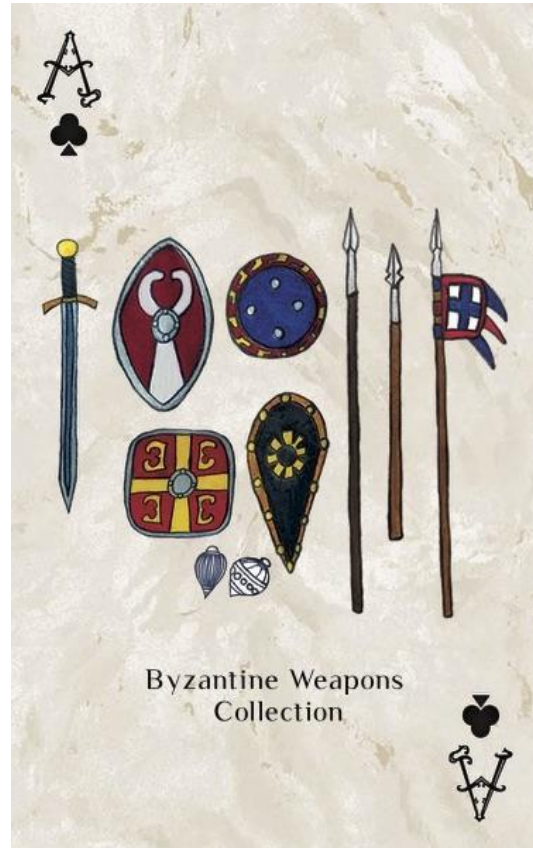


Historical Figures of the Byzantine Empire Playing Cards Descriptions- Clubs

C-A Byzantine Weapons Collection



This illustration features a variety of Byzantine weapons and shields from different centuries. First of all, the spears seen here include the standard long Byzantine spear commonly used by soldiers across different centuries known in Greek as a *Kontos* whereas the one in the left is a long spear and the one on the right shows a spear with a war banner attached to it, and this kind of war banner design with a blue cross and a red frame was used in Byzantium during the era of the Macedonian Dynasty (867-1056). Between both spears is a Byzantine javelin also used by soldiers as missile weapons thrown at enemies, and this kind of javelin is called an *Akontia* in Greek.

Next to it, the weapon seen here is a Western European influenced two-handed longsword which was used in the late Byzantine era such as in the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries although not commonly used by soldiers, but rather it was usually used by high-ranking officers and generals, foreign mercenaries especially those from the west, and knights who usually also came from the west or the Latin principalities in Greece which were established in the 13th century. There are also 4 different types of shields here each

having certain designs. The smallest one seen here in the shape of a circle was a shield used by Byzantine cavalymen, particularly the Cataphracts from the 9th-11th centuries which was just small enough to be used as a protection for their arms when riding their horses. The black one with a gold border is the standard kite-shaped shield used by Byzantine infantrymen especially from the 9th-12th centuries known as a *Skouton*, which is therefore why the infantry unit bearing this kind of shield was known as the *Skoutatoi*. The next shield which is an oval in shape with a red background and a white symbol is a type of late Roman shield made of wood while the white symbol on the middle was based off on a design from the different types of shields seen on the *Notitia Dignitatum* which is Latin for "The List of Offices" which was a late Roman document that details the administrative organization of the Eastern and Western Roman Empire during the 4th and 5th centuries while it also mentions the several army units of the era as well as the kinds of shields used and the symbols on them wherein these said shields are illustrated and colored in the document. The last shield seen is a design from the late Byzantine era which features the symbol of the yellow *Tetragrammatic Cross* with 4 beta symbols on each of the 4 sides of the cross. Now this yellow cross with 4 "B" symbols on a red background was considered to be Byzantium's national flag, though it was only in use in the late 13th century and up until the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453 as hinted by coins and seals containing it only used in the late Byzantine era, thus it was the symbol of Byzantium under its last dynasty, the Palaiologos Dynasty which therefore hints that this shield was only used in the last centuries of Byzantium's existence. Lastly, the other two weapons that appear here at the bottom are Byzantine era ceramic fire grenades which stored the same flammable substance used in the Byzantine Empire's secret superweapon Greek Fire that had been in existence since the 7th century.

C-2 Byzantine Infantryman, 10th Century



The Byzantine army had a large variety of units with various uses and a varied set of equipment depending on the rank and capabilities of the soldier. The lower ranking foot soldiers of the Byzantine army were usually less equipped with weapons and were lightly armored to the point of not really having armor at all as their purpose in battle were just as auxiliary troops made to scout the area of battle or to attack in the form of skirmishes. The one seen in this illustration is a low-ranking Byzantine foot soldier of the Thematic Army during the 10th century. This illustration is based on uniform researches and reconstructions based on the military manuals of the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963-969) such as the *Praecepta Militaria*.

This infantry soldier rather than wearing a metal helmet wears a turban made of either cloth or linen known to the Byzantines in Greek as a *Fakeolion* wrapped around a short cylindrical hat made of soft material- which is not visible here as the turban covers it. Instead of wearing armor, this soldier is seen wearing a green thick padded knee-length vest known as a *Kavadion* or *Zava* which also has detachable padded sleeves made of the same material to give extra protection for the arms due to the lack of metal protection. Beneath his padded vest is a long-sleeved red tunic while for leg protection he wears a pair of leather boots known to the Byzantines as *Mouzakia*, though he does not wear anything for the protection of his lower arms. As for his weapons, this soldier is only seen wielding a small battle-axe known to the Byzantines as a *Tzikourion* and on his left hand he wields the standard Byzantine kite-shaped shield known as a *Skouton*, whereas he is also seen with a pouch attached to his belt which is most likely where he keeps his food supply for battle.

C-3 George Maniakes, 11th Century



One of the most prominent and fearsome generals from the Byzantine Empire in the 11th century was George Maniakes who was born in around 998 in Macedonia and was either of Greek or Armenian origins. George first rose to prominence in the military campaign of the Byzantine emperor Romanos III Argyros (r. 1028-1034) against the Arabs of Aleppo from 1030-1031, and here George was successful in battling the Arabs that he even managed to recapture the city of Edessa from them in 1031 despite the Byzantine emperor Romanos III losing miserably to the Arabs in battle.

George would then further make a name for himself under the next emperor Michael IV (r. 1034-1041) wherein George was in charge of the attempted Byzantine reconquest of Sicily from the Arabs beginning 1038. Here, George was assisted by a division of the Varangian Guard led by the famous Norwegian Harald Hardrada who would later become King of Norway together with Norman and Lombard mercenaries. Despite this campaign in Sicily turning out well for the Byzantines with almost all of Sicily recaptured from the Arabs, it was put to a halt when tensions broke out as George humiliated Stephen who was the Byzantine admiral in charge while George also humiliated Arduin the leader of this expedition's Lombard contingent, thus leading to the Lombard and Norman contingents to desert the Byzantines and more so rebel against them. Due to humiliating

the admiral Stephen who was actually the brother-in-law of the emperor Michael IV, George was recalled to Constantinople in 1040 wherein he was humiliated by being paraded on a donkey. The Byzantines thus never recaptured Sicily from the Arabs, though George was appointed as the Byzantine *Catepan* (governor-general) of Southern Italy in 1042 following the death of Michael IV (1041).

However, with a new emperor which was Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042-1055) being crowned in 1042, George's troops in Sicily proclaimed him emperor after George tortured his rival general Romanos Skleros- who was an ally of Constantine IX to death- and thus they headed west to Constantinople in an attempt to capture it from the new emperor. George though never made it to Constantinople as in 1043, he and his forces met with the new emperor's forces near Thessaloniki where George was mortally wounded and killed in battle, thus his rebellion ended.

This illustration of the Byzantine general George Maniakes is based on his appearance from the *Madrid Skylitzes* manuscripts from 11th century Byzantium by the chronicler John Skylitzes. The image of George here was made to more or less closely resemble his appearance in the manuscript, thus in this illustration he wears a gilded lamellar armor set, with gold pauldrons for the shoulders known to the Byzantines in Greek as *Epomides*, then for the upper arms he is seen wearing a type of metal protection known to the Byzantines as *Manikellia*, and to protect his thighs are tassels known to the Byzantines as *Kremasmata* whereas the semi-circular leather decorative elements attached to his armor at the bottom were known as *Ptergues*. George here is seen wearing a type of greaves for his lower legs known to the Byzantines in Greek as *Podopsella*. Just as he is seen in the manuscript, George in this illustration wears a red cap above his head as well as a blue tunic beneath his armor and a blue cape over it. George too was popularly said to have been so tall and well-built that he appeared to look like a giant while also having strong features and an intimidating look, thus for this illustration he has this appearance. George in this illustration is seen holding a whip which he is also seen holding in one of the illustrations depicting him in the *Madrid Skylitzes*, though this illustration also shows him having a sword which is however sheathed with only its hilt visible. Additionally, George Maniakes happens to be mentioned in the Scandinavian sagas due to him commanding units of the Varangian Guard in battle, and there in these sagas he is known as *Gyrgir*. As George led the nearly successful but still disastrous Byzantine attempt to recapture Sicily from 1038-1040, the Sicilian town known as "Maniace" and the fortress known as "Castello Maniace" in Syracuse happen to be both named after him.

C-4 Tagmata Bodyguard, 8th Century



Tagmata Bodyguard,
8th century

The *Tagma* (plural: *Tagmata*) was the elite military unit in the Byzantine army from the 8th to 11th centuries serving as the army specifically to protect the emperor and the imperial capital Constantinople, thus this was the army that stayed next to the emperor in battle. The elite Tagmata unit was founded by the Byzantine emperor Constantine V (r. 741-775) and over time, the Tagmata increased in number with more specialized troops being incorporated into it such as the *Athatoi* or “Immortals” which was a cavalry force, the *Vigla* being elite city watch troops, and the *Varangians* who came in as Nordic and Rus’ mercenaries but eventually became the imperial bodyguard force. Although originally serving as the army protecting Constantinople, the Tagmata as it grew in number were stationed in the major cities of the empire and could be either elite infantrymen or Cataphract cavalry. Compared to the other units of the Byzantine Empire’s Thematic Army, the Tagmata as the most elite were paid more but were also less in number as compared to the armies of the other *Themes* (military provinces) of the empire, while its overall commander was a more senior general in the Byzantine army known as a *Domestikos*.

The type of Tagmata soldier seen here in this illustration is part of the imperial bodyguard force or *Excubitors* which was an imperial bodyguard unit dating back to the 5th century but was incorporated into the Tagmata army in the 8th century to serve simply as ceremonial parade troops in Constantinople. The soldier seen here is either from the 8th or 9th centuries wherein the style of his armor consists of Roman and Turco-Islamic elements put together. The style of helmet this soldier is wearing has some Turkic elements in it such as its small size and semi-sphere shape, the chainmail coif attached to it in order to protect

the soldier's neck, and the two feathers sticking out of the helmet above. Aside from the helmet and chainmail coif, the rest of this soldier's armor is not visible as it is covered by a white tunic in which beneath it is the standard Byzantine lamellar armor which is only slightly seen below the soldier's stomach area as beneath it is another white tunic and white pants, though his lower legs are protected by a type of Byzantine greaves known as *Podopsella*. As for his weapons, this soldier is seen wielding a long spear or *Kontos* as his primary weapon and the straight Byzantine sword known as a *Spathion* as his secondary weapon which here is sheathed. The shield he is seen using here is the round-shaped Byzantine shield which here is only a simple red one, however the shield he uses in this illustration is not exactly accurate as it appears smaller whereas the real one was much larger in size.

C-5 Bardas Skleros, 10th Century



The influential 10th century Byzantine general Bardas Skleros belonged to the influential Skleros clan of the military aristocracy which owned enormous estates in Asia Minor. Bardas had happened to be the brother-in-law of the influential Byzantine general John Tzimiskes as his sister was married to the latter, and when John became emperor in 969 Bardas became his most trusted general. Shortly after John I Tzimiskes came to power as emperor, the Kievan Rus' army led by their prince Sviatoslav I had been threatening Byzantine Thrace, but in 970 the Kievan Rus' army was decisively defeated at the Battle of

Arcadiopolis very near Constantinople by the Byzantine army led by Bardas. It is said that Bardas and his army killed up to 20,000 Rus' troops whereas the Byzantines only lost 25 men in this battle. Bardas was also instrumental in John I's subsequent campaigns against Sviatoslav's Rus' in Bulgaria which ended with a decisive Byzantine victory at the Battle of Dorystolon in 971 forcing Sviatoslav to abandon his campaign and return home while Bulgaria itself was partially conquered by the Byzantines following this. Bardas had remained John I's top general until John's sudden death in 976, and with John dead the junior- and rightful- emperor Basil II in Constantinople was proclaimed as the new senior Byzantine emperor.

Bardas however was not content with it as he felt he was the rightful heir to his trusted friend the late emperor John while he too felt that he deserved the throne more because of his track record of winning a number of military victories while also possessing great amounts of wealth and influence too. To make things worse, the high-ranking court minister in Constantinople which was the eunuch Basil Lekapenos who was the power behind the young Basil II fired Bardas from his position as the supreme commander of the armies in the east. Enraged about being fired and not so much about not willing to recognize Basil II who he saw as weak and inexperienced as emperor but rather wanting to get back at the eunuch Lekapenos, Bardas declared rebellion against Basil II after raising an army with Armenian, Georgian, and Arab units while proclaiming himself emperor as well. In a short matter of time, most of Asia Minor recognized Bardas as emperor while a number of navy commanders had defected to Bardas too, and thus civil war began between his faction and the faction of the legitimate emperor Basil II. Bardas then marched his forces towards Constantinople and had even attempted to blockade the Dardanelles Strait, but at the end Bardas' navy was defeated while his attempt to capture Nicaea from the forces loyal to Basil II failed as well.

In the meantime, the powerful eunuch Basil Lekapenos released an old enemy of the state, the general Bardas Phokas the Younger from prison as a way to put down Bardas Skleros' revolt, and when Phokas rushed east to gather an army, Skleros too was forced to rush east to deal with Phokas. The civil war was thus fought between the two generals named Bardas whereas Skleros won the first two battles against Phokas' forces but was defeated at the third one in 979 wherein both Skleros and Phokas clashed in single-combat. In this duel, Skleros was mortally wounded in the head by Phokas and even rumored to be dead, thus Skleros' forces fled the site of battle. Bardas Skleros however still lived and had managed to end up in Baghdad together with his family in 980 residing in honorable captivity at the court of the Abbasid caliph wherein he would plot his return to Byzantium and seize the throne with the support of the Arabs.

In 987 however, Skleros was recalled to Byzantium by his old enemy Bardas Phokas who now had apparently risen up in rebellion against the emperor Basil II, and although Skleros returned to Byzantium he was imprisoned by Phokas for supposedly taking funds that were supposedly for Phokas' troops. Phokas on the other hand was killed in battle against Basil II's forces in 989 and thus his rebellion was over with his forces joining Basil II's side. Skleros however ended up succeeding Phokas as the leader of the rebellion against Basil II, but without much of an army left and already at an old age, Skleros eventually felt

that it was best to surrender to Basil II. Skleros thus surrendered and renounced his rebellion and was allowed by Basil II to live in peaceful retirement, and thus the aged Bardas Skleros died a peaceful death in 991.

In this illustration, the appearance and armor of the general Bardas Skleros was based on samples of 10th century Byzantine armor worn by high-ranking generals and military officers, as apparently there are no clear images of Bardas Skleros except for a few panels in the *Madrid Skylitzes* manuscript which however do not show him wearing armor but the purple imperial robes due to him being proclaimed emperor by his troops in 976. To indicate that Bardas is a general in this drawing, he is depicted wearing a more ornate slightly conical-shaped gold helmet with silver patterns engraved on it which exposes his face, and sticking out of it from above are strands of red hairs known as a *Flamouliskia* which identifies if someone is an officer or general in the middle of battle. As for Bardas' armor, he wears gilded lamellar armor with red leather linings, while the armor too consists of pauldrons for the shoulders known to the Byzantines in Greek as *Epomides*, and protecting his thighs is the same kind of gilded lamellar armor for his body although the piece of armor guarding the thighs as seen here was known to the Byzantines as *Kremasmata*, whereas the type of greaves guarding the legs was known as *Podopsella* and this type of gauntlets for the lowers arms seen here was known as *Cheiropsella*. The other unique feature in Bardas' armor are the red strands sticking out of his pauldrons similar to the red strands above his helmet as apparently high-ranking Byzantine commanders had strands of hairs sticking out of the pauldrons of their armor. Beneath his armor, Bardas is seen wearing a long-sleeved red tunic while the weapon he carries is the Byzantine straight sword or *Spathion*.

C-6 Empress Zoe Karbonopsina, 10th Century



The Byzantine empress Zoe Karbonopsina who came from a noble Greek family being a relative of the chronicler Theophanes the Confessor (758-817) and of the admiral of that time Himerios came into the picture as a mistress of the Byzantine emperor Leo VI the Wise (r. 886-912). Zoe's surname is unknown as *Karbonopsina* was not her last name but rather a nickname given to her meaning "coal-black eyes" which probably hints that she had black colored eyes. Leo VI though had been married to three different women in the past, but all had died failing to produce him a son, and being desperate for a male heir, Leo married his mistress Zoe in secret in 906 already after she had finally given birth to their son Constantine, who was to be Leo's heir. Leo had long planned to marry Zoe- ever since Leo's third wife Eudokia had died in 901- but could not achieve it as in the Orthodox Church, a fourth marriage was considered uncanonical, hence the patriarch Nikolaos Mystikos forbade Leo from marrying Zoe despite producing a son, and thus Leo and Zoe were married in secret by a priest who was close to Leo. The patriarch Nikolaos however still opposed the marriage thus leading to Nikolaos being fired from his position as patriarch by Leo in 907 and replaced by Euthymios, the old theology teacher of Leo when he was growing up. The new patriarch recognized the marriage and Zoe as Leo's empress-consort but still did not take the idea of Leo being married for a fourth time lightly.

Leo VI however did not live much longer and thus he died in 912 at only 45, and was therefore succeeded by his younger brother Alexander who in a quest of vengeance against the memory of his late brother who he hated expelled the late emperor's wife Zoe and their young son Constantine from the palace and dismissing Leo's appointed patriarch

Euthymios from his position and restoring Leo's enemy Nikolaos as patriarch. Alexander however only ruled for a year and died in 913 leaving the empire to his 8-year-old nephew Constantine VII, although before his death Alexander had provoked a war with their northern neighbor the Bulgarian Empire under Tsar Simeon I the Great as an act of undoing Leo VI's policy of paying tribute to Bulgaria. The young Constantine VII was crowned as emperor in 913 but due to his young age was put under the regency of the patriarch Nikolaos who forced Zoe into a nunnery. The patriarch however handled the situation of the Bulgarian threat badly and thus lost his popularity allowing Zoe to come out of the nunnery and after being backed by the Byzantine senate and aristocracy, she took over the regency of her young son from the patriarch in 914, although Nikolaos was still allowed to stay as patriarch after he reluctantly recognized her as empress-regent.

Being unable to run the empire by herself, Zoe governed the empire with powerful aristocrats and generals, most notably the general Leo Phokas the Elder who was a favorite of hers, and in her rule as empress-regent Zoe agreed to continue the war against Simeon's Bulgaria which had already begun with Alexander before he died in 913. At first, Zoe's regency was successful as in 915 the Byzantine army defeated an Arab invasion of Armenia and thus making peace with the Arabs, but being too focused on the east, Byzantine Thrace was exposed which allowed Simeon and his Bulgarians to invade it wherein Simeon even captured the city of Adrianople. The Byzantines though planned a massive counter-attack by this time allying with the nomadic Pecheneg people north of the Danube River who were to be transported by ship into Bulgaria by the Byzantine navy. The alliance with the Pechenegs however never happened due to the Byzantine admiral in charge being Romanos Lekapenos and another general quarrelling with each other which thus led to the unpaid Pechenegs to abandon the campaign before it even started, while over in Bulgaria to the south, the Byzantine army led by Leo Phokas and his brother Bardas suffered a crushing defeat to Simeon's Bulgarian army who attacked them by surprise at the Battle of Anchialos in 917.

This defeat only made things worse as with a large portion of the Byzantine army destroyed, Simeon invaded a great amount of Byzantine Thrace and Macedonia while the Arabs used Byzantium's defeat to Bulgaria to their advantage by resuming their raids on the Byzantine Empire's eastern frontier. In order to remain in power and save Leo Phokas who was now hated for leading the army to defeat against the Bulgarians, Zoe attempted to marry him, but in 919 Leo Phokas' plot was destroyed when he was captured and blinded by the orders of the admiral Romanos Lekapenos who in an act to save himself and his position seized the throne from the young emperor Constantine VII after he married off his young daughter Helena to the young Constantine. With Romanos I Lekapenos becoming the new senior emperor in 920 and Constantine VII being demoted to junior emperor, Zoe was again forced to retire to the same nunnery she was forced to retire to a few years earlier by the patriarch, and after 920 she would never be heard of again while her date of death too remains unclear.

In this illustration of Empress Zoe Karbonopsina, her eyes are shaded black as a reference to her nickname *Karbonopsina* which is Greek for "coal-black eyes" whereas the crown she wears is a typical design worn by Byzantine empresses from the 9th-11th

centuries wherein 3 strands of pearls on each of the two sides known as a *Pendilia* flows downwards from the crown. As for Zoe's dress, it is not very much historically accurate in design but rather a more modern-take on Byzantine dresses as seen with the skin-tight sleeves, the cape attached to it, and the off-the-shoulder neckline. The only part though in her outfit other than the crown that remains historically accurate is the pearl necklace seen on her neck, the golden jeweled collar known as a *Superhumeral* which was always attached to the dresses of Byzantine empresses, and of course the purple fabric her dress is made of as a way to indicate that she is an empress as purple was the color reserved for members of the ruling family. The collar however is placed much lower in this illustration as it partly exposes her shoulders as the more historically accurate collars attached to the dresses of Byzantine empresses were closer to the neck; and additionally, another feature in the empress' dress is a white inner dress or shift slightly seen at the bottom beneath the purple outer dress.

C-7 Alexios III Angelos, Byzantine emperor (1195-1203)



Alexios III Angelos who would be Byzantine emperor from 1195 until being overthrown in 1203 was born in 1153 as the second son of the Byzantine general and nobleman Andronikos Doukas Angelos and his wife Euphrosyne Kastamonitissa, while in his father's side Alexios was a great-grandson of the Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081-1118). During the reign of the Byzantine emperor Andronikos I

Komnenos (1183-1185) who was a cousin of Alexios' father, Alexios together with his father and brothers had plotted against the emperor who was persistently hunting down the aristocrats, and with their plot discovered, Alexios with his father and brothers were forced to flee the Byzantine Empire to the Middle East where they spent time in the courts of both the Latin Crusader states of Outremer and in the courts of the Muslim states. In 1185, Alexios' younger brother Isaac who was in Constantinople then seized the throne from Andronikos I through a revolution thus leading to the overthrow and execution of Andronikos I which ended the Komnenos Dynasty and began the rule of the Angelos Dynasty over Byzantium.

With Isaac II Angelos now as Byzantine emperor, he recalled his older brother Alexios back to Byzantium from the Middle East in 1190 and Alexios was thus given by his brother the court title of *Sebastokrator*. Although Alexios was close to his younger brother Isaac, Alexios soon began lusting for more power, more particularly the position of emperor which was held by his younger brother, and as the older brother he felt it should have been him that should be emperor over Isaac. Alexios soon enough found an opportunity to depose Isaac in 1195 during Isaac's campaign against the newly established 2nd Bulgarian Empire that broke free from Byzantine rule, and as Isaac was out hunting, Alexios who was in the camp had the soldiers proclaim him as emperor as apparently Alexios' wife Euphrosyne Kamatera had already been convincing the empire's nobility to turn on Isaac and instead switch their allegiance to Alexios who was believed to be weaker and easier to manipulate than Isaac. When Isaac returned to his camp, he realized it was too late as his soldiers had already switched their support to his brother Alexios, and thus Isaac was captured, blinded, and imprisoned in Constantinople under the watch of Alexios.

Isaac however was still popular with the people of Constantinople and the empire, and so to compensate for blinding him, Alexios III as the new emperor lavishly threw out money to the people to the point of nearly emptying the treasury. As emperor, Alexios III chose to rule by the name "Alexios Komnenos" instead of using his surname "Angelos" the way his brother Isaac did before him as a way to associate himself with the previous ruling dynasty, the Komnenos. Alexios III's predecessor Isaac II was already considered an incompetent ruler, however Alexios III was far worse as by the time he came to power with the treasury almost empty, he did not really do anything about it but instead resorted to the corrupt practice of selling off government offices which he made legal again all while the Bulgarians to the north began growing more in power even raiding Byzantine Greece due to Isaac's campaign against them cancelled with Isaac being blinded in 1195 whereas in Asia Minor, more Byzantine territory had fallen to the Seljuk Turks. To make matters worse for the Byzantines, the Holy Roman emperor Henry VI demanded that Alexios pay 5,000 pounds of gold to him or else Byzantium will be invaded by the Holy Roman Empire, and to solve this Alexios ordered the tombs of the past emperors to be looted for gold while placing a heavy tax on his people as well known as the *Alamanikon* or "German tax". However, Henry VI's invasion never happened as in 1197 he died, though Alexios instead used the money he raised to pay off the Seljuks in Asia Minor to stop their raids while the rest of the state funds were used by Alexios to decorate his palaces and public squares.

Although Alexios III initially maintained good relations with the new Balkan power being the Grand Principality of Serbia whereas Alexios' daughter Eudokia was married to the Serbian Grand Prince Stefan Nemanjic who was even granted the title of "Sebastokrator", these good relations between Byzantium and Serbia eventually deteriorated by 1200 when the marriage between Eudokia and Stefan was dissolved, thus leaving the Byzantines with no more ally in the Balkans. On the other hand, Alexios III too was unaware that there was a plot to restore his blinded and deposed brother Isaac to the throne as Isaac's son who was also named Alexios in 1201 escaped prison- as he was held in the same one as his father- and headed to Venice where he took part in the 4th Crusade which had just assembled there in 1202, and with the prince Alexios' intervention together with the Venetians' own ambitions and desire for revenge against the Byzantines, the Crusade was diverted from Jerusalem to Constantinople. The army of the 4th Crusade thus arrived before the walls of Constantinople in 1203, and without a navy to defend Constantinople- as during Alexios III's reign a corrupt admiral sold off the parts of his ships for his own good- Alexios III decided to personally lead the small army left inside Constantinople against the massive army of the Crusaders outside the walls but at the end failed and retreated back to the capital.

Instead of putting up another fight against the Crusaders, Alexios III with his daughter Irene and with 1,000 pounds of gold fled the city at night leaving his other daughters and wife behind in the city as Alexios with Irene went into hiding in Thrace where Alexios III still refused to renounce his title as emperor despite being ousted from the city as with his absence, his nephew who came with the Crusaders was proclaimed as Emperor Alexios IV Angelos whereas his blinded father Isaac was released from prison by the people and made his son's co-emperor. Not too long after, in early 1204 Alexios IV was executed in a palace coup by the faction of the nobleman Alexios Mourtzouphlos who opposed the former's policy in paying large amounts of debts to the Crusaders who were still camped outside the city, and hearing of his son's death, Isaac II too died of a heart attack. With the new emperor Alexios V Mourtzouphlos cancelling Alexios IV's policy of paying off the Crusaders, the Crusaders attacked Constantinople and in April of 1204 it fell to them whereas Alexios V fled to Thrace as well eventually joining the former emperor Alexios III. At first, Alexios V was received well by Alexios III even marrying Alexios III's daughter Eudokia, the former wife of the Serbian prince Stefan Nemanjic, but at the end Alexios V was tricked and blinded by his father-in-law. Alexios V was eventually captured and executed by the Crusaders who now established the Latin Empire in Constantinople by the end of 1204 whereas Alexios III surrendered to the Marquis of Montferrat Boniface who after sacking Constantinople in 1204 established the Kingdom of Thessaloniki with himself as king.

Alexios III however attempted to escape Thessaloniki and head over to Epirus to be with his cousin Michael Angelos who established his own Byzantine breakaway state there being the Despotate of Epirus, however Alexios before fleeing was caught by Boniface and sent to Boniface's homeland of Montferrat all the way in Italy before being returned to Thessaloniki in 1209 where he later on fled to Asia Minor to join his son-in-law Theodore I Laskaris, who established himself as the "Emperor of Nicaea" with his empire being another Byzantine breakaway state that was holding out against the Latin invaders. Alexios

III however still desiring power plotted against his son-in-law Theodore by joining forces with the Seljuk sultan Kaykhusraw I who was an enemy of Theodore, though Theodore's forces defeated the Seljuks at the Battle of Antioch on the Meander in 1211 whereas the sultan himself was killed. Alexios III with nowhere left to go, was captured by Theodore I and sent to live out the rest of his days in a monastery in Nicaea, and before the year 1211 ended Alexios died in the monastery at the age of 58.

In this full-body illustration of the Byzantine emperor Alexios III Angelos, his facial features, hairstyle and hair color as well as his beard style, and the bowl-shaped crown he wears is based on his miniature portrait from the 15th century manuscript known as *Codex Mutinensis Graecus 122* which features miniature portraits of Roman emperors from Augustus Caesar in 27BCE to the last Byzantine emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos in 1453 and is found at the Biblioteca Estense in Modena, Italy. Although since the only existing historical portrait of Alexios III which comes from this manuscript only shows his face and not his full body, the full-body attire Alexios III is seen wearing here was based on the Byzantine imperial *Loros* robes of another Alexios III, which was the emperor of the Byzantine breakaway state known as the Empire of Trebizond. The imperial robes worn by Alexios III Angelos seen in this illustration including its dark blue color, the patterns for the jewels, and the imperial scepter with a cross above that he holds on his right and the scroll on his left is more or less an exact recreation of the robes worn by Emperor Alexios III Megas Komnenos of Trebizond (r. 1349-1390) which he is seen wearing in his "golden bull" manuscript. Although Alexios III of Trebizond lived almost 2 centuries after the time of Alexios III Angelos, Byzantine imperial robes did not really change by much especially in the latter history of the Byzantine Empire, hence the late 12th century emperor Alexios III wears robes seen in an illustration from the 14th century worn by a 14th century Byzantine emperor.

C-8 Aspar, 5th Century



Some characters in Byzantine history may not have been emperors but were even more powerful than emperors, and one such figure is the 5th century general and politician Flavius Ardabur Aspar who was neither a Roman (Byzantine) too, rather he was both Goth and Alan by origins. Aspar was born in around 400 and was the son of the Gothic or Alan general Ardabur who served the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) emperor Theodosius II (r. 408-450) in the earlier part of his reign. Ardabur's son Aspar first came into the picture in 424 joining his father in the Eastern Roman expedition to Italy as ordered by Theodosius II to defeat the Western Roman usurper emperor Joannes, who had seized the Western Roman throne during the power vacuum that followed the death of the Western Roman emperor Honorius (r. 395-423) in 423. The goal of this expedition was to depose and possibly kill off Joannes and place Theodosius II's aunt Galla Placidia and her son the young Valentinian III in power as both mother and son had fled to Constantinople earlier on. The expedition was successful and in 425, Joannes was captured and killed when Aspar's and his father's troops arrived in Italy wherein Aspar laid siege to the capital Ravenna and eventually managed to get Joannes to surrender, and thus the child Valentinian III became Western Roman emperor with his mother as his regent. However, shortly after Joannes was defeated and killed, Flavius Aetius who was a general loyal to Joannes arrived with an army of Huns which clashed with Aspar's forces outside the city of Aquileia in Italy, though this short battle was put to an end as the new empress-regent Galla Placidia concluded peace with Aetius in exchange for sending the Huns back to their homeland, while Aspar on the other hand together with his father returned to the Eastern Roman Empire.

Some years later in 434, Aspar was appointed as *Consul* of the year in the Eastern Roman Senate after campaigning against the Vandals in North Africa and sometime after that as *Magister Militum* (Master of Soldiers) in the Eastern Roman army which was one of the highest positions only below the emperor himself, and as *Magister Militum* he was an influential power behind Theodosius II while with this position Aspar was also said to have commanded an army against the Huns but was not successful. When Theodosius II died in 450 from a horse-riding accident without having any male heirs, the job was left to Aspar- as he was practically the most powerful man in the empire- to choose the next emperor, and here Aspar chose an army officer named Marcian who served under him as Theodosius' successor, therefore to become emperor Marcian married the late Theodosius' older sister Pulcheria who remained unmarried throughout her entire life. Throughout Marcian's 7-year reign (450-457), Aspar was the power behind him as Aspar despite having so much power could not be emperor in name due to both his barbarian origins and being an Arian Christian, which was considered heretical. Due to both Marcian and Pulcheria being old in age, they never produced children while Pulcheria had died in 453 and Marcian in 457.

Aspar again as the kingmaker of the Byzantine Empire took the role of selecting another man to be his puppet-emperor, however Marcian had a son-in-law being the Constantinople born aristocrat Procopius Anthemius who had a legitimate claim to the throne, but before Anthemius could become emperor, Aspar moved first and thus named his rather unknown army chief-of-staff Leo, who was by origin a Thracian peasant but an Orthodox Christian as his new puppet emperor. This then prevented the more educated aristocrat Anthemius from becoming emperor whereas Leo now being proclaimed the new emperor would also be the first emperor to be crowned by the Patriarch of Constantinople. The reason now to why Aspar chose the peasant Leo as his new puppet emperor was because Aspar had thought that he could simply use Leo as a place-holder emperor for the meantime believing Leo would die any time soon due to his old age, and when both he and Aspar- who was already old here- would die, it would be one of Aspar's sons who would marry one of Leo's daughters that would become the next emperor following Leo. However, Aspar would soon enough be proven wrong by Leo, as having had a taste of power, the seemingly unambitious Leo could no longer let go of it, and thus Leo felt that he no longer needed to be the puppet of the barbarian Aspar which then made Leo begin slowly plotting the downfall of Aspar.

Leo now having the intention to stay in power and form his own dynasty first focused on balancing out the power of Aspar and his mostly Germanic army by recruiting a new group of people which were the Isaurians from the mountains of Asia Minor into the army believing they would be more loyal. In 466, the Isaurian tribesmen came to Constantinople led by the chieftain Tarasikodissa and were thus incorporated into the Eastern Roman army, while their chieftain was married to Leo's daughter Ariadne to fully seal the alliance, and to seem more acceptable to Constantinople's Greek speaking population, the chieftain changed his name to the Greek "Zeno" and became a general as well to the shock of Aspar. The tensions between Leo and Aspar soon enough began to grow more evident in 470 when Aspar tried to convince Leo to make Aspar's son Patricius as a *Caesar* and also to marry him off to Leo's other daughter Leontia, which however only

led to the people of Constantinople rioting as they did not want a Germanic barbarian who was more so an Arian Christian to be their next emperor. The rioting however was put down when Leo told the people that Patricius would soon enough convert to Orthodox Christianity despite Leo now having plans of his own, which was to make his son-in-law Zeno his successor. Little did Aspar know too that both Zeno and the other general Basiliscus who was Leo I's brother-in-law were already plotting to kill him and his sons off, and in 471 as Aspar and his sons were invited to lunch by Leo, they were suddenly ambushed and killed by the orders of Leo, Zeno, and Basiliscus, thus putting an end to the Germanic elements in the Byzantine army. The death of Aspar however was not well received by his loyalists that a riot true enough broke out in Constantinople wherein Aspar's loyalists in the capital ended up clashing with the palace guards and in Thrace the Ostrogoth general Theodoric Strabo would rebel against imperial rule for the next years until his death in 481 while another person too who happened to be loyal to Aspar was his former student in Constantinople Theodoric the Amal who by 475 became the King of the Ostrogoths in the Balkans.

In this illustration, Aspar appears to be wearing the attire of a late Roman *Magister Militum*, and being in a very high military position wherein Aspar was even the highest-ranking *Magister Militum* known as the *Magister Militum Praesentalis*, he is seen wearing the color purple which was only reserved for members of the imperial family and other high-ranking officials. To indicate that Aspar is a *Magister Militum*, his helmet here includes a number of jewels and a purple horsehair crest above it which were only reserved for the helmets of high-ranking generals in the late Roman army and for the emperor himself. The armor Aspar is wearing here is the usual late Roman scaled armor, but to indicate his high rank, it appears to be gilded, while his purple cape and the purple linings in his *Pteruges* guarding his thighs and upper arms also indicate his rank. Beneath his armor, Aspar here is seen wearing a long-sleeved red tunic and white pants which also doubled as socks as they cover his entire feet going completely beneath his shoes. A late Roman longsword or *Spatha* too is seen which here is although sheathed in front of Aspar, and additionally he is holding a walking stick on his right. On the other hand, to show that Aspar is of Germanic barbarian origins, he is depicted here having blond hair, however only his blond beard is shown as the helmet covers his hair.

C-9 Basil I the Macedonian, Byzantine emperor (867-886)



Basil I the Macedonian perhaps was the Byzantine emperor with the most bizarre yet inspiring story of an ambitious and ruthless social climber who went from peasant, to stable boy, to wrestler, to imperial bodyguard, to the emperor's trusted advisor, to co-emperor, and finally emperor. Basil was born in 811 at the Byzantine Theme of Macedonia—hence his name “Basil the Macedonian”—although he was said to be of Armenian and Slavic origins on his father's side and of Greek origins on his mother's side. Basil is also said to be a descendant of the first Byzantine emperor Constantine I the Great (r. 306-337) as well as of the ancient Arsacid kings of Armenia. Little though is known about Basil's early years growing up as a peasant in Macedonia, although some stories say he spent some of his childhood as a captive in the Bulgarian Empire, but whether this happened or not, the adult Basil found himself in Constantinople and found work as a stable boy in the imperial stables, and apparently Basil was very skilled with horses.

Basil ended up coming across the Byzantine emperor Michael III the Amorian (r. 842-867) in around 862 when he managed to tame a horse in the imperial stables that nobody could tame, thus the emperor Michael was impressed with both the talent and the large size of Basil. At around this time too, Basil further impressed Michael III in a wrestling match where Basil who apparently had such great strength defeated the Bulgarian champion. After seeing Basil's strength, Michael III appointed him as his chief bodyguard known in Byzantium as the *Parakoimomenos*. Basil too at this time when working for the imperial court during a visit to Patras in Greece gained the favor of a wealthy woman there named Danielis who promised Basil that when she dies, he would inherit her fortune, and

true enough when Danielis died all her fortune went to him. Basil and the emperor Michael III eventually grew closer to each other that Michael who being forced to marry a woman he did not like asked Basil to divorce his wife Maria in 865 and marry Michael's mistress Eudokia Ingerina so that Michael could still stay close to his mistress. In 866, Eudokia gave birth to a son named Leo who was rumored to be her son with Michael III despite already being married to Basil, and true enough Michael celebrated Leo's birth by hosting chariot races in the Hippodrome. Basil on the other hand further rose up the ranks in 866 by successfully convincing Michael that Michael's uncle Bardas who was a *Caesar* in title was plotting against him, and right when an expedition was being planned to recapture the island of Crete from Arab pirates, Michael gave the order to kill Bardas who was in charge of the expedition, thus the expedition was cancelled. With Bardas dead, Basil was thus made the new Caesar and later as Michael's co-emperor, but apparently Basil would not stop here for he actually had the ambition to be emperor. On one night in 867 with Michael getting heavily drunk as usual, Basil plotted his friend's murder, and as Michael was brought back to his room, he was stabbed to death by assassins sent by Basil, and following this Basil immediately became the new senior emperor.

Although despite being an illiterate and uneducated peasant by origin, Basil possessed a lot of intelligence and ruthlessness especially when it came to politics and holding an empire together as seen by his iron-fisted way of ruling where he did not hesitate to kill those who would dare stand on his way, and true enough he achieved his ambition of becoming emperor through murder. Although a violent man by nature, Basil too was a devout Christian emperor unlike Michael III before him who was not, while Basil too despite having no education undertook the task of revising and updating the Byzantine Empire's code of laws that had been created under the reign of Emperor Justinian I the Great (527-565) some 3 centuries ago, and under Basil I Justinian's code of laws were revised and translated into Greek into what would be the *Basilika* or "royal laws" which would remain the standard code of laws for the Byzantine Empire until its fall to the Ottomans in 1453. In terms of diplomacy, Basil I achieved a lot as first seen when he fired the Patriarch of Constantinople Photios I when beginning his reign in 867 as a way to seal an alliance with the pope and the Frankish Empire as Photios was an enemy of the pope and Latin Church and therefore Ignatios who was patriarch before Photios returned as patriarch, while Basil too confirmed Bulgaria as part of the sphere of influence of the Church of Constantinople and not Rome.

When it came to military conquests, Basil turned out to be successful in it as well, most notably his campaign of 872 wherein he and the Byzantine army managed to defeat the Paulician rebels who were allied with the Arab armies in Eastern Asia Minor while capturing their capital Tephrike as well. Basil I too was the first emperor in over 200 years to pursue an active policy in restoring Byzantine control over Italy which was successful as the Byzantines allied with the Frankish Empire managed to expel Arab raids from Southern Italy, however it was not all successful for the Byzantines as in 878 they lost Syracuse in Sicily to the Arabs. In the capital Constantinople, Basil I's legacy too was seen with his construction of a new church known as the *Nea Ekklesia* in the imperial palace complex which was so impressive in its interiors making it the grandest church ever built since the

Hagia Sophia 3 centuries earlier, however nothing remains of the grand church today as in the Ottoman era wherein it was used as a gunpowder storage, it blew up into pieces.

Basil's last years however would be depressing as following the death of his first son Constantine with his first wife Maria in 879, Basil spiraled into a depression all while he hated his second son Leo who he believed was Michael's son and not his which is why Basil did not mind beating him. Just 3 years later in 882, Basil fell deeper into depression when his wife the empress Eudokia Ingerina died while at around the same time too, Basil suspecting Leo of attempting to murder him had Leo thrown into prison and Basil too even thought of blinding Leo only for him to be persuaded not to do it by rioting in the streets in favor of Leo and the patriarch Photios- who returned as patriarch in 877 being reappointed by Basil following Patriarch Ignatios' death- telling Basil to do otherwise. Leo was thus released in 886 which was also the same year Basil died in the middle of a hunting trip in the woods near Constantinople wherein it was said that Basil when alone was suddenly pushed off his horse by a stag who with its antlers grabbed Basil by the belt and dragged him for 16km through the woods. When Basil was found wounded, a man cut him loose with a knife, but being paranoid Basil had the man executed for holding a knife right next to him, then just a few days later the 75-year-old Basil died from his wounds.

It was suspected too that Leo and a corrupt minister in Basil's court named Stylianos Zaoutzes who was the father of Leo's lover plotted Basil's death making the whole stag story a cover-up. Following Basil's death, Leo VI becoming the new emperor ordered the body of Michael III who Basil had killed 19 years earlier be buried in the Church of the Holy Apostles where the emperors were buried in, which thus also hints that Leo was really Michael's son and not Basil's, and although Basil was known to have established the Macedonian Dynasty that would rule Byzantium for almost 200 years (until 1056), the Macedonian Dynasty may never have existed except for Basil and his legitimate son Alexander- who ruled from 912-913- if the rumors were true that Leo VI (r. 886-912) was Michael III's son.

For this illustration, the Byzantine emperor Basil I the Macedonian is depicted as a large, tall, and muscular man as he was actually described as "most outstanding in bodily form and heavy set; his eyebrows grew together, he had large eyes and a broad chest, and a rather downcast expression". In this illustration, the crown he is wearing was based on the crown the Bulgarian tsar Simeon I the Great (r. 893-927) is seen wearing in his portraits, and Basil and Simeon more or less lived in the same era. As for his outfit, Basil here is not seen wearing the usual purple imperial robes lined with gold fabric and jewels worn by Byzantine emperors, but instead a large red mantle or *Chlamys* embroidered with gold stiches wherein scales can slightly be seen beneath it to the left which thus shows he is wearing a lamellar breastplate beneath the cloak and under it a long white tunic embroidered too with gold stiches and fabric. The outfit Basil is seen wearing in this illustration appears to look more like the imperial robes worn by Byzantine emperors in the earlier days from the 4th up to the 7th centuries, while in terms of appearance, this illustration shows Basil most probably by the time he became the sole emperor in 867 after murdering Michael III wherein Basil was 56 at the time. On the other hand, the red boots

worn by Basil here indicates him as an emperor aside from the crown, while the sword he holds here which is however sheathed also indicates his position as emperor, and he is seen holding a sword in order to highlight his ruthless personality.

C-10 Alexios Philanthropenos, 13th-14th centuries



In the history of the late Byzantine Empire, the general Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos has the story of a tragic hero at a time when Byzantine imperial authority in Asia Minor had been disappearing due to the increase of the power of the numerous Turkish *Beyliks* (feudal states). Alexios Philanthropenos was born in 1270 as the son of the general Michael Tarchaneiotes, a nephew of the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (r. 1261-1282)- who was the emperor that restored the Byzantine Empire in 1261 following the reconquest of Constantinople from the Latin Empire who occupied it since 1204- therefore making Alexios a relative of the ruling Palaiologos family. Alexios meanwhile was named after his maternal grandfather who was also a general, and therefore Alexios was known to have used his mother's last name "Philanthropenos" instead of his father's "Tarchaneiotes". With the emperor Michael VIII's death in 1282, his son Andronikos II Palaiologos (r. 1282-1328) succeeded him as emperor, and as the new emperor Andronikos focused his interests on the crumbling Byzantine defenses of Asia Minor which his father had neglected in his reign. As part of the mission to restore Byzantine rule to their heartland Asia Minor, Andronikos II in 1293 appointed the young

Alexios who happened to be his nephew as the *Doux* or supreme military commander of the Byzantine armies in Asia, therefore sending Alexios off in a mission to restore imperial military presence there and drive off the raiding Turks.

Between 1293 and 1295, Alexios campaigned across the remains of Byzantine territory in Western Asia Minor and scored a number of victories against the armies of several Turkish Beyliks and thus forced them to recognize Byzantine rule, while at the same time he also allied with other Turkish Beyliks against their rival Beyliks. Alexios was indeed so successful in his campaigns that some Turks who had been fleeing west from the expanding Mongols chose to join Alexios' army rather than fighting against him while Alexios too took so many Turkish prisoners that the Byzantine monk and scholar of this time Maximos Planoudes wrote that "a sheep was more expensive to buy than a Turkish prisoner". The people of Asia Minor being tired with the corrupt and neglectful rule of the emperor in Constantinople and the heavy taxes imposed on them that did not benefit them in return soon enough urged the successful general Alexios to rebel against their emperor Andronikos II and seize the throne, but out of loyalty to his uncle the emperor, Alexios refused. Alexios however could not refuse the demands of the people of Asia Minor and so in 1295 he and his army including Turkish allies rose up in rebellion against Andronikos II to save the empire from corruption and decay. Although a large percent of Asia Minor's still Byzantine population joined Alexios in rebellion against the emperor, a lot of the Byzantine provincial governors in Asia Minor still stayed loyal to the emperor. Andronikos II on the other hand tried to lure Alexios into a trap by making peace with him and settling him down by offering him the title of *Caesar*, but at the end the Byzantine governor of Nicaea managed to get Alexios' Cretan mercenaries to betray and blind him as blinding was therefore the punishment for rebels.

Although Alexios was blinded, he still lived but would disappear for the next 30 years whereas the Byzantine commanders that would take his place in defending Asia Minor would turn out to be highly incompetent compared to him that more Byzantine territory there would end up lost to the Turks. In 1324 with Byzantine Asia Minor at such a desperate situation, Andronikos II who was now an old man pardoned Alexios and asked him to once again return to military service, and thus Alexios who probably may have no longer been blind at this point was sent to relieve the city of Philadelphia in Asia Minor from a Turkish invasion. Although having no army with him, Alexios' presence alone forced the Turks out of fear to abandon their siege of Philadelphia as apparently these Turks remembered battling him 30 years ago where they lost to him. Alexios would then be the Byzantine governor of Philadelphia until 1327 but in 1328 he was dismissed from his position as general as Andronikos II was overthrown by his grandson who became the new emperor Andronikos III Palaiologos (r. 1328-1341). Alexios however returned to commanding the Byzantine army in 1336 when the Aegean island of Lesbos was attacked by a Genoese army, and here Alexios led an army into Lesbos' capital Mytilene which surrendered to him before the year ended, thus returning Lesbos to Byzantine rule. Now, Alexios remained as the Byzantine governor of Lesbos until his death, but it remains unclear on when Alexios Philanthropenos died, though it was most likely in the 1340s, while on the other hand contemporary historians of his time namely Nikephoros Gregoras

praise Alexios so much calling him the “Belisarius of the Palaiologan era”, seeing Alexios as someone as great as the 6th century Byzantine general Belisarius.

For this illustration of Alexios Philanthropenos, his appearance and attire is almost entirely based on imagination as there is clearly no image from his time depicting Alexios. This illustration of Alexios was made for a review for the novel *The Usurper* by Emanuele Rizzardi, and therefore his physical appearance was based on how he was described in the novel. The image of Alexios here therefore most definitely depicts him before he was blinded in 1295 as he appears rather young looking here. As for his armor, it is based off on different samples of Byzantine armor for generals and high-ranking officials from the 13th and 14th centuries which appear on illustrations by other artists. The armor worn by Alexios here consists of the classic Byzantine lamellar (scales) which here are gilded to indicate his rank as a general; however, some parts of his armor may not have existed as these were based off originally on the armor seen on Byzantine saints found on frescos in Byzantine churches which do not exactly accurately depict Byzantine armor. Additionally, Alexios here is seen wearing the Byzantine gauntlets or *Cheiropsella* for his lower arms and greaves or *Podopsella* for his lower legs as well as a green cape knotted unusually under his arm, and the weapon he is seen using here is a Western influenced longsword which generals and commanders in the late Byzantine era preferred to use as their weapon.

C-J Maurice, Byzantine emperor (582-602)



Flavius Maurice Tiberius who would be Byzantine emperor from 582-602 was born in Cappadocia in 539 to a Cappadocian-Greek family that spoke Greek and when grown up he was destined for a military career. Maurice was first mentioned as a *Notarius* or secretary of the Commander of the *Excubitores* (palace guards) Tiberius, and when Tiberius became the *Caesar* or co-emperor of the Byzantine Empire following the abdication of the emperor Justin II (r. 565-578) in 574, Maurice succeeded Tiberius as the *Comes Excubitorum* or basically the commander of the imperial guard force. In 577, Maurice was appointed as the *Magister Militum per Orientem* or supreme military commander of the eastern forces, as here the Eastern Romans were engaged in a bloody war against their eastern neighbor, the Sassanid Empire. Tiberius II became the senior emperor or *Augustus* of the Byzantine Empire in 578 following Justin II's death while Maurice for the next 4 years would be busy campaigning against the Sassanids fighting battle after battle wherein he won many battles but was recalled back to Constantinople in 582 when getting word that the emperor Tiberius II fell ill. At his deathbed, Tiberius named Maurice as his successor by offering his daughter Constantina to marry Maurice.

The empire Maurice inherited however was troubled on all fronts as first of all the Sassanid threat continued in the east, the Balkans were constantly devastated by the raids of the Avars and their Slav allies, Byzantine Italy was almost entirely lost to the Lombards, and the remains of Byzantine Hispania almost completely lost, and although Maurice's solution was to refuse paying tributes to the empire's enemies the way his predecessor Tiberius II did due to Maurice being a strict military man, he soon saw it as foolish as it cost a lot of men, and thus he resorted to paying tribute to the Avars in the north who even tried attacking Thessaloniki in 584, though Maurice's decision to pay tribute would lead to bankrupting the empire. With the empire attacked on all sides, Maurice appointed the best generals the empire could have to take care of the borders and expel the enemies, while at the same time to further protect the empire, Maurice in 584 created the Exarchate System. In this new reform, Byzantine Italy and North Africa were to be their own semi-independent states under a governor known as an *Exarch* who had almost the same authority as an emperor but had still answered directly to the emperor, and this reform was made in order to further protect territories in Italy, North Africa, and Hispania which were too far away for the emperor in Constantinople to protect.

In the meantime, due to the Byzantines scoring a large number of victories against the Sassanids in the east, the Sassanid ruler or *shah* Hormizd IV was overthrown in 590 when his general Bahram Chobin who being defeated in battle against the Byzantines and humiliated by Hormizd rose up against him. Hormizd was later killed while his son Khosrow fled to Byzantine territory as Bahram took over the Sassanid throne, and when in the Byzantine Empire Khosrow managed to make an alliance with Maurice who sent Khosrow an army of 35,000 which then defeated Bahram's forces in 591. Khosrow II now came to rule the Sassanid Empire and due to Maurice assisting him in taking power back, both Byzantines and Sassanid Empires agreed to an alliance with each other and to further thank Maurice for helping him, Khosrow surrendered most of Armenia to the Byzantines, thus enlarging Byzantine territory. With the Sassanid problem taken care of, Maurice

returned his attention to the north to once again deal with the Avars who have resumed attacking the Byzantine Balkans together with their allied Slavs and Gepids, and here a number of victories were scored against them by the general Priscus and Maurice's brother Peter. Although Maurice's reign saw a lot of military success, he was not very successful in diplomacy especially with the pope Gregory I who Maurice insulted for poorly defending Rome against the Lombards causing the pope to make a treaty with the Lombards behind the emperor's back.

In the meantime, perhaps one of the greatest achievements of Maurice was in compiling a book on military strategies known as the *Strategikon* in around 600 which explained the battle tactics and cultural traits of all the enemies of the empire whether they were Germanic people, Avars, Slavs, Sassanid Persians, Huns, or others, and this book is still a useful military manual until today. However, it would apparently be one of the strategies in this book that would lead to Maurice's own downfall as this strategy here was when it came to battling the Avars and Slavs which said that the best time to attack them was during winter wherein the Byzantine army would have to set up camp across the Danube River border to prevent them from crossing. This order by Maurice only led to the soldiers growing more and more discontent especially since not only were they forced to stay in enemy territory during the winter of 602 wherein they were usually permitted to return home, but more so because they were not paid due to the empire's treasury running out. The soldiers in the Danube rather than fulfilling their duties turned on Maurice after being persuaded by a low-ranking centurion (army captain) named Phocas who a large number of soldiers rallied under and marched towards Constantinople.

Phocas at first declared that he was heading to Constantinople to depose Maurice and replace him with the latter's son Theodosius, but as Phocas approached the capital, the people backed by the Senate and the Blue and Green chariot racing factions all rioted in favor of Phocas. Maurice and his family escaped by boat to the Asian shore across Constantinople, but when arriving they were caught by Phocas' soldiers and brought back to Constantinople. Maurice's wife Constantina and their daughters were sent to a nunnery while Maurice after witnessing the beheading of his 6 sons was beheaded too by the order of Phocas. With Maurice killed in 602, Phocas usurped power as the new emperor and purged the government of anyone loyal to Maurice to secure his position all while the Sassanid ruler and ally of Maurice Khosrow II used Maurice's death as his reason to resume war with the Byzantines, and the moment Khosrow heard of Maurice's death, he declared war on the Byzantines. Maurice's memory though would be avenged in 610 when Heraclius the Younger, son of the Exarch of Africa and Maurice's loyal general Heraclius the Elder sailed to Constantinople and usurped power killing the usurper Phocas in the process and becoming emperor.

In this illustration, the emperor Maurice wears gilded scaled armor with his purple imperial mantle or *Chlamys* over it, in which the mantle was the standard uniform worn by emperors of his time, which too has the addition of a large golden embroidery panel studded with jewels known as a *Tablion*. The purple mantle Maurice wears is fastened by a golden brooch or *Fibula* with a gem at the center seen on his right shoulder. The purple socks covering his lower legs as well as the red boots also show he is an emperor. In order

to portray Maurice as the military emperor he was as he was in fact the first Byzantine emperor in a hundred years to lead armies in battle, he is seen wearing scale armor here with red leather *Ptergues* or tassels attached to it both protecting his upper arms and thighs, and underneath the armor is a white tunic with golden trimmings as worn by emperors of this time wherein here only the sleeves and bottom part of his inner tunic are visible. The sword meanwhile is another addition to the illustration to also show he is a military emperor. At the same time, this illustration shows Maurice as a large sized man with a large round face, a short beard, and curly hair. The design of the imperial crown Maurice is wearing here as well as his dark colored beard and thick curly hair was based on the image of the face of Maurice from the 15th century manuscript which is a copy of John Zonaras' *History* known as the *Codex Mutinensis Graecus 122* which features miniature portraits of Roman emperors from Augustus Caesar in 27BCE to the last Byzantine emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos in 1453 and is found at the Biblioteca Estense in Modena, Italy.

C-Q Empress Theodora, 6th Century



Not one of but possibly THE MOST influential and most remembered Eastern Roman (Byzantine) empress is Theodora from the 6th century, the wife of the most influential Byzantine emperor Justinian I the Great (r. 527-565). Theodora who came from humble origins was most possibly born in Byzantine Cyprus in 500, though some sources say she

was born in the region of Paphlagonia in Asia Minor or in Syria, but wherever she was born in, she was of Greek descent and a native Greek speaker. Theodora's father Acacius who was a bear trainer for the Green circus faction died when she was very young while her mother who was a dancer and actress presented her 3 daughters wherein Theodora was the middle one to the rival Blue circus faction, and from here on Theodora would be a strong supporter of the Blue faction. Theodora then grew up to be an actress and dancer like her mother wherein there happens to be some scandalous acts written about her, such as one from the *Secret History* by the historian Procopius which says Theodora performed sexual acts on stage. Some sources, most notably Procopius even accuses the young Theodora of being a prostitute, however back then actresses were considered to be at the bottom of society being equivalents of prostitutes compared to today's world where actors and actresses are well respected celebrities.

Theodora later fell in love with a Syrian official named Hecebolus who was assigned as the governor of Libya thus bringing Theodora with him, but there he abandoned her thus leading to Theodora finding herself in Alexandria where she happened to convert to the Monophysite sect of Christianity which was seen as heretical. When back in Constantinople, she met the future emperor Justinian in around 524 who here was the well-educated patrician Flavius Petrus Sabbatius, and the nephew of the reigning emperor Justin I (r. 518-527). Although Petrus was already a powerful patrician at this point, he too was of humble origins being at birth a peasant from the Balkans, and although Petrus who was 42 here wanted to marry the 24-year-old Theodora, there was an existing law that forbade men of patrician status from marrying actresses. Petrus however had his uncle the emperor Justin I reverse this law which he did, and thus Petrus and Theodora married on the condition that Theodora repented from her old ways of being an actress. Just 3 years later in 527, Justin I died and Petrus at the age of 45 succeeded as Emperor Justinian I with Theodora as his empress, and as empress Theodora who had good political instincts advised her husband Justinian many times.

Theodora played a crucial role in saving Justinian's position in 532 when massive rioting known as the Nika Riot broke out in Constantinople's streets and when Justinian contemplated fleeing the city the moment the mob proclaimed a man named Hypatius as their emperor, Theodora persuaded Justinian and the court that it would be better to die than lose the throne. Justinian thus listened to Theodora and about 30,000 of the rioters were massacred by imperial forces led by the generals Belisarius and Mundus with their proclaimed emperor Hypatius executed in the process too. Following the disastrous Nika Riot of 532, Justinian and Theodora focused on rebuilding all the landmarks of Constantinople that were destroyed in the riot at a much grander scale compared to how they were before they were destroyed. In the meantime, the same historian Procopius also says that as empress, Theodora was obsessed with court ceremony to the point that she always tried to make herself feel more superior to those who asked favors from her and her husband that whenever officials came to them, they would have to first wait in a small and stuffy room and when meeting the emperor and empress, they would have to lie face down in front of them.

Theodora too had plotted against a number of officials in Justinian's government such as the finance minister John of Cappadocia who ended up exiled in 541 while Theodora a number of times too tried to sabotage Justinian's top general Belisarius who she was jealous of. Other than that, Theodora as empress as a Monophysite openly supported the Monophysite sect of Christianity that she even appointed a number of Monophysite bishops to different cities in the empire despite Justinian being strongly Chalcedonian Orthodox Christian, though this showed that the imperial couple had in a way united the rival Orthodox and Monophysite sects of Christianity. On the other hand, Theodora had also managed to somewhat create a succession plan for Justinian by marrying Justinian's nephew Justin to her niece Sophia, while Theodora too was also influential in convincing Justinian to pass laws to protect women's rights and laws that also gave more rights to prostitutes and divorced women over property.

During the time the devastating plague hit Constantinople and the whole empire in 542 known as the "Plague of Justinian" wherein Justinian too was victim of it, Theodora ran the empire for him when Justinian fell into a coma. Justinian soon enough recovered and ran the empire again with Theodora at his side, but in 548 tragedy struck as Theodora died at the age of 48, most likely from some kind of cancer. Justinian and Theodora never had any children together and with Theodora's death, Justinian was greatly heartbroken for a long time that he vowed to never marry again, and true enough by the time Justinian died in 565 he had no children and was instead succeeded by his nephew Justin II (r. 565-578) who was married to Sophia, the niece of Theodora.

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

C-K Michael VIII Palaiologos, Byzantine emperor (1261-1282)



Michael VIII Palaiologos was the first emperor of the restored Byzantine Empire beginning 1261 and the founder of Byzantium's last and longest ruling dynasty, the Palaiologos Dynasty that ruled the Byzantine Empire from 1261 when Constantinople was recaptured from the Latins who had taken over Constantinople for 57 years to when the empire fell to the Ottomans in 1453. Michael was born in 1223 in Asia Minor when the Byzantine capital Constantinople had been lost to the Latins of the 4th Crusade- since 1204- and by the time Michael was born, the Byzantine Empire was in exile as the Empire of Nicaea in Western Asia Minor. Michael coming from a powerful military family wherein he was a great-grandson of the former Byzantine emperor Alexios III Angelos (r. 1195-1203) grew up to be a thorn on the side of the Emperor of Nicaea John III Doukas Vatatzes (r. 1222-1254) who Michael saw as a low-born with no legitimate claim to the throne, though Michael was forced to hold red hot irons to prove his loyalty to the emperor when being suspected of plotting. The emperor John III however forgave Michael as he saw some potential in him and even appointed him to the position of *Megas Konostaulos*, which was something like the police general of the empire.

When John III died in 1254, he was succeeded by his son Theodore II Laskaris who was a rival of Michael since childhood, and wanting to avoid being imprisoned by Theodore Michael left the Empire of Nicaea to join the army of the Seljuk sultan Kaykaus II but had to return not too long after to command the armies of Nicaea only to be suspected of treason and imprisoned by Theodore II but shortly after he was released. However, Theodore II who was terminally ill did not have much longer to live and in 1258 he died possibly from a

brain tumor after ruling for only 4 years, thus he was succeeded by his 7-year-old son John IV Laskaris who was under the regency of Theodore's close friend and general George Mouzalon. Michael however usurped power behind the scenes by organizing the murder of George at Theodore's funeral and afterwards bribed and bullied the Byzantine aristocracy into making him young John IV's co-emperor to the point that the patriarch-in-exile Arsenios was powerless to stop Michael's rise, and thus in 1259 Michael was crowned as the co-emperor of Nicaea and was basically the one wielding true power as John IV was only a child and with Michael in power, John IV true enough could not do anything without Michael's permission while all documents too were signed with both the names of Michael and John.

As co-emperor, Michael sent a large army to Greece which thus eliminated all threats to the Empire of Nicaea being the breakaway Byzantine Despotate of Epirus and the Latin principalities of Greece at the Battle of Pelagonia in 1259. The Byzantine victory here thus paved the way for the ultimate reconquest of Constantinople from the Latin Empire which at first was unsuccessful in 1260 when Michael laid siege to the city, but in 1261 it was a success as even though Michael sealed an alliance with the naval Republic of Genoa in Italy as both Nicaea and Genoa had the Latin Empire's ally and benefactor Venice as a common enemy, a small Nicaean army under the command of Michael's general Alexios Strategopoulos- after receiving intelligence reports from local Greeks in Thrace that the main Latin garrison in the city left- managed to sneak into the city in the middle of the night, overwhelmed the small Latin garrison left inside, forced the last Latin emperor Baldwin II to flee the city in a panic, and at the end liberated the city allowing the Byzantines to return. Michael later entered the city for the first time in his life with a grand ceremony wherein he was officially crowned as the emperor of the restored Byzantine Empire at the Hagia Sophia thus vowing to restore the Byzantine Empire from the ruined state the Crusaders left it in. However, the legitimate emperor John IV was still left behind in Nicaea, and so to secure power for himself, Michael VIII now fully as emperor at the end of 1261 had John IV blinded and imprisoned in a castle for life.

Michael VIII then spent his entire 21-year reign rebuilding Constantinople from the 57 years of neglect under the Latin Crusaders who never bothered to clear up the rubble which was caused by their destruction of the city in 1204. Part of Michael's plans of rebuilding Constantinople was to repopulate the city as its population had dropped to 35,000 during the time of the Latin occupation, rebuild the army that had been so diminished over the years in exile, and restore the imperial navy that had basically disappeared after 1204, however all of this would prove too expensive and difficult for Michael to handle as he too was unpopular at the same time for blinding and overthrowing John IV, especially since John IV's dynasty the Laskaris were still popular among the people. Not to mention, Michael VIII too was excommunicated by the patriarch Arsenios when discovering Michael had John IV blinded as Arsenios was a loyalist to the Laskaris Dynasty, however Michael got his excommunication lifted after firing Arsenios in 1265 and replacing him as patriarch with Joseph I who was loyal to the Palaiologos family. At the same time as reviving Constantinople as an imperial capital all while trying to revive the power of Byzantium as a major player in the Balkans, Michael was busy having to rule an empire threatened on all sides as first of all Byzantine Asia Minor was falling to the new Turkish

Beyliks and the Seljuk Empire itself, which was partially caused by Michael now moving the imperial capital back to Constantinople and neglecting the eastern frontier as he instead focused his attention west.

To the north, the empire was threatened by the growing powers of the Serbian Kingdom, the 2nd Bulgarian Empire, and the newly expanding Mongols while in Greece the Latin principalities and the breakaway Byzantine state being the Despotate of Epirus were still a problem. In 1263, Michael's forces recaptured the southeast corner of the Peloponnese Peninsula in Greece from the Latin Principality of Achaia, thus returning it to Byzantine rule. In the meantime, the ever-expanding Mongols had been a problem to Michael VIII's newly restored Byzantine Empire that Michael in fact encountered a Mongol raid himself led by the Mongol general of the Golden Horde Nogai Khan, and here Michael almost lost his life as his officers fled out of fear. Apparently being a master of diplomacy, Michael settled the Mongol threat with diplomacy wherein Michael married two of his illegitimate daughters to two different Mongol rulers, one daughter to Nogai Khan of the Golden Horde and another one to Abaqa Khan who was the ruler of the Mongol Ilkhanate in Persia, and true enough this spared Byzantium from being devastated by Mongol attacks the way their neighboring powers like Bulgaria and the Seljuks were. Nogai of the Golden Horde had turned out to become a great ally to Michael VIII that in 1281, Nogai helped the Byzantines in finishing off another problem to them which was the usurper in Bulgaria Ivaylo who after losing power over Bulgaria as well fled north to Russia which was under Nogai's rule, and there Nogai killed Ivaylo claiming he did it in honor of his father-in-law Michael VIII. On the other hand, Michael VIII succeeded diplomatically by establishing some ties with the new rising power of the Middle East which were the Mamluks, made a temporary alliance with Byzantium's old enemy being the Republic of Venice after being disappointed with the failure of Genoa in battle against Venice, managed to gain the Kingdom of Hungary as an ally by having the Hungarian king's daughter marry his son and heir Andronikos, and with the west he also managed to have his reconquest of Constantinople and the restoration of the Byzantine Empire recognized by the most powerful man in Europe, King Louis IX of France thus preventing any attempts to restore the Latin Empire, at least in the meantime.

However, the threat from the Latin west would soon again return as in 1266, Louis IX's younger brother Charles of Anjou invaded Southern Italy and then Sicily which was under the rule of the German Hohenstaufen Dynasty that ruled the Holy Roman Empire, and with Charles' full conquest of Sicily in 1268 he made it clear that he was doing it to build a Mediterranean empire and one day recapture Constantinople from the Latins wherein Sicily would be his naval base in order to construct a massive fleet. Charles of Anjou too had made an anti-Byzantine alliance with the pope and the former enemies of the Byzantines such as the Latin prince of Achaia William II, the deposed Latin emperor Baldwin II who was still alive, and the Despotate of Epirus, however Charles' ambitions to invade Byzantium were being halted by his older brother Louis IX of France, but with Louis IX's death in his 1270 Crusade in Tunisia, nothing could stop Charles anymore until a violent storm sunk Charles' fleet in 1270 too. Fearing that Charles would return and one day invade his newly restored empire with full force, Michael decided it was time to submit Byzantium's Orthodox Church to the Latin Catholic Church of the west, and in 1274 the

union between the Churches of Rome and Constantinople was sealed at the Council of Lyon as with both Churches united Charles would not have the support and blessing of the pope to attack a now Catholic Byzantium, but back in Constantinople this was not received well by the people whose memory of the trauma brought upon them by the Latin Catholics in 1204 was still fresh. This union with the pope agreed upon by Michael thus made the opposition against him grow even more as those who had already hated him for blinding John IV Laskaris joined forces with those loyal to Michael before but had turned on him for betraying their faith by submitting to the Latin Church who the Byzantines still saw as the ultimate enemy, and true enough even the Patriarch of Constantinople Joseph I resigned despite being loyal to Michael as he too could not accept the fact of submitting to the pope, thus he was replaced as patriarch by John XI who strongly supported the union.

The latter half of the 1270s would then feature so much religious conflicts in Byzantium and rioting in the streets directed against Michael VIII to the point that Michael would have to rule with an iron-fist jailing all those who spoke against him especially against his Church Union, which was also an act to prove to the pope that Michael took the union seriously. The opposition against Michael thus grew so large that there were not enough jails anymore in the empire that Michael had to order them executed. Michael's efforts however in trying unite both Churches would completely prove useless when Martin IV became pope in 1281 as the new pope who was French had happened to be blindly loyal to Charles, and thus Charles renewed his ambitions to capture Constantinople. Charles' plans though would not be executed as in 1282, the people of Sicily that he ruled over spontaneously rose up in a revolt known as the "Sicilian Vespers" to the point of killing off the French garrison in Sicily. This conflict in Sicily was actually another diplomatic feat of Michael VIII wherein he possibly paid off the local lords in Sicily to rise up against their French overlords, and at the end it was a success wherein no Byzantine blood was shed at all. The conflict in Sicily was resolved when the Spanish kingdom of Aragon which was also an ally of Michael VIII invaded Sicily by request of the Sicilian people and the backing of Michael as well.

By 1282, Charles lost control of Sicily to Aragon thus preventing him from launching a naval invasion on Byzantium, though in 1282 as well Byzantium gained a new enemy in Stefan II Milutin, the new king of Serbia claiming to be the defender of Orthodoxy in the Balkans against Michael VIII's pro-Catholic policies. Michael VIII died as well at the end of 1282 while travelling in Thrace from a fever at the age of 59, and being so hated by his people for betraying their Orthodox faith by submitting to the pope and blinding the child emperor John IV back in 1261, Michael's death was not mourned but celebrated. Although being a ruthless ruler and having to do such unpopular moves, Michael VIII was overall a strategic thinker and diplomat who cared more about the long-term sustainability of his empire even if it may cause division among his people, but at the end Michael at least brought the Byzantine Empire back into existence after 57 years of it disappearing, rebuilt and repopulated a ruined Constantinople, and saved the empire from external threats coming from all sides, but due to being seen as a heretic for submitting to the pope and more so betraying his people by bowing down to the people (the Latins) who he fought so hard to liberate his people from, Michael was not given a proper burial but instead was buried in a hidden location outside the city, and following his death his son and successor

Andronikos II would undo his father's religious policy by cancelling the union with the Latin Church.

This illustration of Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos was heavily based on the manuscript illustration of Michael VIII in the *History* of the Byzantine historian George Pachymeres (1242-1310) who wrote it in the early 14th century discussing the events that took place in the reigns of Byzantine emperors Michael VIII (1261-1282) and his son Andronikos II (1282-1328). The type of crown which is a bowl in shape and decorated ornately with jewels as well as the purple imperial robes with lots of jewels sewn into it which is seen in this illustration is very much similar in appearance to the crown and robes Michael is seen wearing in the manuscript. The only major difference though happens to be that in the manuscript, the colors are already faded for both the jewels and the robes, therefore not knowing the exact color of the jewels in the original manuscript, the illustration here shows a variety of colors for the jewels sewn into Michael's robes and attached to his crown, although the only jewels in the original manuscript that are highly visible are the white pearls, hence it is included too in this illustration. On the other hand, another major change made to the illustration of Michael VIII was the color of his robes which appears to be of a darker shade of purple as compared to the original one which uses a lighter purple, while in the original manuscript Michael's hair appears to be somewhat reddish, though in this version his hair is dark brown. The robes Michael is wearing in this illustration just like in the original one also consists of the long jeweled golden scarf or *Loros* which is also draped over his left arm while in this illustration just like in the original manuscript, Michael also appears to be wearing the red imperial boots. Lastly, the major difference between Michael's appearance in the original manuscript and in this illustration is that in the original one he holds an imperial scepter, but for this he holds a sword instead which was done to symbolize him as the ruthless emperor he was known to be who at many occasions resolved issues with violence.