in 860 from a sudden attack by a new enemy from the north which were the Rus' that unexpectedly showed up at the Bosphorus outside Constantinople with their ships, and here Photios in his writing labels them as an "unnamed" enemy that came by surprise "like a thunderbolt from heaven". The Rus' attackers however did not have the power to attack Constantinople, thus they instead pillaged the surrounding areas until they were expelled when the emperor Michael III who was away campaigning in the east against the Arabs returned with an army. Photios though claims that the city in this 860 Rus' attack was saved by divine intervention when Photios dipped the relic of the veil of the Virgin Mary in the Bosphorus which created a strong wave that sunk the Rus' ships. It was true enough this attack of the Rus' in 860 that made Photios think of converting these people in the north which included the Slavs as well through the missionaries Cyril and Methodius as a peaceful way to eliminate them as a threat but also to build more diplomatic ties now that they would have the same religion in common. During his time as patriarch, Photios was also responsible for promoting the 9th century Byzantine cultural Renaissance wherein he was a patron of many learning centers, scholars, and churches while under Michael III's reign with the guidance of Bardas and Photios, Constantinople grew into a prime intellectual metropolis, and true enough Photios himself was known to have written a number of works especially on theology and Church history.

Just as how a shift of power in the imperial court had put Photios in power as the Patriarch of Constantinople, it would also be through another shift of power that brought him down as Michael III by the 860s had a favorite being the wrestler and stable boy Basil the Macedonian who eventually became the emperor's most trusted bodyguard who true enough had ambitions of his own seeing Bardas as a threat to him. After being falsely convinced by Basil that Bardas was out to kill Michael III, Michael ordered the execution of Bardas in 866, and in the following year (867) Basil who now got his way true enough had Michael III himself killed. With both Photios' patrons Bardas and Michael III dead, no one was left to support him while the lowborn Basil who now became the new emperor also

did not trust Photios, thus when becoming emperor, Basil I soon enough fired Photios from his position as patriarch replacing him with the same old patriarch Ignatios who Photios replaced in 858. Basil's reason now to remove Photios was not because he really hated Photios but that he wanted to end the schism and reconcile with the pope to gain the kingdoms of Western Europe, most particularly the Frankish Empire which answered to the pope as an ally against the Arabs in the Mediterranean, and thus with Ignatios reinstated as patriarch the "Photian Schism" had ended.

10 years later though in 877, Patriarch Ignatios died at the old age of 80, and here by this point Basil already having reconciled with Photios reinstated Photios as Patriarch of Constantinople, and now as patriarch again the new pope at this point which was John VIII no longer saw Photios as a direct threat but as an esteemed leader and diplomat for his success in converting the Slavs in his first term as patriarch, therefore there was no more schism even with Photios as patriarch again and in fact Photios was now fully recognized as the Patriarch of Constantinople by the pope. In his second term as patriarch though, Photios was no longer as politically active as in his first term, instead during his second term he was better known for being the teacher of the emperor Basil I's sons the future emperors Leo VI (r. 886-912) and Alexander (r. 912-913), as well as to the future Tsar of Bulgaria Simeon (r. 893-927) who was educated in Constantinople. Photios too in 883 took the side of Basil I against Basil's son Leo- who was believed to not be Basil's son but the late Michael III's illegitimate son- when Leo was accused of plotting to have Basil killed to avenge the death of Michael III who Leo also believed to be his own father. However, when Basil thought of having Leo who he had imprisoned blinded, Photios convinced Basil to not do so, instead Leo was released in 886 but shortly after Basil I died in what was a "hunting accident" also in 886 whereas Leo succeeded him as emperor. Under the new emperor Leo VI, Photios was once again fired from his position as patriarch despite being Leo's tutor, thus Photios was banished to Armenia although there he still continued to be an active scholar finishing his literary work, and it was in Armenia where he died in 893. Long after his death, Photios had been remembered as "the leading light of the 9th century renaissance" and he too was canonized as an Orthodox saint for his efforts and success in sending missionaries to convert the Slavs to Orthodoxy.

This illustration of Patriarch Photios I of Constantinople was based off on several religious icons and frescos which depict Photios himself as a saint wherein these frescos and icons show Photios wearing this kind of black and white liturgical vestments with cross patterns which appear in most Byzantine religious icons depicting historical Church leaders. The robes Photios is seen wearing here consists of a long white scarf-like vestment with black crosses sewn into it known as an *Omophorion*, under that a white mantle with black cross patterns on it known as a *Chasuble*, and beneath that an inner white tunic with gold trimmings which were usually worn by Church leaders beneath their vestments. Although it is most likely impossible- at least historically- the right arm of Photios shows him wearing a golden cuff with jewels which was however only based on a feature seen on icons depicting him and other sainted religious leaders. On his left hand, Photios appears to be holding what is most likely a Bible wherein its cover is ornate and adorned with jewels, and again this feature was based off on religious icons which may not be entirely historically accurate. On his right hand as well, Photios is seen with 3 fingers up which was

a feature present a lot in Byzantine religious icons depicting saints while in terms of facial appearance, Photios like most Patriarchs of Constantinople do, has a long beard while in terms of age he appears to be in his 50s here which was the age he was at when being patriarch for the first time.

D-7 Varangian Guardsman, 11th century



One of the most, if not THE MOST famous elite military unit in Byzantine history was the Varangian Guard which served as the personal bodyguard force of Byzantine emperors for a long period of time (10th to 14th centuries). The Varangian Guard force was known for being a unit that primarily composed of Northern European warriors whether Norsemen (Vikings) from Scandinavia, the Rus' (Russians), and later Anglo-Saxons from Britain. Byzantine emperors beginning with Basil II (r. 976-1025) preferred having these foreign warriors from distant lands as personal bodyguards because of their proven loyalty to the emperor in particular, as being from foreign lands these warriors not knowing anything about the rivalries between political factions and therefore not knowing who to be loyal to only knew that they were to be loyal to the emperor, especially since they were recruited and paid particularly to serve the emperor. Additionally, the name of this unit being *Varangian* comes from the Old Norse word *var* which means "pledge" whereas the Byzantines in Greek used the name *Varangos* which derived from this Old Norse word as true enough these Varangian warriors when being recruited to serve the emperor swore an

oath of loyalty to him. On the other hand, "Varangian" was the word that the Byzantines (Eastern Romans) knew the Norsemen as whereas "Viking" was the word referred to them by those in Western Europe.

Varangian warriors now have been in the service of the Byzantine Empire from as early as 874 during the reign of Emperor Basil I the Macedonian (867-886), although back then these Varangians were only mercenaries in the Byzantine army and not yet a formal unit. It was only beginning 988 when the Varangian Guard was established as a formal military unit that was made to particularly protect the emperor and the palace wherein it was also a contingent in the division of the entire Byzantine army which was known as the *Tagmata* or simply the "imperial army". It was Basil I's great-great-grandson the emperor Basil II that integrated these Varangian warriors into a unit in the imperial *Tagmata* army, and this was due to Basil II's policy of the Christianization of the Kievan Rus' state, as in exchange for Basil's sister Anna marrying the Kievan Rus' prince Vladimir I, Vladimir would convert to Orthodox Christianity and so would his people while Vladimir too would send an army of 6,000 to Byzantium which was to assist Basil II in a civil war against his rival general Bardas Phokas. These 6,000 men that came to the service of Byzantium in 988 mostly consisted of Rus' warriors (from today's Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine) but also immigrants from much distant Scandinavia in search of wealth and adventure, and true enough these Varangians proved to be so effective in helping Basil II crush this rebellion that he turned them into a professional bodyguard force that swore to protect the emperor for a said number of years.

Having the role of being the emperor's personal protectors was something these Varangian warriors were used to as back in their native homelands there were warriors specifically serving their rulers as bodyguards such as the *Druzhina* for the Kievan Rus', the *Hirdsmen* in Scandinavia, and the *Housecarls* for the Anglo-Saxons. In Byzantium, the Varangians being the emperor's bodyguard had ceremonial duties as guards during important functions in the imperial palace, while at times they had police duties especially in hunting down conspirators and traitors against the emperor, guarding high-profile prisoners and prisons, crushing rebellions in the name of the emperor, and even guarding the emperor's bedroom at times. The Varangians too if needed especially if the situation was critical were summoned to battle or to be stationed in fortresses across the empire especially if there was a serious attack, as true enough Byzantine generals across the empire highly preferred the Varangian warriors for their bravery and fearlessness. The Varangian Guard unit also had a leader usually appointed known as an *Akolouthos* (or "Acolyte") which was usually a native Byzantine but in rare cases a Varangian wherein one notable one was the future King of Norway Harald III Hadrada (r. 1046-1066) who famously served for a time in Byzantium's Varangian Guard. Usually, the Varangians participated in battle if the emperor was leading a campaign wherein their role was to guard the emperor, and true enough the emperor Basil II was accompanied by his Varangian Guards during his Bulgarian campaign in the 1010s wherein the Varangians had a major role in winning a decisive victory for the Byzantines which led to the full Byzantine conquest of Bulgaria by 1018. Following this, a number of Byzantine generals requested for a contingent of Varangian Guards to assist them in battling different enemies across the empire with one case being in 1018 as well wherein the Varangians had a crucial role in

destroying a Lombard rebellion in Byzantine-held Southern Italy and years later from 1038-1040 the Varangians formed a large part of the Byzantine army in the expedition to reclaim Sicily from the Arabs which however failed, though part of the Varangians in this expedition was no other than Harald Hardrada.

Although primarily, the Varangians usually fought especially when the emperor was in battle wherein they used their large “Dane-axes” as the main weapon which proved effective in striking down multiple enemies especially when they acted as berserkers charging into battle in a rage without caring about losing blood nor receiving wounds, while these axes too were effective in taking down horses and cavalymen. Another famous case of the Varangians protecting the emperor in battle was at the disastrous Battle of Manzikert against the Seljuk Turks in 1071 where the Varangians fought to the last man protecting the emperor Romanos IV Diogenes (r. 1068-1071) who at the end was captured anyway by the Seljuks. The Varangians too had many instances where they had turned against an emperor and supported a new one such as in this case also after Manzikert in 1071 when they took part in the palace coup that overthrew Emperor Romanos IV and proclaimed Michael VII Doukas (r. 1071-1078) as emperor. Another rather unknown yet a strange fact about the Varangians is that they had a practice of looting the imperial treasury and taking as much gold as they could carry when an emperor dies, which was apparently an Old Norse procedure for a ruler’s bodyguards of pillaging his riches following his death, and this is apparently why some Varangians came home to their homelands extremely rich wherein some like the Norwegian Harald Hardrada came home to Norway rich enough to buy his way to power and become king. Basically, men from distant northern lands like Russia, Scandinavia, and later even Britain journeyed all the way to Byzantium, and Constantinople in particular which they knew as *Miklagard* to serve in the emperor’s Varangian Guard to return home rich, which is why many Varangians never really married local Byzantine women or settled in Byzantium. The Varangians too received great bonuses when helping the Byzantine army win a victory in battle or crushing a rebellion, and true enough the Varangians proved to be really effective in crushing rebellions targeted at the emperor especially since their main purpose was to serve him.

At first, during the end of the 10th century most Varangian Guardsmen were composed of men from the Kievan Rus’ Empire, though by the 11th century they were mostly composed of Scandinavians who journeyed to Byzantium in search of wealth and adventure and a large percent of these Scandinavians were Swedes, although many too were Danes and Norwegians. By the end of the 11th century, the majority of the Varangian Guard force were no longer composed of Scandinavians but Anglo-Saxon exiles from England especially due to England being taken over by the Normans since 1066. For most of the 12th century, the Varangian Guard force consisted of Anglo-Saxons, although they still proved to be an effective force in battle as seen at the Battle of Beroia in 1122 where they played a major role in winning a Byzantine victory over the Pechenegs as the Varangians hacked into the Pecheneg wooden camp with their large axes. The 12th century historian Anna Komnene (1083-1153) who wrote about the reign of her father the Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081-1118) true enough describes the Varangians at her time as “axe-bearing barbarians from Thule” wherein the axe-bearing part refers to their large axes and Thule referring to a distant land which was in fact Britain. The last time the

Varangians had an active role in battle was in defending Constantinople from the attacks of the army of the 4th Crusade in 1203, and although the Varangians were present during the 4th Crusade's final attack on the city in 1204, Constantinople fell to the 4th Crusade as the Varangians fled due to no more Byzantine emperor in power to pay them. With the Byzantine Empire shortly afterwards reborn in exile as the Empire of Nicaea from 1204-1261, the Varangian Guard was revived though only as a ceremonial force that protected the emperor in exile but also to make the emperor seem legitimate while the last mention of the Varangian Guard in battle was at the Battle of Pelagonia in 1259 wherein it was the Varangians that captured and escorted the Latin Prince of Achaia William Villehardouin to prison. The Varangian Guard force was said to have existed up until around 1400, though by this time the Varangian Guard no longer had an active role but rather only ceremonially as more or less a relic of the glorious past of Byzantium and a decoration guarding the imperial palace in Constantinople following its Byzantine reconquest from the Latins in 1261, while its members were most likely no longer of Rus', Scandinavian, or Anglo-Saxon origins but rather most possibly Byzantine Greek locals that can trace their ancestry to the original Varangians. The Varangians on the other hand left behind many traces of their existence such as runes in Byzantine territory and in their homelands in Scandinavia wherein they left behind several runes that describe Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire itself, while on the other hand several Norse sagas describe the heroic deeds of the Varangians that journeyed to Constantinople to serve the emperor with a famous one being the 13th century Icelandic *Laxdaela Saga* about Bolli Bollason, the first known Iclander in the Varangian Guard.

This illustration shows a Varangian Guardsman in the service of the Byzantine Empire most definitely during the 11th century, which was what could be known as the "Golden Age" of the Varangian Guard wherein the Varangian Guard force mostly consisted of Scandinavians (Vikings). In this illustration, this particular Varangian Guard is labelled as a Scandinavian warrior being tall in height in which many Varangians actually were while additionally they were not only tall but muscular, full of stamina, and brave that they would be first to charge into battle with their large axes as berserkers in a frenzy that they did not mind being wounded or dying in battle, which also showed just how committed they were to serving the emperor. The armor of this Varangian was based off on several illustrations and recreations of Byzantine Varangian Guardsmen as true enough not a lot of sources describe in detail the uniform of the Varangians, while there are not really any visual sources from the Byzantine era surviving today that show the Varangian Guard except for the 11th century manuscript known as the *Madrid Skylitzes* which although does not give detailed visuals of the Varangians and their attire except for their large axes. As a special unit in the Byzantine army that was engaged in heavy combat, this Varangian wears two layers of armor, first a chainmail shirt known by the Byzantines in Greek as a *Lorikion* over his red tunic, and over it a layer of lamellar armor sewn into leather known by the Byzantines in Greek as *Klivanion* wherein at the bottom of it are small red tassels known as *Pteruges* which here are only for decorative functions as the real protective leather tassels known as *Kremasmata* are seen attached to the armor both at the arm holes and down below at the thighs. This Varangian has extra protection for the head as seen with an additional chainmail coif which is separate from his chainmail shirt, which here covers the entire head except for the eyes- which was most probably done to strike fear into his

enemies- while the helmet he wears over it is the kettle-shaped Byzantine helmet. This Varangian too is seen wearing a type of metal gauntlets protecting his arms known to the Byzantines in Greek as *Cheiropsella* and a similar type of metal greaves protecting his lower legs and leather boots known to the Byzantines in Greek as *Podopsella*, while he too wears leather gloves over his arms. Although this Varangian like many others serving in the Varangian Guard already wears Byzantine style armor rather than his own native Scandinavian style armor, he still bears traditional Scandinavian weapons in which the one seen here is his large two-handed and single-bladed *Dane-axe* on his right hand, while the round wooden shield on his left is his native Viking round shield, though the Byzantine weapon he is seen holding here is his secondary weapon being the standard Byzantine straight double-edged sword or *Spathion* wherein it is sheathed here. The Varangians true enough went to battle with their traditional Viking weapons and shields that the 11th century Byzantine historian Michael Psellos even describes the Varangians in his time as “a whole group carrying shields and brandishing on their shoulders a certain single-edged, heavy iron weapon” which hints that they used these certain “Dane-axes” which they drew from behind their backs, and due to carrying these distinct axes many Byzantine writers referred to the Varangians as “axe bearing barbarians” or *Pelekyphoroi Barbaroi* in Greek.

D-8 Basil the Digenes Akritas



As much as the Byzantine Empire's history featured countless military heroes with great military feats, Byzantium too featured many literary works discussing the heroic deeds of fictional military heroes. One such literary work is the epic poem known as the *Acritic Songs* which is also the surviving epic poem of the Byzantine Empire the way England had the *Arthurian Legends* and Ancient Greece the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as their own versions of epic poetry. Like most epic poems, Byzantium's "Acritic Songs" or more specifically *The Song of Digenes Akritas* is a tale of the heroic and chivalric deeds of the half-blooded warrior Basil who is known as "Digenes Akritas" which in Greek means the "two-blooded border lord". This story too is considered Byzantium's "national epic" as it reflects both Byzantium's type of literature but also their culture and military values of chivalry, loyalty, and learning to put aside differences for the good of the empire. Now, in the Byzantine Empire especially during the period from the 7th-11th centuries when the Byzantines were constantly at war with the Arab powers in the east, a certain military class was created in charge of defending the empire's borders especially from the Arabs, and this military class that guarded the border were known as the *Akritai* (singular: *Akritas*) whereas their bravery in defending the empire's border made them worthy enough of having epic poetry written about them. In the case of the "Song of Digenes Akritas", its hero Basil belonged to the famous *Akritai* border guard who as his name "Digenes" suggests is a half-blood being a Byzantine Greek of Cappadocia on his mother's side and Arab on his father's side.

In this epic poem on the life and heroic deeds of Basil, the story begins describing his background wherein his mother being from a powerful Byzantine military aristocrat clan being the Doukas clan from Cappadocia is kidnapped by an Arab emir. Although after kidnapping this woman, the emir ends up converting to Orthodox Christianity and later marries this woman and even settles in the Byzantine Empire with some of his people. The emir and the Byzantine noblewoman later have a child which is the story's hero Basil and already as a young boy, Basil proves his bravery and strength when he goes hunting with his father and kills two bears unarmed by strangling the first to death and breaking the second's spine while he too kills a lion in the same manner. When grown up, Basil follows in the footsteps of his father wherein he also kidnaps a daughter of a Byzantine general which in this case is Eudokia who he eventually marries. The story also mentions him taking down a group of bandits all by himself wherein he defeats their 3 leaders in single combat while he too is involved in fictional scenarios such as slaying a dragon. The strength of Basil became so unmatched that no one, not even the strongest female warrior named Maximu could match him. The story ends with Basil once having defeated all his enemies building a luxurious palace at Byzantium's border at the Euphrates River ending his days peacefully. The Cypriot version of the story on the other hand mentions Basil grabbing hold of the "5 Fingers" mountain range of Cyprus using it to leap all the way to Asia Minor. Later versions of "Digenes Akritas" though say that Basil is only defeated by death in the form of the Ancient Greek *Thanatos* beating him in a wrestling match.

Now when it comes to the story of Digenes Akritas, despite being a work of historical fiction, it still definitely had a specific time period it was set in, and this time period is more or less the early 10th century which is where the story arc of Basil takes place as the events mentioned before his birth were actual events in Byzantine history that

took place in the late 9th century while his mother's family being the powerful Doukas clan were also prominent in the early 10th century as troublemakers for the ruling Macedonian Dynasty. Since the character of Basil the Digenes Akritas is a fictional one, for this illustration of him he wears armor wherein its parts come from different periods in Byzantine history, as well as his banner and weapons. For instance, the helmet worn by Basil here is a more ornate one with gold edges and a leather skirt sticking out of it below with golden scales whereas the red horsehair sticking out of the helmet above known to the Byzantines as a *Flamouliskia* also indicates his high-rank and status. The armor Basil is seen wearing here is a type of Byzantine lamellar armor known to them as *Klivanion* that may have not existed in the 10th century where the story most likely took place as this kind of armor was worn during later periods, particularly the 13th and 14th centuries. This armor now has the distinct feature of a breastplate made of lamellar scales forming a circle at the center which is therefore why this type of armor is also referred to as "mirror armor" as it consists of two identical lamellar circles, one in front and the other behind (not visible). Additionally, this armor appears to also have a metal collar area to protect the shoulders and neck area, extra protection for the upper arms consisting of scales sewn over leather, and attached to the body armor below are short leather pieces sticking out known as *Pteruges* which here have no real function except only as decoration for the armor. The real protection piece beneath the armor seen here is first the longer leather tassels which here comes in 3 layers known by the Byzantines as *Kremasmata*, and below that and the entire body armor itself is a chainmail shirt or *Lorikion*. The red tunic with golden trimmings as well as the ornate blue skirt under the chainmail indicates Basil as being someone wealthy as true enough only wealthy Byzantines wore ornate and rather complicated clothing. Other than that, Basil in this illustration is seen also wearing metal greaves protecting the legs with the double-headed eagle symbols on them which was the symbol associated with Byzantium, while his weapon here being a more ornate Byzantine straight double-edged sword or *Spathion* is seen sheathed with most of it covered by his armor, though the weapon he is holding here is a long spear which the Byzantines knew by the name *Kontos* and attached to it is the Byzantine flag from the Macedonian Dynasty era (867-1056) which indicates the character being in this era which was true enough where the story of Basil the Digenes Akritas was more or less set in.

D-9 Mounted Cataphract Cavalryman, 10th century



The armored cavalrymen force known as the *Cataphracts* (Greek: *Kataphraktoi*/ Latin: *Cataphracti*) have existed since ancient times originating in Persia as a heavy cavalry force consisting of both horse and rider fully or almost fully enclosed in armor. The name “Cataphract” true enough comes from the Greek word *Kataphraktos* which literally means “armored” or “completely enclosed”, and long before they were in use by the Byzantine Empire in the Middle Ages, they have already been used by various powers that used horsemen in battle such as the Scythians, Sarmatians, Alans, Parthians, Achaemenid Persians, Armenians, Georgians, Seleucids, Sassanid Persians, Romans, Goths, Chinese, and Koreans. The Roman Empire though came late in adopting the Cataphract cavalry which was at their time dominant in the Eastern world and it was only by the 3rd century when the Romans began having a Cataphract cavalry force which was their response to the new powers that began threatening them in the 3rd century being the Goths in the north and the Sassanid Persian Empire in the east in which both powers relied a lot on cavalry which thus made the Romans have to start relying more on one in order to face them as prior to that the Romans heavily relied on infantry. From the 3rd century onwards, the Cataphracts-known in Latin as the *Cataphractarii*- were a formidable unit in the Roman army as an effective cavalry, and with the Roman capital moving east to Constantinople as well as the division of the Roman Empire between east and west in 395, the Cataphracts would be more dominant in the Eastern Roman Empire- which eventually was the Byzantine Empire-based in Constantinople.

Throughout almost the entire history of the Byzantine Empire, the Cataphracts served as both a heavy cavalry and shock cavalry force especially to break enemy formations while the cavalymen were equipped with multiple weapons as their role was to wear down the enemy and break their formations with different kinds of tactics whether charging at them with full force, thrusting them with their spears, slashing them with their swords, bludgeoning them with their maces, or firing arrows to disperse the enemy. Over the centuries, the arms and armor as well as the fighting styles of the Byzantine Cataphracts had evolved and so did their unit's name from the Latin "Cataphractarii" to the Greek "Kataphraktoi" by the time Byzantium's language shifted from Latin to Greek in the 7th century. By the 7th century as well, the Byzantine Empire's administrative system as a whole was reorganized into the Thematic System where the empire was divided into military provinces or *Themes* wherein each recruited troops locally while each Theme had its own army under a governor-general known as a *Strategos* that would always be there as a force to be deployed if a said part of the empire was under attack wherein the nearby army most likely from the said Theme would come to the rescue unlike in earlier years wherein an entire army would have to travel all the way from one part of the empire to reinforce another. In the Byzantine Empire's Themes, the Cataphracts served as a core cavalry unit for each Theme wherein members of the Cataphract units were recruited from among the middle-class landowners of the Theme and were to serve as professional troops that were paid a regular salary while their armor too was manufactured by the Theme's central armory, although a Cataphract soldier would have to pay for extra accessories for his or his horse's armor while his horse was usually his own, and in return these Cataphract soldiers were rewarded with land in the Theme they belonged to for their military service.

It was during the 10th century when the Byzantine Cataphracts had its heyday, especially under the military emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963-969) who made the Cataphracts into a deadly force in battle by developing new fighting styles for them. Part of the styles Nikephoros II developed for the Cataphract army was in having them attack in either a row formation to harass the enemy or in a wedge formation to run straight into the enemy's formation. Another tactic the Cataphracts used in battle was to have a first row of them advance in a trot and fire arrows at the enemy leaving the other rows to charge at the enemy in a long horizontal line wherein they would use their spears, swords, or maces against the enemy units. All these tactics used by the Cataphracts in the 10th century too happen to be mentioned in Nikephoros II's military manual known as the *Praecepta Militaria*. In the Byzantine Empire, the Cataphracts are never said to have died out as a military force as rather, over the centuries, they had simply been reduced in number due to the Byzantines in later centuries using more infantry than cavalry troops whereas hired foreign mercenaries had usually served as cavalry troops. The Cataphracts of Byzantium too may have greatly influenced the mounted knights of medieval Western Europe together with their fighting styles and type of equipment used. The Cataphracts of Byzantium, particularly in the 10th century wore lamellar or scale armor which was worn by both horse and rider, and apparently scale or lamellar armor was worn by Cataphracts universally as it was flexible enough to give both the horse and rider a good degree of motion, yet strong enough to resist the impact of a heavy charge into infantry formations.

This illustration now was based off on several present-day illustrations and recreations by reenactors of Byzantine Cataphracts from the Middle-Byzantine period (7th-12th centuries) which are based on primary sources. The Cataphract in this illustration wears a set of lamellar armor for his body, upper arms, and thighs wherein this armor type was known by the Byzantines as *Klivanion* in Greek which consists of overlapping scales sewn to each other either by leather straps or bronze wires placed over a layer of leather. The name for this armor type “Klivanion” derives from the Greek word *klivanos* meaning “oven” because this armor type tended to get unbearably hot like an oven when worn in the sun. The armor of this soldier also consists of the same lamellar armor protecting the thighs which the Byzantines called this segment protecting the thighs as *Kremasmata* which is also the section protecting the upper arms, while this Cataphract is seen wearing metal pauldrons to protect the shoulders which the Byzantines referred to as *Epomides*, while over the chest area of the armor is a type of leather harness to give more support to the upper part of the rider’s body. The rider is seen to not be wearing a chainmail shirt inside his armor, instead he wears a chainmail coif over his head which fully encloses it only leaving his eyes seen which was also used to strike fear into enemies as they did not see the enemy rider’s face, then over his head is a small semi-sphere-shaped helmet just to protect the upper head wherein sticking out of it from above are decorative strands of horsehair which the Byzantines referred to as *Flamouliskia*. Beneath the rider’s armor, instead of wearing chainmail he wears a padded inner vest for additional protection inside which was known by the Byzantines as either a *Zava* or *Kavadion*- which was also often worn by Byzantine soldiers inside their lamellar armor- wherein only a part of it is visible in dark green seen below the lamellar armor section on his left upper arm and below the lamellar armor section on his left thigh, and beneath the padded vest is already his tunic. This Cataphract soldier also wears a type of metal greaves for his lower legs known by the Byzantines as *Podopsella* wherein the one on his left leg is visible while his right arm shows him wearing the Byzantine gauntlets known as *Cheiropsella* wherein only the back of it is seen here in the form of the leather straps used to fasten it, and additionally the soldier has a blue cloak worn over his armor.

As for their weapons, the Byzantine Cataphracts carried up to 4 with them at the same time being their spear or *Kontos* as their main weapon for thrusting, a sword as the secondary weapon, sometimes a mace, and a bow. However, the soldier here is only seen with his spear which measures up to 4 meters long wherein this has a banner attached to it while his other weapon seen here is his sword wherein only its sheath is visible, whereas he is also seen holding a small round shield with the mark of Christ (the *Chi-rho*) painted on it to symbolize his role of not only defending his empire but his Christian faith, while the Cataphracts usually wielded small round shields as shields were not useful anyway when charging at enemies with full force. As for the horse, its armor is the same lamellar type worn by the rider which covers almost the entire horse in the form of a large blanket made of metal scales sewn into a leather layer wherein one section of it was for the horse’s body going all the way down to its lower limbs while another section was to cover its neck all while a fitted metal piece was placed over the horse’s face in front which is attached to the lamellar section. Additionally, as this Cataphract is already from the 10th century, the horse already includes a stirrup for the rider to place his feet on as apparently the Byzantines did not use the stirrup until about the 7th century, while on the other hand this horse also has a

blanket section over its back for the rider to sit on in order to ride comfortably without getting his bottom injured by the sharp scale armor of his horse. Again, as the name Cataphract meant “completely enclosed”, Cataphract soldiers were not only completely covered in armor, their horses too were, hence in this illustration both horse and rider are in full armor, and true enough a full set of Cataphract armor for both horse and rider consisted of approximately 1,300 scales weighing up to 40kg altogether!

D-10 Constans II, Byzantine emperor (641-668)



One Byzantine emperor to have experienced ruling the empire at such a major turning point was Constans II in the 7th century as in his 27-year reign (641-668), the Byzantine Empire lost a great amount of territory in the east to the Arabs thus forcing the Byzantines to be on the defensive which they would be for the next 200 years all while the empire’s cultural and linguistic atmosphere had shifted from Latin to Greek. Constans now was born as “Heraclius Constantine” in 630 in Constantinople when his grandfather Heraclius (r. 610-641) still ruled as emperor whereas Heraclius’ eldest son Constantine was Constans’ father. Although Constans’ real name was Heraclius Constantine which were the names of his grandfather and father, he was known by his nickname “Constans” (*Konstas* in Greek) which meant “little Constantine” while as emperor he too ruled by his real name, though history remembers him by his nickname. When Constans was only 10-years-old in 641, his grandfather Heraclius died and was thus succeeded by his son and

Constans' father Constantine III who after ruling for just 3 months died and was succeeded by his half-brother Heraklonas who was soon enough banished from Constantinople together with his mother and regent Martina- Heraclius' second wife- by the loyalists of Constantine III led by the general Valentinus who then placed the late Constantine III's son Constans II in power despite his young age. Even at such a young age, Constans proved to possess great intellect and cunning when he spoke to the senators in such a convincing way that convinced them that his father Constantine III was killed by Martina and Heraklonas all because of their greed for power which thus gave a valid reason to banish both Martina and Heraklonas. Constans II due to his young age began his reign under the regency of his father's trusted general Valentinus, a council of senators, and the Patriarch of Constantinople Paul II, and despite his young age too Constans in 642 served as an honorary consul in the Byzantine Senate making him the last emperor to serve as a consul.

Just a few months into the young Constans' reign in 642, the Byzantine forces completely withdrew from Egypt allowing the new rising power of the Arab Rashidun Caliphate to completely take over the province just as they had done with Byzantine Syria and Palestine a few years earlier in the last years of Heraclius' reign. A Byzantine fleet however under the admiral Manuel attempted to recapture Egypt going as far as liberating Alexandria from the Arabs in 645 but not too long after, the Arabs returned with a large army expelling the Byzantines from Egypt for good. In the meantime, the young Constans in around 643 had even sent an embassy consisting of Byzantine senators all the way to the court of the Chinese emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty in the Chinese capital Chang'an. On the other hand, Constans II's early reign was already troubled as in 645 his supposed protector Valentinus who even became his father-in-law- with Valentinus' daughter Fausta marrying Constans and thus proclaimed empress- suddenly made an attempt to seize the throne from Constans but failed to do so as the people of Constantinople rallied by the patriarch Paul II refused to allow him entry into the city and instead stormed out of the walls and lynched Valentinus to death. Constans now at only 14 or 15 was forced to rule the empire alone with no more regent as his mother Gregoria too was never mentioned to be his regent thus making Constans lose his youth years. The very troubled state the Byzantine Empire Constans would rule which had usurpers left and right and invasions every now and then would thus turn the teenage Constans into the ruthless and autocratic type of ruler in which he would rule his entire reign as.

At such a young age too, Constans already involved himself in religious issues wherein he stood for the *Monothelite* doctrine of Christ's natures which many especially in the western parts of the empire saw as heretical, and true enough Constans' stand on this religious issue made him greatly unpopular that in 646 the semi-autonomous Byzantine governor of North Africa known as the *Exarch of Africa* Gregory who was based in Carthage rose up in rebellion against Constans' pro-Monothelite policies as Gregory was strongly Chalcedonian (Orthodox). Gregory's rebellion however never succeeded as the Rashidun Arab army that had already taken over Egypt marched west across the Sahara Desert meeting up with Gregory's rebel army in 647 where the Arabs defeated it even killing Gregory in the process and thus making the Byzantine Exarchate of Africa an Arab vassal while in the east the Arab armies had already broken in to Byzantine Armenia and Cappadocia. Constans II on the other hand attempted to end the entire conflict between

Chalcedonian and Monothelite Christians over their views on the natures of Christ by issuing a controversial decree in 648 known as the *Typos of Constans* which forbade any kind of debates on religion especially since the empire was in a troubled state. The one however who did not comply with the emperor's decree was the pope Martin I who saw this as a violation on religious freedom and soon Constans in 649 ordered the pope's arrest without hesitation, although the operation failed whereas Constans was again faced with a major challenge of the Arabs now invading Byzantine Asia Minor in 650, which then forced Constans to make a truce with the Arab governor of Syria Muawiyah. After concluding a truce with the Arabs, Constans returned to his mission in arresting Pope Martin I, and so to legitimize the pope's arrest Constans claimed that Martin I was elected as pope without the emperor's approval, and thus in 653 the pope's arrest worked when the Byzantine Exarch (governor) of Italy based in Ravenna came to Rome and sent the pope over to Constantinople in chains as a condemned criminal. Constans who was very furious with the pope being elected without his approval and not complying with his decree of having absolutely no more religious debates exiled the pope to Cherson, the remote cold northern province of the Byzantine Empire in the Crimea Peninsula north of the Black Sea where the pope would die just 2 years later in 655.

Although the Arabs concluded a truce with Constans, in 654 the Arab Governor of Syria Muawiyah who now took over the once Byzantine fleet in Syria began raiding Byzantine held islands in the Aegean including Rhodes where it was said that the Arabs carted off the remains of the ancient famous statue known as the Colossus of Rhodes which took up to 900 camels to cart off the remains which were then melted down and turned into coins. The Arab attack on Rhodes thus forced Constans to go into action by assembling his fleet, and in 655 the Byzantine fleet of Constans consisting of 500 ships met with the Arab fleet of only 200 ships at the Battle of the Masts somewhere near the Aegean coast of Asia Minor where despite having more ships, the Byzantines still lost to the Arabs whose ships were faster. Constans nearly lost his life in this battle if not for him swapping clothes with a sailor who by wearing the emperor's purple robes was mistaken for Constans and killed by the Arabs as Constans in the disguise of a sailor managed to make it back to Constantinople. Following this Arab victory, the Arab fleet even attempted to attack Constantinople by sea but never made it as a violent storm forced them to turn back to Syria while in the following year (656), the Arab Rashidun Caliphate was plunged into a civil war known as the First Fitnah wherein the Governor of Syria Muawiyah emerged victorious by 661 taking over as the new caliph, ending the Rashidun Caliphate which was the first Islamic Empire and replacing it with a new one being the Umayyad Caliphate which was based in his capital Damascus in Syria making the Arabs now ever more closer to Byzantium unlike with the Rashiduns wherein their base of power was all the way south in Medina in the Arabian Desert.

As the Arabs were undergoing the civil war between 656 and 661, Constans II used this time to reorganize Byzantium's defenses where in 658, he defeated a Slav invasion in the Balkans wherein the defeated Slavs were resettled into Asia Minor. From 659-661, Constans reorganized the administrative structure of Byzantine Asia Minor which was therefore when the new system of military provinces known as the *Themes* or "Thematic System" was established wherein 5 Themes were created in Byzantine Asia Minor, and

each Theme had its own governor-general or *Strategos* and each was to recruit its army locally per Theme so that each Theme had an army large enough to repel an Arab raid from the east while at the same time when one army would be busy defending the border, another one from another Theme would be needed elsewhere if another part of the empire was under attack, unlike in earlier years wherein an army would have to march from one end of the empire to another if one side was under attack. This new system established under Constans II would true enough turn out to be so effective, although Constans would become increasingly unpopular especially by the people of Constantinople due to his harsh taxation and autocratic style of ruling. In 660, Constans went as far as having his brother Theodosius banished from the palace and later secretly killed as he feared that his brother would one day oust him from power especially now that Constans had begun growing unpopular. With Theodosius no longer in the picture, Constans had his 3 sons Constantine, Heraclius, and Tiberius crowned as his co-emperors, but still being unpopular in Constantinople, Constans decided to leave the capital for good and move his imperial court to Syracuse in Sicily.

Before heading to Italy, Constans with an army headed to Thessaloniki where they fought off an invading army of Slavs successfully in 662 and following that they stayed for a time in Athens before setting sail for Italy in 663. Once in Italy, Constans with his army launched an attack against the new Lombard Duchy of Benevento in the south taking advantage of the Lombard ruler being away, and although this Byzantine attack was successful, it was soon enough repelled when the Lombard ruler returned thus forcing Constans and his men to retreat to Naples. For some 12 days in 663, Constans himself visited Rome where the pope Vitalian welcomed him and toured him around the city, thus this made Constans the last Roman emperor to set foot in Rome with Rome still under Roman (Byzantine) hands, while he too would be the first Eastern Roman emperor since the East-West division of the Roman Empire in 395 to set foot in Rome, the cradle of their civilization. When in Rome, despite being welcomed by the pope in which this one was in friendly terms with Constans, Constans' soldiers had stripped off the ornaments of buildings in Rome including the Pantheon in which these ornaments were sent to Constantinople to be minted into coins especially with the empire here already lacking funds for the constant wars they would soon face. Constans on the other hand also believed that it was time to restore Byzantine rule to Italy which was after all the birthplace of their Roman civilization, although he also felt that it would be safer to move the capital there especially since the east where Constantinople was located was too exposed to the Arab attacks.

For the next 4 years from 664-668, nothing much is mentioned about Constans except it was in this time when he held court in Syracuse, and possibly he had been regaining his youth that he lost during his teenage years when ruling a highly troubled empire. When in Sicily, it was said that Constans raised the taxes so brutally that the Sicilian locals could no longer afford it, especially since they did not have much money as those in Constantinople or in the east, and this tax policy of his led Constans to be even hated by the Sicilians. Suddenly in 668, Constans II met an unlikely and unexpected end at the age of 37 when bathing in the baths of the palace in Syracuse wherein the Arab court historian Theophilos of Edessa says that his Greek servant struck him in the head with a

bucket (or soap-dish), but the mystery remains on who sent his servant to kill him. One theory is that the people of Sicily who hated him for his harsh tax policies paid this servant to kill him in his bath, another one is that the people of Constantinople who felt abandoned by him leaving them plotted to kill him, but the most possible theory is that the new Arab caliph Muawiyah I plotted Constans' death as he feared that Constans relocating to Sicily would soon enable him to launch a fleet and take back Egypt from the Arabs due to Sicily being closer to Egypt than Constantinople was. Following Constans' death, his army in Sicily named their general Mizizios as their new emperor despite Mizizios not wanting it, but in the following year (669) Constans' son the new emperor Constantine IV (r. 668-685) when travelling to Sicily put down Mizizios' rebellion together with Constans' loyalists from the Exarchate of Africa- which by 668 was no longer an Arab vassal- wherein Mizizios was executed. Constans II now despite being quite obscure happened to be one of Byzantium's greatest reformers especially since it was under his rule when the Thematic System of Byzantium's administration which would last for many centuries to come was established.

This illustration of the 7th century Byzantine emperor Constans II was mostly based off on the coins minted during his reign which depicts him in quite a very detailed way. The coins of Constans II which shows him on it however only shows his face and upper body and not his full attire, although since it is very detailed it was not hard to recreate his image for this illustration. First of all, Constans II was known to have a very large beard which is why he is also known by the nickname "Constans the Bearded" or *Konstas o Pogonatos*, and true enough his coins show him having a large beard and long wavy hair. For this illustration, Constans is depicted in his adult years having this said large beard, a long and thick mustache, and long wavy hair like he does in his coins; whereas the type of crown he is seen wearing here which is a simple design of a golden band studded with pearls, a cross above it, and strands of pearls attached to it below known as a *Pendilia* is also the same type of crown he has in the coins depicting him. The gold-jeweled brooch or *Fibula* seen on Constans' right side fastening his cloak was also based on the one he is seen wearing on his coins and so is the purple cloak or mantle. The type of purple mantle or *Chlamys* Constans is wearing here which has a large golden square at the center known as a *Tablion* as well as the white tunic underneath, the purple socks, and ornate red shoes was based off on the attire of Byzantine emperors from the 6th and 7th centuries as seen in various present-day illustrations depicting Byzantine attire of that time and the mosaics of the 6th century Byzantine emperor Justinian I the Great (r. 527-565) and Constans II's son Constantine IV in the 7th century which are both found in Ravenna, Italy. In this illustration, Constans' left arm is tucked beneath his mantle while his right hand is holding a jeweled chalice of wine in which the illustration for this cup was based off on existing artifacts of 7th century Byzantine chalices.

D-J Theodosius I the Great, Byzantine emperor (379-395)



Very few rulers in world history had achieved as much as the Roman (Byzantine) emperor Theodosius I the Great (r. 379-395) in making Christianity an official state religion, reforming the Roman Empire's military structure, winning two major civil wars, and most importantly ruling at the end of an era as Theodosius was the last emperor to rule a united empire. Theodosius now was born in 347 in the Roman province of Hispania (Spain) to a Roman military family wherein his father Theodosius the Elder was a high-ranking general under the Western Roman emperor Valentinian I (r. 364-375). Theodosius and his family were Roman citizens said to be of Spanish (Iberian) origins, though very little is recorded about his early life except that from a young age he already joined his father the general Theodosius the Elder in military expeditions. One of the son Theodosius' earliest adventures was joining his father in suppressing the Great Conspiracy of Britain from 367-368 wherein Theodosius' father was the hero of it as he successfully stopped the Celtic and Germanic invasions of the island and punished all those who conspired to give up Britain with such brutality. The son Theodosius then received his first independent command post in 374 being appointed as the commanding officer or *Dux* of the Eastern Roman province of Moesia along the Danube (today's Serbia) wherein he successfully repelled a Sarmatian invasion. However, in 375 Theodosius' family fell out of favor following the death of the emperor Valentinian I of the west wherein Theodosius' father Theodosius the Elder who was in North Africa here was betrayed and executed while his son had to return to his homeland Hispania to retire just to avoid trouble, and back in Hispania Theodosius married Aelia Flaccilla while in 377 they had their first child being their son Arcadius.

However, due to the Goths invading the Eastern Roman Empire in full force which culminated at the Battle of Adrianople in 378 with the death of the Eastern Roman emperor Valens (r. 364-378)- who was the younger brother of Valentinian I- and following that the Goths roaming and raiding freely into Roman territory, Theodosius was recalled from Hispania to the Balkans to return to being a general in order to suppress the Goths. The Western Roman emperor Gratian (r. 367-383) meanwhile who was Valentinian I's son could not handle ruling such a massive empire alone now that his uncle Valens was gone, and so when reaching the Balkans in 379, he selected the general Theodosius to rule the east as Valens' replacement and Gratian's co-emperor due to Theodosius being the nearest capable general around to solve a migration crisis as great as this. With Theodosius now unexpectedly becoming the Eastern Roman emperor, his first objective was to clear out the Goths mindlessly laying waste to the Balkans, and due to the pillaging Goths blocking the way to Constantinople, Theodosius was first forced to hold his court in Thessaloniki. In order to put the Goths under control, Theodosius resorted to recruiting any able man in the area to the army as well as in hiring other barbarian mercenaries, although these men who were forced to be recruited into Theodosius' army refusing to fight ended up mutilating themselves only to be forced to fight anyway while the Goth mercenaries that were hired just defected to their fellow Goths anyway. The campaign against the Goths in the Balkans thus began terribly for Theodosius that Theodosius seeing no solution to fully expel the Goth migrants from Roman territory resolved to just making peace with them and allowing them to settle in Roman territory as allied forces or *Foederati* to protect the empire and serve whenever they were called to war in order to stop their pillaging.

Only in late 380 did Theodosius finally arrive in Constantinople where he permanently set up court there, and being a patron of the arts and architecture, Theodosius in his reign put his attention into making Constantinople worthy of being an imperial capital in which he had a number of obelisks shipped from Egypt to decorate Constantinople's Hippodrome while he too built a new harbor, and sometime later, Theodosius ordered the renovation of a public forum wherein he decorated it with a column dedicated to him, hence this would be the Forum of Theodosius. In 381, Theodosius attempted to make peace with the Goths by allowing their king Athanaric to retire in Constantinople and when Athanaric died, Theodosius gave him a lavish funeral with full honors only fit for emperors. In 381 as well, Theodosius I as the Eastern Roman emperor convened the Second Church Council also known as the "First Council of Constantinople" which was the council that reconfirmed the Nicene Creed made at the First Church Council in Nicaea back in 325 which defined the Holy Trinity and Natures of Christ, but more importantly the Council of Constantinople in 381 declared that the Orthodox (Nicene) Christian faith which followed the Nicene Creed established in 325 was to be the Roman Empire's official religion and that all other heresies such as Arianism which did not agree with the creed were condemned as heresies all while the Ancient Pagan religion of the Greeks and Romans as well as other Pagan religions of the empire were outlawed. In 382, the conflict with the Goths was fully resolved wherein Theodosius allowed the Goths to settle in lands along the empire's Danube border in exchange for their military service to the empire as allied troops, and these terms were true enough favorable to the Goths who came into Roman territory to look for land to settle in anyway, though this policy of

Theodosius would later on prove to be troublesome as the Goths would soon enough demand more and more land and titles.

In the west meanwhile, Theodosius' western co-emperor Gratian was killed in 383 when the Roman general in Britain Magnus Maximus, who was a long-time friend of Theodosius and fellow Roman-Spaniard rose up in rebellion against Gratian eventually tracking Gratian down to Lugdunum (Lyon) in Gaul where traitors paid off by Maximus killed Gratian. Magnus Maximus too thought of co-ruling the Roman Empire with his old friend Theodosius I wherein Maximus ruled the west and Theodosius over the east, though Theodosius proving his loyalty to the late Gratian and the Valentinian Dynasty refused to accept Maximus as his co-ruler but instead Gratian's younger half-brother Valentinian II. At first though, Theodosius did nothing about the usurper Magnus Maximus except for having troops secure the Alps to defend Italy from his army as Theodosius was preoccupied with his own problems in the east including settling down the Goth migrants along the Danube and enforcing Nicene Christianity as the official religion. In 385, Theodosius achieved making a true peace agreement with the Sassanid Empire in the east which was for the longest time the Romans' mortal enemy, and here Theodosius sent his trusted general and aide the half-Roman half-barbarian Flavius Stilicho to travel east to the Sassanid Persian capital Ctesiphon wherein Stilicho himself in behalf of Theodosius secured peace with the Sassanid ruler Shapur III (r. 383-388). The peace deal between Theodosius and Magnus Maximus however came to an end in 387 when Maximus broke the blockade in the Alps and invaded Italy from Gaul which forced the young Western Roman emperor Valentinian II with his mother Justina and sisters to flee to Theodosius in Constantinople. As for Theodosius with his first wife Aelia Flaccilla having died years earlier, he concluded an alliance with Valentinian II and Justina to take back Italy from Magnus Maximus wherein Theodosius married Justina's and the late Valentinian I's daughter Galla in 387, and in 388 Justina had died while Theodosius with an army led by his other half-barbarian general with the position of *Magister Militum* (Master of Soldiers) Arbogast headed west assured that they would defeat Maximus. Theodosius and Arbogast thus defeated Maximus' forces at the Battle of Poetovio in 388 wherein the defeated Maximus was executed, and later that year Arbogast travelled to Gaul and killed off Maximus' son and co-emperor Flavius Victor.

With the civil war over, Valentinian II returned to Italy ruling from Milan though as a puppet of his Magister Militum Arbogast whereas Theodosius returned to enforcing Nicene Christianity as the state religion that at this point, Theodosius who was also under the influence of the Christian extremist Bishop of Milan Ambrose began persecuting Pagans and heretics in an extremist manner. In 390, a bloody incident happened when a riot broke out in Thessaloniki when its local commander being the Goth Butheric imprisoned the star chariot racer, and the people angry at this killed Butheric only for Theodosius to respond to it with such brutality by ordering an army of his Goth allies to attack Thessaloniki and kill everyone responsible for killing Butheric. Theodosius however who was in Milan at that time tried to reverse the order but it was too late as the Goth troops already made it to Thessaloniki wherein they slaughtered about 7,000 civilians in the Hippodrome in only 3 hours. When hearing of this massacre in Thessaloniki, the Bishop of Milan Ambrose put a ban on Theodosius from communion and entering the Church for 8 months which was for Theodosius to make up for his sins in ordering the said massacre. After 8 months, in 391

Theodosius was finally allowed back into communion, although to save his soul, Ambrose advised Theodosius to be even more extremist with his anti-heretic and anti-Pagan policies. During the 390s, Theodosius grew more extremist that he ordered Pagan temples empire-wide to be shut down, had Ancient Pagan practices that had been a sacred tradition for centuries including the Vestal Virgins in Rome and sacrifices banned, turned Pagan holidays into workdays, and most famously he put an end to the tradition of the Olympic Games in Greece wherein the last one was held in 394. Theodosius' religious policies true enough were so extremist that he failed to stop Christian zealots in places like Egypt from burning down Pagan temples and libraries and killing Pagan scholars, and in fact Theodosius even tolerated it.

In 392 meanwhile, Theodosius' western co-emperor Valentinian II was found dead by suicide which was however part of his general Arbogast's plot to eliminate him, and with Valentinian II dead Arbogast proclaimed a scholar from Gaul named Eugenius as his new puppet emperor. At first, Theodosius again did nothing to stop the usurpation of Arbogast and Eugenius until discovering that Arbogast and Eugenius were rallying the pro-Pagan population of the Western provinces who felt suppressed by Theodosius' policies to their cause despite Arbogast and Eugenius still being Nicene Christians. Theodosius then by 393 gathered a large army of native Eastern Romans, barbarian Foederati troops, and auxiliaries from the Caucasus to head west and crush the rebellion of Arbogast and Eugenius, while in the process Theodosius and his trusted general Stilicho also recruited the Goth leader Alaric- who Stilicho previously defeated in 391- and his men to his side. The opposing forces of Theodosius and his allies and Arbogast met at the Frigidus River in today's Slovenia in 394 where the battle turned in favor of Theodosius when a strong Alpine wind rushed into the battlefield and blew directly against Arbogast's forces blowing the arrows they fired back at them while the Goths under Alaric too brutally charged into Arbogast's forces. The battle ended with a victory for Theodosius and overall for his ideology of Nicene Christianity over Paganism, although with a large number of men wiped out in both sides, it still greatly deprived the Roman Empire of manpower. The usurper puppet emperor Eugenius was thus executed while Arbogast ironically like Valentinian II was found dead by committing suicide.

Theodosius thus became the sole ruler of the entire Roman Empire, though he did not have much longer to live and just 4 months later in January of 395, he died in Milan at the age of 48 from a severe case of edema. Theodosius I thus died as the last emperor to rule the entire Roman Empire north to south from Britain to Egypt and west to east from Portugal to Syria by himself- at least only in his last 4 months- as following his death, the Roman Empire would be divided between east and west for good wherein the east would live on for a thousand more years as the Byzantine Empire whereas the Western half would die out some 80 years later (476). Theodosius I's eldest son Arcadius (r. 395-408) came to rule the Eastern half from Constantinople while the younger son Honorius (r. 395-423) would rule the Western half from Milan and later from Ravenna though Theodosius' dynasty which he founded known as the Theodosian Dynasty would rule the Eastern half until 457 and the Western half until 455. Overall, Theodosius I somewhat deserves his title "the Great" despite being such a polarizing historical figure as his reign really defined a massive political, religious, and cultural shift in the world as not only did Nicene

Christianity become the Roman Empire's official religion under him but under his rule, the barbarians have now settled in Roman borders in which they would eventually become a larger threat, an era had ended with the centuries old Pagan practices of Ancient Greece and Rome coming to an end, and the Roman Empire forever divided beginning with Theodosius' death in 395; therefore, the death of Theodosius I in 395 was what really defined the end of the old Roman civilization and the beginning of its successor in the east being the Byzantine Empire as Theodosius true enough really envisioned the east with Constantinople as the continuation of Rome's imperial traditions and systems.

This illustration of the emperor Theodosius I the Great here was based on several images and surviving pieces from his time in the late 4th century that depict him. The most notable one used as a source for this illustration especially for the armor and *diadem* style crown is the massive 5m bronze statue of a late Roman emperor found in Southern Italy known as the "Colossus of Barletta". This statue although does not specify which late Roman emperor it depicts as it could be either Valentinian I, Theodosius I, Honorius, Theodosius II (r. 408-450), Marcian (r. 450-457), Leo I (r. 457-474), or even later emperors like Justinian I (r. 527-565), or Heraclius (r. 610-641). This statue too originally came from Eastern Roman Constantinople wherein it was looted by the army of the 4th Crusade when they captured it in 1204, and although supposed to be brought to Venice it ended up being washed away in the shore of Southern Italy as the ship carrying it was shipwrecked, therefore it still stands in the town of Barletta in Southern Italy today. Just like the emperor in this massive statue, Theodosius here is wearing the same type of "imperial armor" which consists of a cuirass style "muscle armor" like those worn by Roman emperors and generals wherein a thigh-length and long-sleeved tunic is seen beneath it, and over it a cloak. As it is an imperial style armor, it includes many ceremonial elements used for decoration such as the ribbon across the waist and the white leather tassels or *Pteruges* beneath the armor protecting both the upper arms and thighs. The golden color of the armor as well as the white leather for the *Pteruges* was based on the color of illustrated versions of late Roman imperial armor which shows the emperor wearing a gold set of armor to indicate his position as emperor whereas the purple color for the ribbon, cloak, and edges of the tassels is after all the imperial color. The golden orb held by Theodosius on his left hand as well as the diadem type of crown he wears which is lined with pearls and has a single jewel at the center of it too was based off on what is seen in the said statue in Barletta. The knee-high leather boots on the other hand were also based on the type of boots seen in the statue, although the statue doesn't show the emperor wearing short trousers beneath his armor, therefore the one Theodosius is wearing here is an additional piece. The statue in Barletta on the other hand shows the emperor holding a cross on his right hand, whereas Theodosius here instead of raising a cross is holding an imperial banner with the initials of Christ in Greek (the *chi-rho*) on it. The face of Theodosius in this illustration as well as his hairstyle meanwhile were based on his appearance seen in an artifact from his time being a large silver dish known as the *Missorium of Theodosius I*.

D-Q Empress Zoe Porphyrogenita, 11th century



Among the numerous Byzantine empresses, one of the most famous ones is the 11th century empress Zoe Porphyrogenita of the Macedonian Dynasty who is both remembered for having a famous mosaic in the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and also for having a unique and interesting story being an empress-consort from 1028 until her death in 1050 and for a brief period of time in 1042 as the reigning empress, while she too ruled alongside 5 different rulers. Zoe was born in 978 at the purple room of Constantinople's imperial palace, hence she had the title *Porphyrogenita* which meant "purple born" as it was a Byzantine custom for the children of the ruling family to be born in the palace's purple room to secure their legitimacy. At Zoe's birth, her father Constantine VIII was the junior co-emperor of his older brother the emperor Basil II (r. 976-1025), and although Zoe was a purple-born, her early life remains obscure with nothing much mentioned about it as true enough her uncle the emperor Basil II wanted to keep his nieces being Zoe and her two sisters away from marrying anyone from the Byzantine nobility as it would give their husbands an opportunity to seize the Byzantine throne. Although she was not permitted to marry a Byzantine nobleman, she was permitted to marry a foreign prince, and in this case Zoe in 1002 was selected as the bride for the Holy Roman emperor Otto III in which Basil II agreed to this proposal. Zoe then set off by ship to Germany together with an Italian archbishop in order to marry Otto III, but when the ship arrived in the port of Bari in Italy, news reached Zoe that her husband-to-be Otto III had died thus forcing Zoe to return to Constantinople and remain single for the next decades to come.

With Basil II's death in 1025, his younger brother and Zoe's father Constantine VIII succeeded as the new emperor due to Basil dying childless while Zoe on the other hand 3 years later in 1028 was offered once again an opportunity to marry this time to the German prince Henry who had turned out to be only 10-years-old while Zoe here was already 50. This marriage proposal however did not happen as it also happened that in 1028, Constantine VIII died and before his death in order to secure the succession of the Macedonian Dynasty, Constantine arranged for Zoe to be married to a general also named Constantine who here was the Byzantine governor of Antioch. The emperor's advisors including the Byzantine Senate however convinced him to stop Zoe from marrying this general Constantine but instead for Zoe to marry the *Prefect* or Mayor of Constantinople Romanos Argyros as the senate wanted someone less independent and easy for them to control. Constantine VIII then forced Romanos who was already married to divorce his wife and marry Zoe, and true enough shortly before Constantine VIII's death the 50-year-old Zoe married the 60-year-old Romanos who then succeeded Constantine VIII as Emperor Romanos III. Now as the empress-consort, Zoe feeling suspicious that her younger sister Theodora might take the throne from her accused Theodora of plotting against her with multiple lovers, therefore forcing Theodora to be banished to a nunnery. As for Zoe, despite being already in her 50s, she was still desperate to be pregnant with Romanos III that she had even gone as far as trying to use "magical potions" to allow her to bear children at her age, yet at the end nothing worked, which thus further alienated the couple from each other out of frustration thus leading to both Zoe and Romanos having their own lovers. Zoe on the other hand was described by the Byzantine historian of that time Michael Psellos (1018-1078) to have carried out all sorts of experiments to make herself look young and attractive despite her old age, and such experiments she did included making all kinds of cosmetics and perfumes, which true enough kept Zoe still looking young. In 1033, Zoe fell in love with her young low-born palace servant Michael the Paphlagonian who was the brother of her husband's eunuch minister John, in which she made this affair with someone 30 years younger than her an open secret to the point that Romanos III questioned Michael of having imperial ambitions which Michael denied.

In 1034 however, Romanos III who was gravely ill died in his bath wherein the same historian Michael Psellos says that the servant that killed him by drowning him was ordered to do so by the couple Michael and Zoe, though some rumors also say that Zoe poisoned Romanos. Right after Romanos' death, Zoe and Michael were married while the Patriarch of Constantinople Alexios I was bribed with a large sum of gold to crown Michael as the new emperor Michael IV. Although Zoe thought Michael would prove to be a more devoted husband than Romanos, she was mistaken as shortly after they were married, Michael confined Zoe to the women's quarters of the palace known as the *Gynaecium* keeping her under strict surveillance as Michael IV feared that Zoe would turn on him the same way she did with her former husband Romanos III. Michael IV though ruling quite effectively had a rather short reign of just 7 years as by 1041 his condition of epilepsy grew worse that he died before the year ended refusing the pleas of his wife Zoe who begged to be at his side as he was dying. With Michael IV dead, his brother the eunuch minister John forced Zoe to adopt Michael's nephew also named Michael who was thus crowned as the new emperor Michael V shortly after the death of his uncle. The new emperor Michael V now banished his stepmother Zoe to a monastery in the Princes' Islands in the Marmara

Sea outside Constantinople on charges that she attempted to kill him, though the people were furious about the treatment Michael V gave Zoe especially since Zoe was a member of the ruling Macedonian Dynasty. Michael V however listening to the people released Zoe from the monastery she was exiled to and restored her to the throne, yet the people were still angry at Michael V that in April of 1042 there were riots in Constantinople targeted against Michael V and in favor of placing not only Zoe but her younger sister Theodora on the throne. Michael V was thus overthrown and banished to a monastery where he was blinded dying later that year while Zoe together with her sister Theodora who was released from the nunnery ruled together as co-empresses.

For some 2 months, the Byzantine Empire was ruled by two women wherein Zoe was the senior empress and Theodora the junior one, and in public occasions to show that Zoe was the senior one, her throne was placed slightly in front of Theodora's, although Theodora had happened to be the brains behind Zoe's rule. The rule of the empresses however did not last long as this began breaking the imperial court into factions with one loyal to Zoe and the other loyal to Theodora, thus after just 2 months Zoe had to look for a new husband to rule as the senior emperor to save the empire from division. The 64-year-old Zoe here had a choice among 3 suitors to marry all named Constantine, and among the 3, she chose a lover she had before being the handsome wealthy civil aristocrat Constantine Monomachos who was some 20 years younger than her, and following their marriage Constantine was crowned as Emperor Constantine IX. With Constantine IX (r. 1042-1055) as the new emperor, Zoe and Theodora still kept their positions as co-empresses, although Zoe at this point was clearly already too old to bear children while Constantine on the other hand allowed his long-time mistress Maria Skleraina to live with them in the palace which would turn out to be such a scandal. Soon enough by 1044, rumors began spreading that Maria was attempting to murder both Zoe and Theodora leading to riots in Constantinople which were calmed when Zoe and Theodora reassured that they were all safe and that there was no plot to kill them. Zoe continued to rule as empress until her death in 1050 at the age of 72 whereas her husband Constantine IX ruled for some 5 more years until his death in 1055. Following Constantine IX's death, Theodora being the last member of the ruling family took the throne as the sole senior empress ruling in her own right for another year until her own death in 1056 which thus put an end to the Macedonian Dynasty which had ruled the Byzantine Empire since 867.

This illustration of the 11th century Byzantine empress Zoe Porphyrogenita was mostly based off on the famous mosaic depicting her in the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, mostly for her empress' attire seen here but not so much her facial features and hair. The type of crown Zoe is seen wearing here which was the specific design for Byzantine empresses which includes a spiked top and attached to it at the bottom a strain of pearls and other precious jewels known as a *Pendilia* in which the one Zoe is seen wearing here does not only include a strain of pearls but golden plates with precious jewels on them, which is also what is seen in the mosaic depicting her. The mosaic of Zoe in the Hagia Sophia however does not show a full-body version of her but instead ends only at her hips while parts of Zoe's mosaic too appears to be faded. Just like in Zoe's mosaic, the dress of Zoe in this illustration includes the same kind of collar piece studded with jewels known as a *Superhumeral* which was usually part of a Byzantine empress' attire and below that the

purple dress wherein the color identifies her as a ruler wherein the fit at the body appears to be tight though it becomes loose at the bottom and the sleeves. Part of her imperial dress too seen here just like in her mosaic is the golden central section known as the *Loros* which is studded with various pearls and red and green gemstones while in her upper arms as seen in her mosaic too are golden embroidered circles with patterns. The piece of cloth meanwhile wrapped around her lower-left side at the hip like a blanket is known as a *Thorakion* which is a scarf-like garment in the shape of a shield which is studded with pearls and other precious stones. The *Thorakion* is attached to the empress' belt, and this item happens to be a signature look in a Byzantine empress' attire, although it was most commonly used by Byzantine empresses only in the 10th and 11th centuries. The mosaic of Zoe though only shows the upper part of her *Thorakion*, thus for this illustration the lower part of Zoe's dress was based on other historical illustrations and items depicting 11th century Byzantine empresses such as the Crown of Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos which shows the same Zoe on the left and her sister Theodora on the right of the emperor wherein both Zoe and Theodora appear to be wearing the *Thorakion* over their dresses at the lower part, while the bottom part of Zoe's dress in this illustration which features a golden border studded with jewels as well as her red shoes was based on her image in that said crown. The mosaic of Zoe too in the Hagia Sophia also doesn't show her holding an imperial scepter but rather a scroll, thus for this illustration, the scepter she is holding again was based on her image from the Crown of Constantine IX and on the images of other Byzantine empresses from the 11th century such as Maria of Alania who is seen holding a scepter. As for her facial appearance in this illustration, she is not depicted the way she appears in the mosaic wherein her hair is hardly visible while lacking facial expression too, rather she is depicted most possibly at the time when she was empress-consort for her first husband Romanos III when she was in her 50s, though despite Zoe appearing in her 50s here she appears to look more youthful and attractive as true enough the historian of her time Michael Psellos says that Zoe even in her 50s was "stunningly beautiful" and that "every part of her was firm and in good condition", and she too used her own beauty as a tool of statecraft.

D-K Justinian I the Great, Byzantine emperor (527-565)



Perhaps already THE MOST influential and well-known figure in Eastern Roman (Byzantine) history is Emperor Justinian I the Great who ruled the Byzantine Empire at its height of power in the 6th century. Justinian the Great too is the person synonymous with Byzantine history, and this is for so many reasons as it was under the highly energetic and ambitious 38-year reign of Justinian when Byzantium reached its height of territorial extent spanning the entire Mediterranean Sea and not to mention at its height as a cultural superpower, while out of all the Byzantine emperors it is Justinian I who had left behind such a great legacy that lives on today as seen with landmarks like the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and the mosaics of Ravenna which were great feats of architecture and art that were made under his rule. More significantly, Justinian had left behind his code of laws known as the *Corpus Juris Civilis* which until today serves as a basis for the structure of modern law. Now, no matter how brilliant and influential Justinian I was, he too had an impressive and surprising origin story coming from low-birth being born to a peasant family in the Balkans (today's North Macedonia) in 482 with the name Flavius Petrus Sabbatius. Petrus' uncle Justin however travelled to Constantinople earlier on to escape both poverty and his farm being attacked by barbarians, and in Constantinople Justin somehow ended up joining the exclusive imperial guard force known as the *Excubitors* where he served in it for about 40 years under the Byzantine emperors namely Zeno (r. 474-475/ 476-491) and Anastasius I (r. 491-518). When serving in the Excubitors, Justin rose up the ranks to the point of becoming the commander of the Excubitors while also gaining a lot of wealth after being a hardened war veteran fighting many wars, and during his time in the Excubitors, Justin now becoming rich too had his family including the young

Petrus moved to Constantinople. Petrus was then adopted by Justin thus changing his name to "Justinian" in honor of his uncle, and as Justin was a hardened soldier, his nephew Justinian spent his time studying politics, law, history, and theology apparently receiving the best education.

Things would however take a complete turn for both Justin and Justinian in 518 when the emperor Anastasius I died, and with the emperor having no children, it was Justin as the head of the palace guards who succeeded as emperor after of course bribing the other palace guards to support him. Justin I despite his low birth and still being illiterate despite him serving in the palace guard for decades was now the emperor, although his much learned nephew Justinian was the power behind his policy-making whether domestic or foreign, and it was true enough Justinian who helped Justin make decisions especially when it involved strengthening the position of the Chalcedonian (Orthodox) Christian faith, attacking their main enemy being the Sassanid Persian Empire in the east through proxy wars using neighboring smaller kingdoms, and most notably reconciling with the Church of Rome in 519. With Justin becoming emperor, his nephew Justinian succeeded him as the new commander of the palace guard force despite Justinian having no military background, then in 520 Justinian secretly killed off the ex-fugitive general Vitalian who Justin pardoned since Justinian knew in advance that Vitalian would be a threat to his uncle and possibly later on to his own rule. In 521, Justinian was consul for the year and soon enough, he met the love of his life being the former actress Theodora who was 18 years younger than him. At this time, it was forbidden by law for patrician men like Justinian here at this point to marry actresses who were seen as at the bottom of society, although Justinian had his uncle revise this law which he did and thus Justinian and Theodora married in 525.

In 527, Justinian was made his uncle's co-emperor shortly before his uncle Justin I died, and thus Justinian I at age 45 was emperor with his wife Theodora as his empress, and already as his reign began Justinian would not stop working on making policies and planning out new construction projects which is why he would be remembered as the "emperor that never slept". Only 2 years into his reign in 529, Justinian ordered the ambitious project of the codification of all Roman laws since the time of Augustus Caesar in the 1st century CE into one universal law code known as the "Corpus Juris Civilis", and this code of laws was to make all laws made by the Roman emperors of the past more consistent while it also removed repetitive elements but also added new ones especially since Justinian's laws were to be favorable to Orthodox Christians though discriminating against the heretical Christian branches such as the Monophysites and Arians, Pagans, and Jews, and in charge of compiling these laws into one code was the brilliant jurist Tribonian. On the other hand, Justinian focused a lot on financial policy wherein he wanted to put an end to the rich getting tax exemptions and the poor having to suffer, thus Justinian appointed the iron-fisted John the Cappadocian as the finance minister who was said to have tortured rich tax evaders to force them to pay up their taxes, which turned out to be successful. Theodora too had an active role in her husband's reign by advising him in passing laws which protected women's rights, especially for actresses as she was one before. In the meantime, Justinian too could not do everything at the same time, especially if it meant going to battle, so rather than leading the troops in battle himself as Justinian preferred to remain as a "palace emperor", he appointed highly competent generals to lead

the army such as the Thracian Flavius Belisarius who at such a young age already possessed so much military skill. Now by the time Justinian I came to power, war broke out with their eastern neighbor being the Sassanid Empire over control of Armenia and Georgia (then the Kingdoms of Lazica and Iberia), although in 530 the Byzantine army led by the young Belisarius scored a decisive victory at the Battle of Dara in Syria over the Sassanids, though in the following year 531 Belisarius' forces lost to a larger Sassanid army at the Battle of Callinicum. The war with the Sassanids though came to an end also in 531 when their ruler or *shah* Kavad I died, and as his son took over as the new shah Khosrow I, a peace deal was made with the Byzantines known as an "eternal peace" wherein Justinian was to pay the Sassanids an annual tribute of 11,000 pounds of gold as Khosrow also knew Justinian had ambitions to reconquer the now lost Western Roman provinces, thus to cripple Justinian would mean forcing him to pay a heavy tribute.

The first real test though to Justinian's reign came in 532 with the "Nika Riot" which was carried out by Constantinople's rival Green and Blue chariot racing factions which now had turned into unruly and dangerous political parties supported by powerful senators and aristocrats. Here in 532, as Justinian tried to limit the power of both factions despite being a strong supporter of the Blues by executing the leaders of a previous riot, the execution failed thus leading to further rioting that went on for days burning down most of the city including the old Hagia Sophia cathedral and the palace's main gate while liberating prisoners as well. Justinian at first tried to appease the rioters by firing both the finance minister John the Cappadocian and the jurist Tribonian as these people who hated them wanted them out of power in the first place. However, despite John and Tribonian being "fired", the people still continued rioting and burning down the city and even proclaiming Hypatius who was a nephew of the former emperor Anastasius I as emperor that Justinian came to the point of contemplating to flee the city by boat even if it meant losing the throne as he could possibly take it back only for Theodora to object by making a speech saying that it would be better to die royal than shamefully lose the throne. This speech of Theodora then made Justinian decide on dealing with the violent rioting with violence thus making Justinian send out the troops commanded by no other than Belisarius as well as the barbarian-descended general Mundus, and the eunuch Narses to kill off the rioters by trapping them in the Hippodrome, and true enough at the end about 30,000 rioters were slain. With the riots over, Justinian had the conspirators behind it including Hypatius executed, John and Tribonian restored to their positions, and most of the city rebuilt as Justinian saw the destruction of the city from the riots as an opportunity to rebuild the capital in a much grander scale. Part of Justinian's construction projects here was to rebuild the Hagia Sophia into a massive and stunning church like no other before it, and to do the job he hired the Greek mathematicians Anthemius of Tralles and Isidore of Miletus, who however as mathematicians never constructed anything in their lives, especially a structure so large and grand. The construction of the Hagia Sophia however required endless funds, thus to fund this, Justinian set his eyes on conquering the Vandal Kingdom in North Africa which was once a Roman province until it fell to the Germanic barbarian Vandals about a century earlier.

Justinian too would only declare war and invade a foreign power if there was a just reason to do so, and in this case with the Vandals, their former king Hilderic (r. 523-530)

who was an ally of Justinian was overthrown in 530 by the former's cousin Gelimer. Now to punish Gelimer for usurping the Vandal throne, Justinian in 533 sent Belisarius with an army of about 16,000 to invade North Africa coming from Constantinople, and in surprisingly only a year Belisarius crushed the Vandal army, captured their capital Carthage, and forced Gelimer to surrender thus sending Gelimer off to Constantinople where he was paraded in Belisarius' triumphal march and presented to Justinian, although Gelimer was spared and allowed to live peacefully in retirement at an estate in Asia Minor whereas Justinian's ally the former Vandal king Hilderic was found dead in prison by the time Belisarius arrived in North Africa. By 534, the entire Vandal Kingdom which consisted of parts of North Africa, Sardinia, Corsica, and the Balearic Islands was wiped off the map and annexed to the Byzantine Empire while all the loot taken from it was used to construct the Hagia Sophia church and other structures Justinian had in mind.

Just a year after the conquest of the Vandal Kingdom however in 535, Justinian got word that in the Ostrogoth Kingdom of Italy, his other ally being the queen-regent Amalasantha was killed in her bath by the anti-Roman faction of the Ostrogoth nobility led by her cousin Theodahad who then became the new Ostrogoth king. Not recognizing the new King of Italy and also having had the dream of restoring Italy and particularly Rome where the Roman civilization all began back to Roman hands, Justinian here in 535 once again sent Belisarius with the mission of conquering Italy counting on him as he easily conquered North Africa from the Vandals. The conquest of Italy however was not as easy for Belisarius as it was with North Africa as the Ostrogoth armies kept going back and forth across the land while Justinian sent reinforcements to Italy as the war progressed while for the Ostrogoths, their king Theodahad was assassinated in 536 and thus replaced as king by Vitiges. Meanwhile in 536, the mysterious event happened wherein light from the sun was partially blocked by a thick cloud of ash that covered the sky for about the entire year which eventually caused crop failures, and although no one knew what it was back then, modern science explained that it was caused by several volcanic eruptions that happened across the world. In 537 meanwhile, the Hagia Sophia cathedral with its first "flat-shaped" dome was completed in just 5 years, although not completely decorated yet but as Justinian entered it for the first time, he was reported to have shouted "Solomon, I have outdone you". Back in Italy however, despite Belisarius getting into minor conflicts with the other Byzantine generals such as Narses and John, the conquest of at least most of Italy was successful culminating in 540 with Belisarius' capture of the Ostrogoth capital which was once the Western Roman capital Ravenna- until the fall of Western Rome in 476- and here the Ostrogoth king Vitiges like Gelimer before him was shipped off to Constantinople and paraded in Belisarius' triumphal parade.

However, despite the Byzantine victory over the Ostrogoths in Italy which returned most of Italy up until the Po River in the north back to Roman hands, the Sassanid shah Khosrow I in 540 broke the "eternal peace" with Justinian and once again declared war due to the Armenians living along the border of both Byzantine and Sassanid Empires not happy with Justinian's rule and preferring Khosrow over him, while Vitiges before being captured sent Ostrogoth envoys to Khosrow in Persia asking him to resume war with Byzantium to distract the Byzantine forces who here were battling the Ostrogoths. Belisarius was then sent east in 540 after returning from Italy to this time deal with the

Sassanids whereas Khosrow even managed to invade Byzantine Syria and temporarily capture Antioch. Now with the conquest of Italy from the Ostrogoths completed by 540, Constantinople was at its height as an imperial metropolis with people from different parts of the world coming and going to trade and admire the impressive sites. However, things would turn in the blink of an eye especially for the Byzantines beginning in 541 when the bubonic plague broke out in a port in Egypt, and by 542 it reached Constantinople via ships coming from Egypt, and from there the plague spread so quickly especially in the densely populated capital that the historian of this time Procopius reported that up to 10,000 people in the capital died each day from the plague, and Justinian too was a victim of it falling into a coma for a long time while his wife Theodora ran the show for the time being. People too believed that this plague in 542 was the end of days as the death toll was so high that dead bodies were scattered all over the streets due to not enough of the living to bury them, and true enough this plague which became known as the "Plague of Justinian" wiped out about 1/3 of the Byzantine Empire's population and due to such a massive death toll, the empire's economy too was crippled as there were no longer enough people alive to pay taxes.

Justinian although survived the plague despite being already 60-years-old, though in the recently reconquered Italy, due to the plague killing off a large number of the Byzantine soldiers and civilians as well which also led to famines at the same time, the Ostrogoths who were pushed north across the Po River due to not being as affected by the plague regrouped after electing a new king being the energetic and ambitious Totila who taking advantage of Byzantine Italy affected by the plague began attacking Byzantine territory to the point of taking back whatever the Byzantines conquered in the past few years. In 544, Belisarius after battling the Sassanids in the east returned to Italy to deal with Totila but failed to stop him as Belisarius this time did not have much of an army due to Justinian beginning to envy him while in 548, Belisarius was recalled again to Constantinople and this time to retire from military command and instead become a senator. It also happened that in 548, the empress Theodora died without even producing any heirs with Justinian, and with Theodora dead Justinian being heartbroken vowed to not marry again even if it would destabilize the empire considering that there will be no heir. Although heartbroken due to Theodora's death, Justinian still continued to lead his empire at a very effective way despite the empire too still being affected by the plague that in 552, Justinian sent monks to distant China to steal their superior silk making secrets and when they returned to the empire, a silk manufacturing industry was established using Chinese silk making techniques, while in 553 Justinian held the Second Council of Constantinople (Constantinople II) which was an attempt to reconcile the Orthodox with the Monophysite Christians.

Back in Italy meanwhile, the war against the Ostrogoths continued to go on, and with Belisarius retiring, the same very old eunuch Narses took over from where Belisarius left off, and thus it was under Narses when the final phase of the war continued which ended with a decisive victory for the Byzantines at the Battle of Taginae in Umbria in 552 with Totila himself killed in battle. By 553, the Byzantines had secured all of Italy finishing off the Ostrogoth Kingdom for good only for the Franks from Gaul to suddenly invade Italy for a brief period of time as in 554, one group of the Frankish army was destroyed by Narses' army while the other group of Franks all got the plague and died. With Italy now

completely under Byzantine hands, the next and last Roman reconquest for Justinian was Hispania which here was under the Visigoth Kingdom, and taking advantage of a Visigoth civil war in Hispania but also to further protect Byzantine North Africa from a potential Visigoth invasion, Justinian in 554 sent an army from Italy to invade at least Southern Hispania while taking a side in the Visigoth civil war. Now by 555, with at least the Southern and Eastern coast of Spain annexed to the Byzantine Empire as a province, the Byzantine Empire was at its height of territorial extent controlling almost the entire Mediterranean- except for the Southern coast of Gaul- thus turning the Mediterranean once again into a “Roman lake”, and the empire here stretched north to south from the Crimea (in Ukraine) to Egypt and west to east from Southern Spain to Syria, although despite all these successes, all the wars with the plague included decimated a large percent of the population especially in Italy which practically became a wasteland due to all the wars, plagues, and famines.

As for Justinian, his last years as emperor would be relatively peaceful and stable the moment all conquests were finished in 555, although a number of tragedies would still happen such as the massive earthquake in Constantinople in 557 which led to the collapse of the Hagia Sophia’s original dome by 558, although by 562 the dome was rebuilt as a semi-spherical one which is the same one seen today. In 559, Belisarius was recalled from retirement by Justinian to deal with a sudden invasion of Thrace by the Huns who came very close to Constantinople, and here with only 300 men Belisarius defeated the Huns sending them way. In the meantime, a number of battles in the east continued between Byzantines and Sassanids until Justinian in 562 once again concluded a peace deal with the Sassanid shah Khosrow I wherein the Byzantines were to again pay tribute. In 565, first Belisarius met his end and in the same year just months after Belisarius’ death, Justinian at the old age of 83 died, though he had not properly named a successor, although it was his eldest but inexperienced nephew Justin II (r. 565-578) that succeeded him as emperor. Before his death though, Justinian approved the construction of the Orthodox monastery of St. Catherine in the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt. Justinian I at least died seeing his empire massive and intact as not too long after his death, most of his achievements would be undone with new foreign enemies such as the Lombards, Avars, Slavs, and decades later the Arabs coming into the scene. For basically achieving so much in only 38 years as emperor which included wiping off two kingdoms from the map being the Vandals and Ostrogoths, holding a major Church council, ruling through a deadly plague pandemic, constructing some of the most impressive landmarks like no other which included the Hagia Sophia, and establishing a legal system that would still be in use today, there is no way to doubt that Justinian is the most influential of all Byzantine emperors. Although at the end, a lot of his achievements especially the reconquest of the Western Roman provinces from the barbarian kingdoms had still drained the imperial treasury that it would eventually lead to more tragedies than successes for the Byzantines to come in the years ahead.

This illustration of the 6th century Byzantine emperor Justinian I the Great seen here was almost if not entirely based off on no other than the famous full-body portrayal of Justinian being his mosaic at the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna Italy made during his reign which shows him standing together with the generals Belisarius and Narses, senators,

palace guards, and clergymen. In this illustration like in the famous mosaic, Justinian here wears a large golden crown studded with red and blue jewels and lined with pearls while attached to it at the bottom are strains of pearls known as a *Pendilia*. For his attire, Justinian here is seen wearing the standard imperial robes of Roman emperors from the 5th, 6th, and 7th centuries which consists of a large purple mantle or *Chlamys*- in which purple is the color to indicate him as an emperor- which has a large embroidered square panel sewn into the center of it on both sides known as a *Tablion*, while the entire Chlamys itself is held together at his right shoulder by an ornate jeweled brooch known as a *Fibula*. Inside the Chlamys is a white tunic which has the special feature of golden borders and a round decorative pattern on the visible right shoulder to indicate Justinian's imperial rank, whereas below that he is seen wearing purple stockings and a pair of red leather shoes studded with jewels- as seen in the famous mosaic too. Just like in the mosaic, Justinian here appears to be holding a large golden ceremonial bowl which were used for Masses, and although almost everything about Justinian seen here looks identical to his image in the mosaic, the only difference is that here he is facing slightly to the left, unlike in the mosaic where he is facing forward. In terms of appearance, Justinian appears younger here, therefore in this illustration he is somewhere in his late 40s which was during his first years as emperor with his hair still thick and dark brown.