

Historical Figures of the Byzantine Empire Playing Cards

Descriptions- Spades

Joker1 Alexios IV Angelos, Byzantine emperor (1203-1204)



The man to possibly have made the most stupid decision in Byzantine history was the short-lived emperor Alexios IV Angelos at the beginning of the 13th century. It was his own personal interest that was a key factor in diverting the army of the 4th Crusade to Constantinople eventually leading to their Sack of Constantinople in 1204 and following that the 57-year Latin occupation and the temporary collapse of the Byzantine Empire. Alexios now was born in around 1182 to the Angelos family which was at this point part of the Byzantine aristocracy and related to the ruling Komnenos Dynasty whereas his father was the aristocrat Isaac Angelos and his mother a woman named Irene who was probably a commoner. By the time Alexios was 3-years-old in 1185, his father Isaac was proclaimed as Byzantine emperor following the overthrow and execution of the emperor Andronikos I Komnenos (r. 1183-1185). Throughout the 10-year reign of Isaac II Angelos (1185-1195), nothing much is recorded about his young son Alexios that in fact the young Alexios was never made his father's co-emperor. The young Alexios however was mentioned in 1195 when his father Isaac was suddenly overthrown in a coup led by his older brother also named Alexios- who Isaac's son was possibly named after- and here as Isaac and his son

Alexios were out hunting, they were suddenly arrested when returning to the camp where the usurper Alexios was. Isaac was then blinded and then imprisoned in Constantinople whereas his son too suffered the same fate as his father being imprisoned by his uncle in the same prison as his father.

After spending some 6 years in prison, the teenage Alexios in 1201 managed to find a way out by bribing his way out and negotiating with a Pisan ship captain to take him away from Constantinople and get him to his sister Irene Angelina in Germany who at this point had already married the King of Germany Philip of Swabia. After being smuggled out of Constantinople and disguising himself as a sailor by cutting his hair off, Alexios made it to Italy, and from there to the court of his brother-in-law Philip in the Holy Roman Empire. There in Germany, Alexios met with the leaders of the newly assembled 4th Crusade who were in Philip's court too, and true enough some of the 4th Crusade's leaders had ambitions to attack Constantinople as part of the Crusade such as the Marquis of Montferrat Boniface I- the main leader of the Crusade- who knew about Constantinople's riches as his brother Conrad was actually the brother-in-law and for a time a general of Isaac II. Alexios and Boniface were said to have negotiated diverting the Crusade to Constantinople as Boniface had intentions to gain wealth and glory there while Alexios needed the army of the 4th Crusade in order to achieve his dream of ousting his uncle the emperor Alexios III and restoring his father and himself to power.

In the meantime, the 4th Crusade could not depart unless they had a fleet which was to be provided by the Republic Venice, and here Venice's ruler or *doge* Enrico Dandolo was a sworn enemy of the Byzantines having a lifelong desire for revenge against them for blinding him. He too also agreed to provide the 4th Crusade transport as long as they attacked the Hungarian held port city of Zara in Croatia and capture it for Venice, as it had been Venetian before but lost to Hungary. The young Alexios on the other hand went to Rome where he met the pope Innocent III who organized the 4th Crusade in the first place with the intention to head to Egypt in order to march to Jerusalem and take it back from the Saracens, though he did not buy Alexios' story of having the Crusade diverted to Constantinople for his own selfish reason of ousting his uncle and putting himself and his father on the throne. The Doge of Venice Dandolo however was waiting for every opportunity that would allow him to ship an army to attack Constantinople, and he finally got it when Alexios came to him in Venice as Alexios true enough also needed Venice's fleet for he and the Crusaders' army to reach Constantinople. In 1202, the Crusaders sacked Zara and captured it for Venice, though its leaders were excommunicated by Pope Innocent III for attacking a fellow Catholic power which was Hungary all while Alexios and Dandolo met up with the Crusaders at Zara as the Crusade was now to be diverted from its original plan which was Egypt to Constantinople, though a number of soldiers disagreed with the change of plans as they did not want to attack their fellow Byzantine Christians but rather they came to fight Muslims and retake Holy sites in the Holy Land, thus leading to many soldiers defecting except those who really wanted Constantinople's riches and to have revenge on the Byzantines for their condescending attitude towards the Latins over the past decades. In return for the Crusaders helping Alexios oust his uncle and place him in power, he promised them with promises that were impossible such as providing the Crusaders with a Byzantine army of 10,000 to assist them against the Saracens once they are done with

Constantinople, the maintenance of 500 knights in the Holy Land which Alexios would pay for himself, 20 Byzantine ships to transport the Crusaders to Egypt, and to completely pay off the Crusaders' debts to Venice which was a total of 200,000 silver marks. Other than that, Alexios had also promised to submit the Greek Orthodox Church of Constantinople to the pope's authority in exchange for the Crusaders helping him.

Now from Zara, the Venetian fleet with the army of the 4th Crusade and Alexios set sail for Constantinople wherein they arrived outside its sea walls in June of 1203 to the surprise of the people of Constantinople and the emperor Alexios III as due to the Byzantine navy having just been abandoned by Alexios III, Constantinople was defenseless. Before the Crusaders launched their attack, they first had the prince Alexios paraded outside the walls as if he was the Byzantine emperor, though the people ignored it as they already had an emperor being Alexios III while they too did not want Latin soldiers storming into the capital. Due to the people of Constantinople refusing the young Alexios entry, the Crusaders began their attack on the city first through the Galata Quarter north of the Golden Horn and from there, they attacked the much shorter sea wall of the main city along the Golden Horn harbor. Alexios III however tried to fight back by charging out to the Crusader army but at the end fled like a coward and escaped the capital to Thrace in the middle of night thus losing the throne. With Alexios III gone, the Crusaders in a way "captured" the city while the people in the morning following Alexios III's flight released the blind Isaac II from prison as the people still loved him despite being imprisoned for 8 years. Despite being blind, Isaac was emperor again, although due to being blind and losing his mental faculty due to being imprisoned for years, Isaac was now a puppet to his son Alexios IV who now became his father's co-emperor who on the other hand was a puppet of the Crusaders and the doge Enrico Dandolo.

As the functioning emperor, Alexios IV now ruled to simply fulfil his promises to the Crusaders as the Crusaders would not leave until they were paid the full 200,000 silver marks, thus putting him at the mercy of the Latin invaders who here were camped at the Galata Quarter. The problem now was that Alexios could not keep up his promises as the 200,000 silver marks was simply too much as Constantinople here even did not have that much money while its people were already taxed to the limit. Alexios IV now was only able to raise up to half of the sum promised which was 100,000 silver marks by confiscating the treasures from churches which he had melted down and made into coins, while he too had to extend his debt period to the Crusaders, therefore extending the stay of the Crusaders for a couple more months. All while raising funds to continue paying off debts to the Crusaders, Alexios IV later on in 1203 led an army out of Constantinople to hunt down his escaped uncle Alexios III but failed to do so as unrest eventually broke out in Constantinople between the Greek locals and the Latins living there. The people now were enraged with Alexios IV for allowing the Crusaders to come into the capital in the first place and to agree to paying off such a large sum to them, thus this eventually led to a strong anti-Latin sentiment in Constantinople wherein some Greeks attacked or even killed any Latin they saw thus further enraging the Crusaders to the point of making them resume their attack on the city.

The Crusaders true enough had grown tired of waiting for months to be paid off thus feeling like Alexios IV had betrayed them all while Alexios' father Isaac too had started growing disgusted at his son for making a deal with the Crusaders that Isaac too felt that he no longer wanted to share the throne with his son that he came up with false rumors about his son being homosexual just to discredit him. Alexios IV though still remained greatly unpopular that riots directed against him and his pro-Crusader policies did not seem to end, and eventually in January of 1204 the riots turned into a rebellion wherein the people of Constantinople as well as the Byzantine Senate gathered in the Hagia Sophia proclaiming a noble named Nikolaos Kanabos as emperor against Alexios IV and Isaac II. Alexios IV here tried to call his Crusader "allies" for help by having the anti-Western courtier Alexios Doukas Mourtzouphlos negotiate with the Crusaders in Galata, however Mourtzouphlos instead of doing that had the rebel Kanabos imprisoned, and after bribing off the senate and Varangian Guard force, he was proclaimed emperor directly against Alexios IV and Isaac II to make a clear anti-Crusader statement that the Byzantines will no longer pay off debts to them. As Mourtzouphlos was proclaimed emperor, he first instructed both Alexios IV and Isaac II to hide telling them that the mob was out to get them, however even though they hid in the palace, Mourtzouphlos still managed to arrest them and throw them back into prison. Alexios IV was then strangled to death in prison at only 22 under Mourtzouphlos' orders in February of 1204 while his father Isaac died shortly after at the age of 47 possibly from shock after hearing of his son's death. The new emperor Alexios V Mourtzouphlos now overturned all of Alexios IV's policies and thus stopped paying tribute to the Crusaders, however this eventually led to the Crusaders retaliating by attacking Constantinople with full force in April of 1204 and at the end capturing it as the Byzantine defenders including Alexios V lost morale and fled.

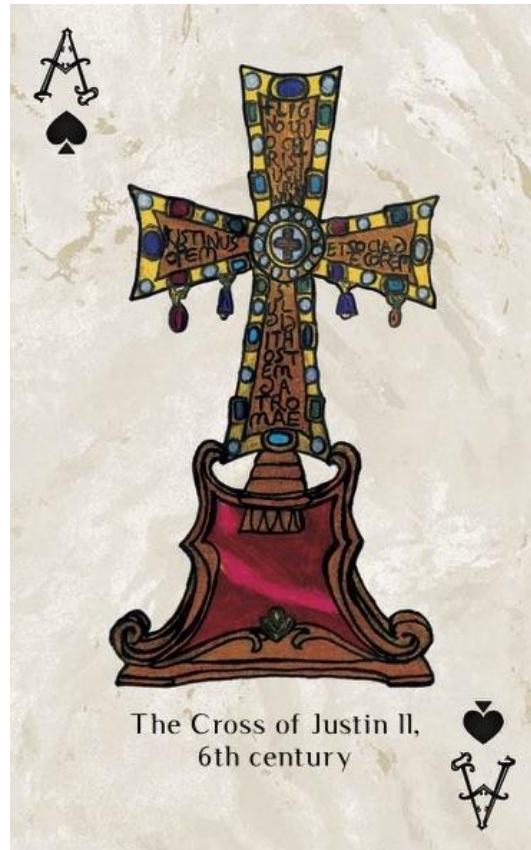
For this illustration of the Byzantine emperor Alexios IV Angelos, it was based on the appearance of his jeweled crown and face where he appears to accurately look like a young man on his miniature portrait from the 15th century manuscript *Codex Mutinensis Graecus 122* found today at the Biblioteca Estense in Modena, Italy which shows miniature portraits of all Byzantine emperors. Since the said miniature portrait of Alexios IV shows him as a young man without a beard, he was illustrated that way here, though his image in the miniature doesn't show him having any hair, while for this illustration he has a bit of dark colored hair. This illustration shows Alexios IV when he was emperor from 1203-1204, therefore he is seen wearing the style of crown worn at this era being the late 12th and early 13th centuries which has a strain of pearls sticking out of it known as a *Pendilia* and on his left hand he holds a scroll which is probably a document. The robes Alexios IV wears here is the standard golden imperial *Loros* which is the gold scarf studded with jewels and has the addition of pearls hanging from it. The robe he is seen wearing under the *Loros* scarf appears to be orange instead of the usual purple worn by Byzantine emperors while his shoes is the red shoes reserved for Byzantine emperors.

Joker2 Din Djarin, the Mandalorian in Byzantine armor



This illustration shows a cross-over between the universe of *Star Wars* and the Byzantine Empire showing the fictional character being the bounty hunter Din Djarin also known as “Mando” or the “Mandalorian”, the lead character from the *Star Wars* series *The Mandalorian*. This illustration shows him wearing his signature *Beskar* helmet which he hardly removes in the series as well as the same kind of gloves, leather sash, and boots he wears in the series. The Byzantine part about his attire though is the armor in which the one seen here is the lamellar armor type known to the Byzantines as *Klivanion* as well as the pauldrons or shoulder guards and the scaled upper-arm protection known to the Byzantines as *Manikellia*. Attached to the lamellar armor suit below are small leather tassels for decorative purposes known as *Ptergues*, though the one giving actual protection for the thighs are the studded leather tassels below it known to the Byzantines as *Kremasmata*. The character here also wears Byzantine style gauntlets for his lower arms known as *Cheiropsella* and greaves for his lower legs known as *Podopsella*, while he also wears a Byzantine style red cape fastened by a golden brooch, though he is not seen wielding any weapons here.

S-A The Cross of Justin II, 6th Century



Possibly the oldest, if not THE oldest surviving reliquary of the True Cross, this silver-gilt jeweled cross adorned with various jewels on gold settings was given by the Byzantine emperor Justin II (r. 565-578) and his wife the empress Sophia to the people of Rome. The date of when this exact reliquary containing the True Cross itself was sent to Rome from Constantinople isn't very clear, although the most possible one is either the year 568 or 569 as it was recorded that in either years, Justin II and Sophia sent relics to Pope John III in Rome in order to improve relations between the Church of Constantinople and the Church of Rome.

This reliquary cross dating back to the 6th century CE still exists today found in the Treasury of St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City. The relic of the true cross being a piece of wood from it can be seen at the center of the reliquary, while the cross-shaped reliquary it is stored in is 15.75 inches high and 11.81 inches wide, although it's height was made longer due to a spike at the bottom of it which fits it to its stand. The stand this reliquary cross stands on featuring a marble base was added much later on in order for this cross-shaped reliquary to have something to stand on. The reliquary cross too bears the engraved Latin inscription: *ligno quo Christus humanum subdidit hostem dat Romae Iustinus opem et socia decorum* which more or less translates to "With the wood with which Christ conquered man's enemy, Justin gives his help to Rome and his wife offers the ornamentation". It's Latin inscription hints that at the time this reliquary cross was made, the language mainly spoken in the Byzantine Empire was still Latin as just a few decades after the time this reliquary was made, the empire's language shifted to Greek. This

illustration is basically an almost-exact recreation of the 6th century reliquary cross of Justin II.

S-2 Empire of Trebizond Infantryman, 15th Century



The Empire of Trebizond was a break-away state of the Byzantine Empire which controlled lands in the northeast corner of Asia Minor along the Black Sea and the southern part of the Crimea Peninsula as well for some time. As its name suggests, its imperial capital was the city of Trebizond (today's Trabzon, Turkey). When Constantinople fell to the army of the 4th Crusade in 1204, the surviving Byzantines created a number of successor states- namely the Empire of Nicaea in Western Asia Minor, the Despotate of Epirus in Western Greece, and the Empire of Trebizond in Northeast Asia Minor. The Empire of Trebizond was created by descendants of the Komnenos emperors which once ruled the Byzantine Empire from Constantinople (1081-1185), and with the support of their neighbor which was the Kingdom of Georgia, the Empire of Trebizond was created in 1204 when word got around that Constantinople had fallen to the 4th Crusade (Latins).

Trebizond was able to call itself an empire mainly because its founders being the brothers Alexios and David Komnenos were direct descendants of the Komnenos Dynasty that once ruled the Byzantine Empire and in fact were grandsons of the last Komnenos Byzantine emperor Andronikos I (r. 1183-1185). The two Komnenos brothers now were able to receive military assistance from the neighboring Kingdom of Georgia under Queen

Tamar the Great (r. 1184-1213) who was their aunt as the brothers had been living at her court in Georgia before they seized the area of Trebizond in 1204. At first both brothers ruled together as co-emperors wherein they ruled by the name *Megas Komnenos* meaning "Grand Komnenos" to assert that they were the legitimate Byzantine emperors as direct descendants of the Komnenos line, due to the rulers of the breakaway Byzantine states of Nicaea and Epirus also having claims to the now fallen Byzantium. Among the two brothers, David died first in 1212, and in 1222 Alexios died, thus passing the throne to the latter's son-in-law Andronikos and therefore continuing the empire. Due to the destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258, the Silk Road which once passed Baghdad was diverted north putting Trebizond in it, hence Trebizond in the late 13th century would grow richer and richer due to travelers along the Silk Road which went all the way to China passing by it, either heading there or coming back, and among the famous travelers that passed by Trebizond was the Venetian Marco Polo who visited the city on his way back to Italy from China in 1295.

Eventually in 1261, the Byzantines from the Empire of Nicaea recaptured Constantinople from the Latins and reestablished the Byzantine Empire, though despite this Trebizond still called itself the legitimate "Roman Empire" refusing to surrender its claim and territories to the Byzantine Empire which was based in Constantinople again. However, during the reign of Trebizond's emperor John II Megas Komnenos (1280-1297), the Empire of Trebizond's claim to Constantinople was given up as the emperors of Trebizond beginning with him no longer styled themselves as "Emperor and Autocrat of the Romans" but as "Emperor and Autocrat of all the East, Iberia, and Perateia". The Empire of Trebizond would then just end up being content with what they were as a maritime power in the Black Sea that was focused more on trade than in conquests while it also developed its own unique cultural identity as a melting pot of Pontic Greek, Laz, Georgian, and other cultures too.

During the 14th century, the Empire of Trebizond fell into bad times due to the plague of Black Death brought by Genoese merchant ships from the Crimea in 1347, a period of deadly civil wars, and the rise of Turkish powers in Asia Minor known as *Beyliks* which now began expanding north encroaching into the Empire of Trebizond's territory. During the reign of the Emperor of Trebizond Alexios III Megas Komnenos (1349-1390), the Empire of Trebizond experienced a golden age of trade and artistic accomplishments, and it was also in his reign when the tradition began of using the diplomatic strategy of marrying princesses of the ruling dynasty to neighboring Turkish rulers in order to avoid war, and apparently these imperial princesses from Trebizond were famed for their beauty. On the other hand, the Empire of Trebizond actually outlived the main Byzantine Empire in Constantinople itself- in which the latter fell to the Ottomans in 1453 following the Siege of Constantinople- whereas Trebizond survived for 8 more years until it fell in 1461 to the same Ottoman sultan Mehmed II that captured Constantinople in 1453. The fall of Trebizond to the Ottomans in 1461 is therefore considered the real end of the Byzantine Empire as Trebizond was still true enough ruled by a descendant of a Byzantine imperial dynasty- the Komnenos Dynasty- therefore despite giving up their claim to Constantinople, they could still claim it considering that Constantinople already fell to the Ottomans. The Fall of Trebizond to the Ottomans in 1461 however was not as dramatic as the Fall of

Constantinople in 1453 where the last emperor there being Constantine XI Palaiologos (r. 1449-1453) made a heroic last stand, whereas the last emperor of Trebizond David Megas Komnenos (r. 1460-1461) simply surrendered when being unable to defend Trebizond against the Ottomans for an extended period of time.

As the Empire of Trebizond was more so a naval power in the Black Sea and not a military power, their army consisted of a large number of mercenaries including Iberian (Georgian) cavalry, Laz militia, Italian and French soldiers, and even Turkish troops. This illustration most likely depicts a local militiaman serving the Empire of Trebizond in its last days during the 15th century. This soldier being from the light infantry units is not fully equipped with armor but instead just wears a long coat while wielding a one-handed curved sword and a shield for protection. The hat he wears has a design of local hats from the area of Trebizond in today's Turkey. This illustration was based off on a number of images depicting army units from the Empire of Trebizond (1204-1461).

S-3 Byzas of Megara, 7th Century BCE



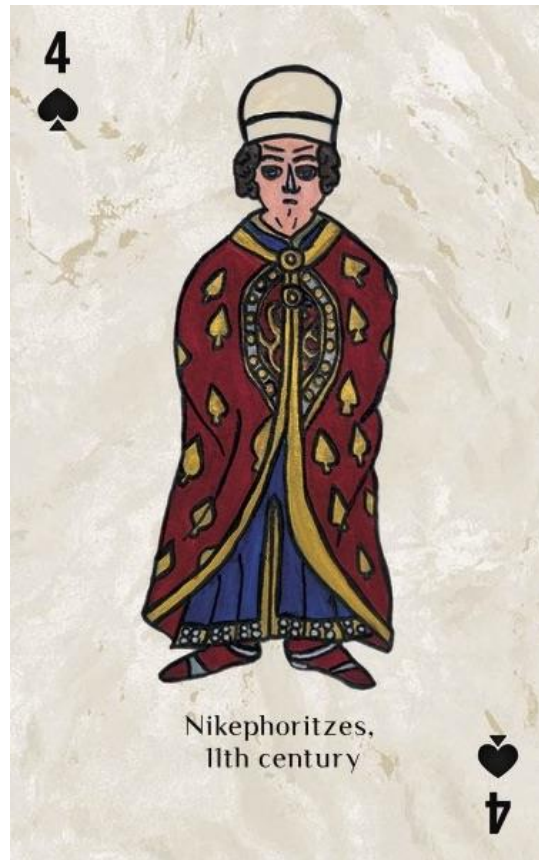
Most great cities have a mythical founder with rather mysterious origins, and Constantinople is no exception. Before becoming the new Roman capital in 330CE, it has been an Ancient Greek colony with origins going all the way back to the 7th century BCE or even earlier depending on what source you read. The most common origin story of

Constantinople- then known as *Byzantion* to the Ancient Greeks- is that it was founded by Byzas of Megara, who is said to be the son of the Greek god Poseidon, although more likely he was the son of the King of Megara Nissos. Byzas apparently consulted with the Oracle of Delphi who in return told him to set up a colony for his city-state which was Megara in the “land opposite of the city of the blind”. After sailing through a perilous journey north up the Aegean Sea, through the Dardanelles, and then to the Sea of Marmara, Byzas and his men had found the perfect spot to settle on, and this was a peninsula on the west side of a narrow strait which then became known as the Bosphorus- separating Europe from Asia- opposite from an already existing city- which would eventually become Chalcedon. The “city of the blind” apparently meant the existing city on the Asian shore across the peninsula as they were blind to the fact that the peninsula across them would soon enough prove to be a more strategic location. Byzas would then establish his own Greek colony on this peninsula which would eventually grow into the city known as “Byzantion” named after its founder Byzas himself. He would also later on marry the daughter of the nearby Thracian king as a way to settle peace with their rather hostile Thracian neighbors, although the date of Byzas’ death remains unclear.

Whether Byzas was a real historical figure or not, his name still gave the name to the city of Byzantion (or *Byzantium* in Latin) and therefore the name of the “Byzantine Empire” itself despite the Byzantines themselves during their time never calling themselves as such- as they in fact called themselves “Roman” all the way until their empire fell in 1453. The term “Byzantine” was only first used to refer to them in the 16th century when the empire had already fallen, and here the German historian Hieronymus Wolf (1516-1580) coined the term “Byzantine” which came from Constantinople’s original name Byzantion or Byzantium to differentiate the Eastern Roman Empire based in Constantinople from the Ancient Roman Empire.

This illustration was more or less plainly based on imagination on what the legendary founder of Byzantium Byzas looked like, as there are really no clear images of Byzas found online except for a coin depicting his face, which too is an idealized depiction of him. For this illustration, the attire of Byzas was based on the usual full bronze armor known as a *Panoply* and helmet known as a *Corinthian* worn by Ancient Greek *Hoplite* soldiers, as Byzas was more or less a warrior. The symbol on his shield on the other hand does not really have any historical basis, again the symbol was based on pure imagination. Here, Byzas is also seen as in the position of an Ancient Greek hero with his helmet put up to reveal his face while wielding both a spear and sword as well, although the spear he wields is much shorter than the long Ancient Greek spear known as a *Sarissa* which was up to 6m tall, while his sword is the Ancient Greek one known as a *Xiphos* which here is seen in a sheath.

S-4 Nikephoritzes, 11th Century



Eunuchs have played important and powerful roles in Byzantine state administration throughout the centuries, and often they get the stereotypical image as corrupt and greedy yet at the same time brilliant as administrators. One such eunuch who fits all these stereotypes having a major part in running the Byzantine government was Nikephoritzes from the 11th century, who is also probably the last influential eunuch in Byzantine history. Nikephoritzes' actual name was Nikephoros but got his nickname "Nikephoritzes" meaning "little Nikephoros" due to entering imperial service after being castrated and turned into a eunuch at a young age. Long before being the virtual leader of the Byzantine Empire as the power behind the emperor Michael VII Doukas (r. 1071-1078), Nikephoritzes had already been a secretary in the imperial court since the 1040s first serving the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042-1055). During the reign of Emperor Constantine X Doukas (1059-1067), Nikephoritzes as a court official was banished to Antioch to be its governor which was his punishment for accusing the empress Eudokia of adultery, however following Constantine X's death in 1067 he was recalled to Constantinople and imprisoned.

When the new emperor Romanos IV Diogenes took over in 1068 after marrying the widowed empress Eudokia, Nikephoritzes was released and appointed as the civil governor of two provinces in Greece, although after Romanos IV was overthrown in 1071 with Constantine X's and Eudokia's son Michael VII Doukas taking over, Nikephoritzes was recalled to Constantinople and appointed to a powerful position in the imperial court as the new emperor's uncle the *Caesar* John Doukas who also ran the show valued Nikephoritzes'

administration skills. Under Michael VII, Nikephoritzes was the *logothetes tou dromou* or simply the finance minister, and in that position his power grew rapidly to the point that he forced the emperor's other ministers like the emperor's uncle John and the famous author Michael Psellos to step down from their positions. With Michael VII being a rather weak ruler, Nikephoritzes was basically in charge of the empire, and being in charge he put all his attention into replenishing the empire's treasury, although this meant resorting to brutal taxation across the empire. According to the historian Michael Attaleiates (1022-1080), Nikephoritzes' tax policies did more harm than good to the empire that it caused shortages in grain and inflation in its prices, and more so eventually created a famine in Constantinople. At the same time however, Nikephoritzes also made an attempt to reform the army and tried to centralize the empire's grain tax by establishing a central warehouse, which at the same time too created a state monopoly for grain.

In the meantime, the empire's heartland Asia Minor had almost completely been lost to the invading Seljuk Turks while in the Balkans, the Bulgarians rose up in rebellion under a leader named Constantine Bodin due to Nikephoritzes' harsh taxes on them, while the army in the Danube frontier rebelled as well this time due to Nikephoritzes' own corruption in taking the money that was supposed to be for the soldiers' pay there. Eventually, the dire situation the empire was in led to the emperor Michael VII falling out of power when a number of generals rose up against his rule, and by 1078 the rebel general Nikephoros Botaneiates was proclaimed as emperor by bishops within Constantinople who now wanted both Michael VII and Nikephoritzes out of power. At the end, Michael VII decided to abdicate and pass the throne to Botaneiates and retire as a monk, though Nikephoritzes not wanting to let go of power fled the capital, but was discovered, arrested, and then exiled to an island in the Marmara Sea near Constantinople where he was tortured to death.

Being a eunuch state administrator, Nikephoritzes in this illustration is shown wearing a large ornate red silk cloak with gold patterns sewn into it whereas both his arms are covered by the cloak, and inside this cloak is an ornate blue tunic. The lavishness of the clothes he wears in this illustration symbolizes the great power and influence he had over Byzantine politics especially in the 1070s. Additionally, he is seen wearing a unique white egg-shaped hat, which was apparently part of the attire worn by Byzantine court officials and men of high status especially in the 11th and 12th centuries, while his beardless face on the other hand indicates he is a eunuch who had been made as such at a young age. The illustration of Nikephoritzes here was based on the images of the eunuchs seen in the background of the Byzantine era illuminated manuscript depicting Emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates (r. 1078-1081) which was made between 1074 and 1081. Ironically, when Nikephoros III became emperor, Nikephoritzes had fallen out of power and was tortured to death. With this manuscript having the closest images there are to 11th century Byzantine eunuchs, it was chosen as the basis for this particular illustration.

S-5 Cataphract, 11th Century



Cataphracts were a military unit that have been around since Ancient times consisting of men usually mounted on horses and almost completely armored. The word “Cataphract” derives from the Greek word *Kataphraktos* (plural: *Kataphraktoi*) meaning “completely enclosed”, and typically Cataphract soldiers whether they were Persian, Ancient Roman, or Medieval Roman (Byzantine) were almost entirely armored from head to toe and so were the horses they were mounted on. Cataphracts have played a major role in the Roman army since the 3rd century as an elite cavalry force, and with the Roman Empire’s center relocating east eventually becoming the Byzantine Empire in the 4th century, cataphracts continued to remain as an elite cavalry force in battle. Over the centuries, the armor and equipment of Byzantine cataphracts evolved and so did their name from the Latin *Cataphractarii* to the Greek “*Kataphraktoi*” as Byzantium’s language changed from Latin to Greek in the 7th century.

This illustration roughly depicts a Byzantine cataphract soldier from the 10th-11th centuries, which was basically the golden age of the Byzantine army wherein cataphracts played a major role as the formidable, versatile, and disciplined elite cavalry of the Byzantine army. In this illustration, this cataphract soldier is seen standing on foot and not mounted on his horse while he wears a conical-shaped helmet known as a *Kranos* with a distinct wide brim and attached to the helmet is a chainmail coif covering everything except the eyes, while attached to the helmet above is a plume known as a *Flamouliskia*. For their armor, cataphracts usually wore 3 layers: the innermost one being a shirt of chainmail known as a *Lorikion*, over that the standard scaled Byzantine lamellar armor known as a

Klivanion, and over that a padded vest known as an *Epilorikion*. The most visible part of the cataphract soldier in this illustration is the outer vest or *Epilorikion* as Byzantine soldiers especially cataphracts usually wore one over their lamellar armor to protect it from overheating due to marching for hours under the sun. The lamellar armor can only be partly seen in this illustration, first at the bottom part of the *Epilorikion* beneath it known as *Kremasmata* as well as the one in his upper arms known as a *Manikellia*; though both the visible parts of the lamellar armor are extension pieces for the upper arms and thighs as the body armor is completely concealed by the padded vest. The innermost layer of his armor being the chainmail is also visible though in this illustration it is short-sleeved and only until the thighs as below it is a red tunic and trousers. Additionally, this soldier wears the Byzantine scaled gauntlets for his arms known as *Cheiropsella* and the scaled greaves for the legs known as *Podopsella*. For his weapons, this cataphract soldier is seen wielding a mace known to the Byzantines in Greek as an *Apelatikion* which cataphracts and other Byzantine soldiers preferred using for close-combat while the other weapon he is seen with is the large and straight double-edged Byzantine sword known as a *Spathion*; although usually Byzantine cataphracts were armed with more weapons such as a secondary sword, spear, and a small round shield as well. This illustration here was based on several other illustrations of Byzantine era cataphracts and photographs of reenactors as Byzantine cataphracts.

S-6 Dancer, 6th Century



Dances were a major part of Byzantine daily life and culture; thus, they were often performed in public during major days of celebration such as in Constantinople's founding day (May 11) or when the Byzantine army returns victorious from battle. There were many types of dances in the Byzantine Empire throughout the 11 centuries of its existence, and some included ones where female dancers displayed a lot of movement. However, we do not know much about dances, dancers, and dancers' attire in the Byzantine Empire as historical sources written by Byzantine authors do not really record anything about everyday life in their empire, thus the limited evidence we have for dancers come from illustrated manuscripts from their time such as the *Paris Psalter* manuscript which shows the Biblical king David of Israel glorified by women dressed as dancers from the era of the Byzantine Empire.

In this illustration, the dancer's outfit was slightly based on the loose sleeveless dresses the dancers in the manuscript mentioned earlier are seen wearing, however the outfit she wears in this illustration was based as well on an existing illustration of a Byzantine dancer possibly in the 6th century wearing a dress very much like this. Unlike the dancers seen in the manuscript mentioned earlier, the one in this illustration and in the existing illustration it was based on wears a dress more revealing than in the manuscript as this one is a strapless dress wrapped around the woman's body like a towel which exposes both shoulders and upper chest as well as the legs as the high slit is to allow the dancer more movement. It is known as well that Byzantine dancers wore gold bands in their arms and ankles, hence the one in this illustration wears them with the addition of more accessories. Additionally, the dancer in this illustration wears several golden bands in the form of a string which serves as an item to hold up the loose dress, whereas one is like a harness which features two bands going above the shoulder and forming an x-pattern which goes beneath both breasts taking the shape of it as a way to also give them support, similar to a bra except this is an external one. Supposedly, this dancer in the illustration is the empress Theodora from the 6th century before she became empress and the wife of the emperor Justinian I the Great (r. 527-565). Before marrying Justinian in around 525, Theodora was an actress as well as a dancer who according to the although biased *Secret History* of the historian of this time Procopius performed explicit acts on stage as an actress.

S-7 Comitatus, 4th Century



The famous Roman legionnaires in the late Roman era (3rd-7th centuries) have evolved into a more flexible infantry unit known as the *Comitatenses* (singular: *Comitatus*), and just like the legionnaires they formed the backbone of the Roman army as well as of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) army from the 4th century up to the early 7th century. The name “Comitatus” comes from the Latin word meaning “company” which also in this sense meant a “field army” as they were true enough the mobile field army of the late Roman era. In the late Roman army, the Comitatuses were a heavy infantry unit and a legion of them would consist of up to 6,000 to 7,000 soldiers. In times of war in the late Roman Empire, the more inferior border guard force known as the *Limitanei* were in charge of guarding the empire’s borders in case of an invasion, though if an enemy invaded the empire’s borders then the more superior Comitatuses would be sent to counter-attack these said invaders. The Comitatuses soldiers usually fought more on the defensive than on the offensive in order to conserve manpower, thus rather than attacking the enemy head-on, they would usually form a shield-wall or *Phalanx* formation with their spears and wait for the enemy to charge at them.

Comitatuses soldiers too would wear varying types of armor whether a scaled cuirass armor- such as the one seen in this illustration known as a *Lorica Squamata*- or a chainmail shirt known as a *Lorica Hamata*, while they would also wear different types of helmets- mostly being the late Roman ridge helmet- and would sometimes wear gauntlets for the arms and greaves for the lower legs for extra protection. As for weapons, the comitatus soldier’s primary one was a thrusting spear known as a *Hasta* while the

secondary one was a sword which was basically the late Roman longsword known as a *Spatha*, and would always carry a shield for defense which was usually a large oval-shaped one. The comitatus soldier in this illustration wears the gold scaled cuirass type armor known as *Lorica Squamata*, a late Roman ridge helmet, and has the addition of leather *Pteruges* or strips as thigh and upper arm guards as well as metal gauntlets and greaves. The comitatus soldier here is seen wielding a spear with alternating blue and red stripes in its shaft as his primary weapon, whereas his secondary weapon being the *Spatha* sword is sheathed, and his large oval-shaped shield bears the symbol of Christ's initials in Greek (the *chi-rho*) which was usually painted on the shields of soldiers in the late Roman era. The illustration of the Comitatus soldier here was based on various images and artworks of late Roman Comitatuses legionnaires as well as photographs of reenactors as Comitatus soldiers.

S-8 Epirote Soldier, 14th Century



Following the fall of Constantinople to the army of the 4th Crusade in 1204, the Despotate of Epirus was one of the 3 Greek successor states or simply breakaway Byzantine states with a claim to restore the Byzantine Empire. As it was ruled by relatives of the Angelos Dynasty that ruled the Byzantine Empire from 1185 until the temporary fall of the empire in 1204, the Despotate of Epirus had a legitimate claim to Constantinople and

to call itself an empire, however it was never officially called an “empire”, hence we know it as the “Despotate of Epirus” where its ruler was never in title an “emperor” but a “despot” which was for the Byzantines a rank lower than that of the emperor. However, the term “Despotate of Epirus” was never used by its inhabitants referring to their state- the same way the inhabitants of the Byzantine Empire never called themselves “Byzantines” but “Romans”- rather, the Epirotes under the despotate still referred to themselves as “Romans” (*Romaioi* in Greek) and their state still as “Romania” or basically the “Roman Empire”, while their rulers or despots still referred to themselves as “Emperors of Romania”. However, since the despots of Epirus were never officially crowned as emperors, they cannot be legitimately called emperors and the land they ruled not as an empire while several historical sources especially western ones refer to this state as the “Despotate of Epirus”, and to avoid confusion with the actual Byzantine Empire that was restored in 1261 with the reconquest of Constantinople from the Latins, we will simply refer to this state as the Despotate of Epirus.

Now, the despotate wherein its capital was Arta centered on the region of Epirus in Western Greece and at certain points included parts of Albania, the western part of Greek Macedonia, and Thessaly. With Constantinople having fallen to the Crusaders in 1204, the Despotate of Epirus was created in 1205 by Michael I Angelos who was its first ruler and a cousin of the previous Byzantine emperors Isaac II (r. 1185-1195/ 1203-1204) and Alexios III (r. 1195-1203) of the Angelos Dynasty. Following Despot Michael I’s death in 1215, the Despotate of Epirus began aggressively expanding territory westwards under his successor and half-brother Despot Theodore Komnenos Doukas who was also intent to recapture Constantinople from the Latins, and true enough he even captured Thessaloniki and Adrianople, but before marching on to Constantinople he was defeated by the Bulgarians under their ruler Ivan Asen II (r. 1218-1241) at the Battle of Klokotnitsa in 1230. With the defeat of the Epirotes and the capture of their despot Theodore, chances for Epirus to grow into a dominant power and take back Constantinople were ended while they too became a rival of the rising Byzantine successor state of Nicaea which eventually recaptured Constantinople in 1261.

Prior to that, in 1259 the Despotate of Epirus under their ruler Michael II Angelos (r. 1230-1268) had formed an alliance with the Latin states of Greece formed as part of the aftermath of the 4th Crusade’s capture of Constantinople, but at the end the Epirote-Latin alliance was shattered as the smaller army of the Empire of Nicaea defeated them at the Battle of Pelagonia in Northern Greece. The Nicaean victory therefore would pave the way for their reconquest of Constantinople in 1261 and the reestablishment of the Byzantine Empire. At the latter part of the 13th century with the Byzantine Empire restored, Epirus gradually lost territory and over the decades very much lost its significance. Eventually in 1337, the Despotate of Epirus was conquered by the Byzantine Empire by Emperor Andronikos III Palaiologos (r. 1328-1341) and therefore restored to the Byzantine Empire as an imperial province under a Byzantine governor, though in 1348 Byzantine Epirus was conquered by the Serbian Empire and remained under Serbian rule until power shifted to the hands of the Tocco Italian noble clan which ruled it until Epirus completely fell to the Ottoman Empire in 1479.

This illustration depicts an infantry soldier of the Despotate of Epirus from the 14th century before it was recaptured by the Byzantine Empire in 1337. This infantry soldier wears a standard Byzantine conical-shaped helmet known as a *Kranos*, a chainmail coif and shirt, a pair of leather boots known to the Byzantines as *Hypodemata*, leather *Kremasmata* for extra protection in the thighs, and a leather chest harness in which its purpose is to balance the weight of the armor above. For his weapons, this soldier wields a spear known to the Byzantines as a *Kontos* as his primary weapon as a spear was basically a Byzantine soldier's primary weapon, and although hardly visible as it is tucked beneath his shield is the curved Byzantine sword known as a *Paramerion* which is his secondary weapon. His blue and white striped shield indicates that he serves the Despotate of Epirus as these were the colors of the despotate. This illustration was based on a few artworks of Epirote and Byzantine soldiers from the 13th and 14th centuries.

S-9 Flavius Belisarius, 6th Century



One of the most, if not THE most influential Byzantine general was Flavius Belisarius from the 6th century who was instrumental in the ambitious Roman reconquests of North Africa and Italy under Emperor Justinian I the Great (r. 527-565) as Belisarius literally fought the wars in which the emperor Justinian never set foot in himself. In battle, Belisarius is best remembered for his smart military tactics in using deception against the enemy and making use of available resources in order to win battles. He was also known

for using a great amount of Hun cavalry as well as Germanic Heruli cavalry warriors in his army as shock troops in battle as these people were known for their ferocity. Belisarius was born in Roman Thrace sometime between the years 500 and 505, entered military service at a young age by serving in the imperial bodyguard force known as the *Excubitors* under Emperor Justin I (r. 518-527) and following that under Justin I's nephew and successor Justinian I beginning 527, and at the beginning Belisarius worked together with a more senior general who was also once a member of the palace guard named Sittas.

Belisarius' first major campaigns were against the empire's eastern neighbor being the Sassanid Empire wherein he scored a major victory over them at the Battle of Dara in 530 by trapping the Sassanid cavalry in ditches thus slowing them down allowing Belisarius' fierce Hun cavalry to descend on them, though in the following year 531 his forces lost to the Sassanids at the Battle of Callinicum, which was not a great loss to the Byzantines as the emperor Justinian I concluded peace with the new Sassanid ruler or *shah* Khosrow I (r. 531-579). However, in 532 Belisarius further proved himself by crushing the violent Nika Riot in Constantinople which ended with a brutal massacre of about 30,000 rioters who the imperial troops trapped in Constantinople's Hippodrome.

Following this, Belisarius was sent by the emperor Justinian with an army of 15,000 to recapture North Africa from the Vandals in 533 and in only a year he succeeded in completely annexing the Vandal Kingdom including its capital Carthage to the Byzantine Empire. In the course of just a year, Belisarius crushed the Vandal army under their king Gelimer (r. 530-534) at the Battle of Ad Decimum, captured the Vandal capital Carthage, and later defeated Gelimer again at the Battle of Tricamarum outside Carthage. In North Africa, Belisarius did not order his troops to pillage to show that they came as Roman "liberators" and not as foreign invaders, especially since most of North Africa's population were still Roman descendants, though the Vandal king Gelimer was sent to Constantinople to be paraded in Belisarius' triumphal march but was at least spared and allowed to live in peaceful retirement. With North Africa under Roman hands again, Justinian sent Belisarius to Italy which was under the Ostrogoth Kingdom in 535 with the mission to do the same in restoring it to Roman rule, however the campaign in Italy against the Ostrogoths went longer than planned.

In 536, Belisarius was able to recapture Naples from the Ostrogoths and in 537 he retook Rome which for over a year he defended against the Ostrogoth army and at the end was successful. Belisarius scored further victories against the Ostrogoths in Italy between 538 and 540 despite mistrust breaking out between Belisarius and the other generals such as John and the eunuch Narses, and eventually the war culminated with Belisarius' capture of the Ostrogoth capital of Ravenna in 540 wherein the Ostrogoth king Vitiges (r. 536-540) was captured and brought to Constantinople as a prisoner. After finishing his part in the Italian campaign against the Ostrogoths, Belisarius was reassigned by Justinian to the eastern frontier to battle the Sassanid Persians as war had resumed with them while in the meantime plague struck the Byzantine Empire which too at the same time devastated Italy and thus allowed a faction of the Ostrogoths that still remained there north of the Po River to undo the Byzantine campaign and rebuild their kingdom under a new king named Totila (r. 541-552) who even managed to recapture Rome from the Eastern Romans. In 544,

Belisarius was sent by Justinian again to Italy to deal with the new Ostrogoth threat, and Belisarius true enough scored a number of victories and even recaptured Rome again from the Ostrogoths, but was not able to finish the war as he was recalled to Constantinople in 548 where he retired from military service and became a senator all while Italy was fully returned to Roman rule by 553 following the death of Totila in battle in 552 against the army led by Narses.

Belisarius however briefly returned to military service one last time in 559 when a group of Huns known as the *Kutrigurs* invaded Byzantine Thrace, and with no able general nearby, Belisarius was summoned by the very old Justinian to deal with this threat. With only an army of 300 mostly made up of local peasants and war veterans, the much older Belisarius who also used his surroundings to his advantage by having his men hit the trees to release dust directed at the enemy was able to defeat this army of Huns and once again retire following this. However, in 562 Belisarius was accused of corruption, tried, and imprisoned, but was shortly afterwards given full pardon by Justinian, though 3 years later in 565 Belisarius died just months before the emperor Justinian himself died.

This illustration of Belisarius depicts him during his time as a senator after 548 as he is seen wearing the minimalist white robes of a late Roman senator during this time which consists of a large outer cloak or mantle known as a *Chlamys* with a red panel at the center of it on both sides known as a *Tablion* and inside it a white tunic with black embroideries. However, to indicate his career as a general despite him not wearing armor here, he is seen holding a sword. This image was almost entirely based on the mosaic depicting Belisarius who stands next to the emperor Justinian I in the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy where Belisarius in the mosaic wears the exact same clothes while having the exact same facial features, hairstyle, and facial hair too, though the mosaic in Ravenna doesn't show him holding a sword.

S-10 Constantius II, Byzantine emperor (337-361)



As the son of the first Roman emperor to rule from Constantinople which was Constantine I the Great (r. 306-337), Constantius II can be considered as the 2nd Eastern Roman (Byzantine) emperor as he was the son of Constantine that ruled from Constantinople. Constantius was born in 317 in Sirmium (in today's Serbia) as the second son of Constantine the Great with his second wife the empress Fausta, and from a young age Constantius was already assigned to military command in the east by his father, while earlier on in 324 Constantius who being only 7-years-old here was already made a *Caesar* by his father. With the death of Constantine the Great in 337, Constantius here being 20 was the first to make it back to the capital Constantinople from protecting the empire's eastern border against the Sassanid Empire since 335; and when back in Constantinople, he supposedly ordered a massacre of his uncles and male cousins to prevent a power struggle in the future, though he spared 3 male cousins due to their young age and also due to the fact that they could be trained to serve the empire in the future. Shortly after, Constantius II agreed to divide the Roman Empire into 3 parts wherein Constantius was to rule the eastern provinces including Thrace, Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt from Constantinople; his older brother Constantine II over the Western provinces being Gaul, Britain, and Hispania; and the youngest brother Constans over Italy, North Africa, and most of the Balkans, and all 3 brothers were to rule as *co-Augusti* or senior emperors.

Already at the beginning of his reign as the Augustus in the east, Constantius II put all his attention into battling the Sassanid Empire wherein he would spend most of his time away from Constantinople and campaigning in the eastern border defending it from

Sassanid invasions led by the Sassanid ruler or *shah* Shapur II (r. 309-379). In this war which began in 337 with the Sassanids laying siege to the Roman city of Nisibis in Mesopotamia, the Sassanids despite laying siege to several eastern cities in the Roman Empire did not achieve much, and at the end Constantius II succeeded in pushing back Shapur II's invasion. In the meantime, the eldest brother Constantine II greedy for more territory attacked Italy which was controlled by the youngest brother Constans only for Constantine II to get killed in an ambush in 340, thus leaving Constans in control of the entire west including his own original provinces. Constans however would only rule for 10 more years as in 350, his general Magnentius with a large army loyal to him rebelled and assassinated Constans whereas Magnentius afterwards proclaimed himself emperor of the west. Constantius II however did not recognize the usurper Magnentius as emperor and so in the meantime as Constantius was away battling the Sassanids, he appointed a trusted general named Vetricius as his temporary co-emperor just to defend the Balkans from Magnentius. At the end of 350, Constantius returned to the Balkans whereas Vetricius stepped down dutifully thus allowing Constantius in 351 to march deep into the Balkans wherein he would meet Magnentius and his forces at the Battle of Mursa Major- which was one of the bloodiest battles ever fought between Roman troops- and at the end Constantius won the battle despite losing a lot of men, though Magnentius survived and escaped to Italy. Constantius however did not yet pursue Magnentius after winning the battle, rather he marched north to the Danube in 352 to defend it against Sarmatian raids, and after taking care of the Sarmatian threat he returned to campaigning against the usurper Magnentius. Once Constantius chased Magnentius and his men out of Italy, Magnentius was eventually defeated again by Constantius' forces in 353 at the Battle of Mons Seleucus in Southern Gaul wherein the defeated Magnentius then committed suicide.

Now as the sole Augustus, Constantius II in 354 campaigned against the Germanic Alemanni tribe at the Danube border which was a success for him, though at the same time his religious policies caused further division in the empire as he favored the Arian sect of Christianity which was seen as heretical over Nicene Christianity, and true enough Constantius was even considered an Arian Christian. In Constantius II's reign, Arian missionaries who were not very much accepted in Roman territory were sent to lands beyond the Roman Empire such as to the lands of the Goths in Eastern Europe wherein a large number of Goths ended up converting to Arian Christianity. Constantius II too on the other hand had passed a series of laws that favored Arian Christianity but had also targeted the old Pagan faith as some of these laws ordered that Pagan temples be shut down and Pagan sacrifices banned, however these anti-Pagan laws were not really well received by some of the population as by this point the old religion was still rather popular. Additionally, Constantius II too was known to have passed some laws against Jews, although none of them were harsh, but rather it made things more difficult for Jews.

Having too much responsibilities ruling the Roman Empire as a whole, Constantius II appointed his surviving male cousin Constantius Gallus- who was not murdered in 337- to be Caesar in the Eastern provinces ever since 351 before Constantius set off to battle against Magnentius, and thus to seal the alliance Constantius' older sister Constantina was married to Gallus. Constantius however eventually received shocking reports of Gallus' bad behavior including corruption and cruelty towards his subjects and more so of plotting

against Constantius, and thus Constantius ordered Gallus and his wife Constantina to come over to Milan where Constantius based himself in. Constantina however died on the way west and following her death, Gallus hesitated to travel west but eventually did, but on the way to Italy he was arrested by Constantius' troops under the general Barbatio and executed in 354 despite Constantius changing his mind to execute him but it was too late as the order to not execute him did not come in time. In the meantime, in 355 the general Claudius Silvanus who previously served Magnentius but surrendered to Constantius in 353 in exchange for being given the rank of *Magister Militum* (Master of Soldiers) revolted in Gaul after bribing off invading Germanic tribes to support him. Constantius here dealt with Silvanus by sending his other general Ursicinus to Gaul to trick Silvanus, and thus Silvanus' rebellion ended with him being killed as a result of Ursicinus bribing Silvanus' troops to turn him over.

In need for another Caesar this time for the west due to having to face all these headaches, Constantius in 355 appointed his last surviving male cousin Julian who was Gallus' half-brother as his new Caesar thus Constantius married off his younger sister Helena to Julian, and although Julian was at first seen as unfit due to being a serious scholar with no experience in government and military, he was surprisingly capable as Julian managed to expel an Alemanni invasion of Gaul in 357 at the Battle of Strasbourg which thus made him highly popular among his army. Constantius in the meantime in 357 defeated a Sarmatian and Quadi invasion in the Danube River, while during the same year he also visited Rome for the first time in his life. When in Rome, Constantius received envoys from the Sassanid shah Shapur II to return the lands he took from the Sassanids in his previous campaign, and although Constantius tried to avert war with the Sassanids by sending envoys to Shapur II with peace offerings, it failed as Shapur simply launched another invasion of Roman Mesopotamia. Constantius II thus was forced to return east to waging war with the Sassanid Persians in 359 while in the previous year (358), a massive earthquake razed the city of Nicomedia in Asia Minor to the ground just before Constantius was to hold a Church Council there, thus the council was cancelled. With limited troops for his renewed campaign against the Sassanids, Constantius decided to test Julian's loyalty by asking for a large reinforcement army, but rather than coming to Constantius' aid, Julian's soldiers who were in Gaul with Julian in 360 proclaimed Julian as Augustus against Constantius following another victory of Julian over the Alemanni. Although Constantius at first tried to find ways to reason with Julian, he eventually saw this as a declaration of war, thus Constantius abandoned his campaign against the Sassanids and marched west while Julian and his forces marched east from Gaul, but before both forces met in battle, Constantius fell ill in a town in Southern Asia Minor where he died in 361 at the age of 44, and shortly before his death he named his cousin Julian his successor as he had no sons and to also avoid civil war. Julian thus succeeded Constantius II as the sole emperor of the Roman Empire, and as Julian reached the capital Constantinople, he had Constantius buried at the Church of the Holy Apostles next to his father Constantine the Great.

This illustration of Constantius II was heavily based on a depiction of him from the *Missorium of Kerch*, though the main difference between the image of Constantius on the missorium and in this colored illustration is that he is not seen riding a horse but instead standing up. The outfit Constantius wears in this illustration being an ornate tunic with a

jeweled belt and sash is exactly what he is seen wearing in the missorium depicting him and so is the *diadem* crown he is wearing, however since the missorium does not present a colored version of him, his tunic appears to be gold-brown with purple for the trimmings as purple which is also the color of his pants in this illustration is to indicate that he is an emperor. In this illustration, Constantius is seen holding a golden spear which the missorium also shows him wielding as he is on his horse, though this illustration has the addition of a sheathed ornate imperial *Spatha* sword which is not seen in the missorium. The facial features and hairstyle of Constantius in this illustration was based off on his facial features and hairstyle as seen in the missorium as well as in other coins and busts of him. Since the 4th century Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus had also described Constantius II as “peculiarly long of body and short in the leg”, he is depicted that way in this illustration.

S-J Andronikos III Palaiologos, Byzantine emperor (1328-1341)



Born in 1297 as the grandson of the reigning Byzantine emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (r. 1282-1328)- coincidentally sharing birthday with his grandfather being March 25- and son of the co-emperor Michael IX Palaiologos, Andronikos grew up to be a rather carefree playboy imperial prince. However, an event that took place in just a single night in 1320 turned his life around as here the young Andronikos who enjoyed gambling

when walking home was ambushed by thugs working for the father of his lover who he owed money to after losing a bet. Instead of killing Andronikos by shooting arrows at him, they killed his younger brother Manuel who they mistook as Andronikos, and when word of Manuel's death reached their father Michael IX, he died from a heart attack out of shock while Michael's father the emperor Andronikos II on the other hand put the blame on his grandson Andronikos for killing his own brother and causing his own father's death. Seeing it that his wasteful and spoiled grandson was the killer of his brother and indirect killer of his father as well, Andronikos II disinherited the grandson Andronikos from the succession, but the grandson Andronikos responded by challenging his grandfather's decision by gathering an army and gaining support from the young nobles of the empire in which most were his friends and from the people of the empire tired of the weak rule of Andronikos II and his harsh tax policies wherein they received nothing in return.

Beginning 1321, a major civil war in the Byzantine Empire erupted between the grandfather Andronikos II and the grandson Andronikos which was marked by intermittent fighting and truces. Eventually, both sides in the civil war gained their own foreign allies whereas the grandfather was supported by the Serbian Kingdom and the grandson by the 2nd Bulgarian Empire. The grandfather Andronikos at times tried to stop the civil war by offering his grandson the position of co-emperor, but the grandson had refused as he true enough wanted to rule the empire alone. The civil war came to an end in 1328 when the grandson Andronikos captured Constantinople by bribing the garrison at the walls, thus the grandfather standing no chance against the might of his grandson- who was backed by the people discontent with the old emperor's regime- decided to abdicate for good and retire to a monastery wherein he would die 4 years later (1332). Now the grandson Andronikos III Palaiologos became the sole ruler of the empire in 1328 whereas his life took a complete turn from a carefree playboy to a committed emperor, though the power behind his rule was his best friend since childhood the young nobleman John Kantakouzenos who previously helped Andronikos III win the civil war, and with Andronikos III as emperor it was Kantakouzenos that was the chief administrator and general or *Megas Domestikos* who was responsible for a number of Andronikos III's victories and for reforming the empire's corrupt judicial system into a new one known as the "Universal Justices".

However, during the reign of Andronikos III, Byzantine rule over Asia Minor was completely lost due to the conquests of the Turkish Beyliks, most notably that of the Ottomans that true enough they captured Nicaea from the Byzantines in 1331 and Nicomedia in 1337, while Andronikos III himself leading the army was defeated by the Ottomans in 1329 at the Battle of Pelekanon wherein he was almost killed. Andronikos III though as an energetic emperor with a vision to at least revive the empire's strength rebuilt the Byzantine navy and recaptured a number of islands in the Aegean that had been under Latin overlords for over a century. On the other hand, Andronikos III had the luck of being emperor in the year 1330 which was 1,000 years since the founding of Constantinople as the imperial capital, while he also encountered the famous North African explorer Ibn Battuta who visited Constantinople in 1332 which is however only recorded by Ibn Battuta but not in Byzantine sources.

In the Balkans however, Andronikos III suffered a defeat to the Bulgarians in 1332 at the Battle of Rusokastro, though he was able to conclude peace with Bulgaria after his defeat while he also prevented the expanding Serbian kingdom under King Stefan IV Uros Dusan from invading Byzantine Macedonia in 1334 by ceding some territory in Macedonia to the Serbians. The greatest success made under Andronikos III was perhaps the Byzantine reconquest of the entire region of Thessaly from the breakaway Byzantine state in 1333 and 4 years later in 1337 the Byzantine reconquest of the region of Epirus in Western Greece which thus put an end to the breakaway Byzantine state which was the Despotate of Epirus that had been around since the fall of Constantinople to the 4th Crusade in 1204. From 1337 onwards, the Despotate of Epirus was destroyed and thus returned to being a Byzantine province under Constantinople with a Byzantine governor. With Byzantine rule over their heartland Asia Minor almost literally all lost, Andronikos III perhaps thought of shifting the new Byzantine heartland to Greece, however Andronikos was not able to achieve many of his ambitions as he died suddenly from malaria in 1341 at the age of 44 without even properly naming his 8-year-old son John as his successor, though at least by the time he died the Byzantine Empire was in a very much stable state while controlling most of mainland Greece as well as Macedonia, Thrace, the Peloponnese, and a number of Aegean Islands. Andronikos III's reign was therefore labelled as the last time that the Byzantine Empire was a major power in the Balkans as following his death, the empire was plunged into a civil war greater than the one he fought against his grandfather from 1321-1328, and the civil war from 1341-1347 fought between the factions of Andronikos III's wife Empress Anna of Savoy and son John V against the general John Kantakouzenos would further destroy the empire in terms of finance and manpower.

In this illustration, the 14th century Byzantine emperor Andronikos III Palaiologos is seen wearing the standard purple imperial robes worn by Byzantine emperors in which a long gold jeweled scarf known as a *Loros* is wrapped around it while it too contains a golden jeweled neck collar known as a *Superhumeral*, and this style seen here was the one regularly worn by late Byzantine emperors. Andronikos here is seen wearing a large bowl-shaped golden crown studded with jewels which was the type of Byzantine crown worn from the 12th century until the end of the empire in 1453, and he too is seen holding an imperial scepter on his right hand and a scroll on his left hand. This illustration was very much entirely based on the full-body illustration of Andronikos III from a 14th century manuscript where he is seen right next to his wife Empress Anna of Savoy, and this illustration shows Andronikos wearing and holding exactly everything seen on the manuscript with the only difference here being that he has more expression in this illustration unlike in the manuscript where you cannot really see his face as it has faded.

S-Q Irene of Athens, Byzantine empress (797-802)



As the FIRST woman in the Byzantine Empire to rule in her own right as the sole empress (797-802), Irene Sarantapechaina was born in Athens in around 752 to a noble although not very influential family in Byzantine politics. At a young age, Irene was orphaned though in 769 at the age of 17 she was brought over to Constantinople by orders of the emperor Constantine V (r. 741-775) to be the future wife of his son and heir Leo. It remains unclear on why it was Irene out of all women in the empire that was chosen to marry the future emperor, but it was most likely because of her exceptional beauty and sharp wit which had a lot of potential for the future of the imperial heir Leo. Shortly after Irene's arrival in Constantinople she married Leo and in 771 they had a son which was Constantine named after his grandfather, the emperor. Although the emperor Constantine V and his son Leo stood for the Iconoclast movement in the empire which cracked down on religious icons empire-wide, Irene was apparently against this movement and therefore a strong Iconophile with the ambition to restore the veneration of icons before they were banned under the reign of Constantine V's father Emperor Leo III the Isaurian (717-741).

In 775, the emperor Constantine V died and was thus succeeded by his son as Emperor Leo IV and therefore Irene as his wife became the empress-consort, and although Leo IV was an Iconoclast like his father and grandfather before him, he was much more moderate in his policies and therefore did not carry out any persecutions, and probably it was his wife Irene that advised him to do so. After ruling for only 5 years, Leo IV died in 780 from tuberculosis- though rumor has it that he died from being cursed after wearing the crown of a long-dead Byzantine emperor- and since their son who now became

Emperor Constantine VI was only 9-years-old here, Irene as his mother ruled as empress-regent for him. With the empire being under the control of a woman and her young son, their rule was soon enough challenged by the mostly Iconoclast army backing the late Leo IV's half-brothers, though Irene put down this conspiracy by having her in-laws forced to become monks so that they would no longer pose a threat. As her son's regent, Irene from the beginning had already been asserting herself as the effective ruler of the empire and not her son who was the emperor, and to do this she had images of herself minted in coins where she appeared on the obverse and her son only on the reverse, while she also attempted a negotiation with the Frankish king Charles- later known as Charlemagne- wherein his daughter would marry her son Constantine, although these negotiations soon enough failed and the marriage never pushed through.

In the meantime, the Byzantine Empire was faced with a massive invasion of the Arab Abbasid Caliphate from the east in 782 while in Sicily its Byzantine governor rebelled against her rule too, though the Sicilian rebellion was crushed and the Abbasids forced to retreat as Irene agreed to pay tribute to them. As empress-regent, Irene is best remembered for appointing the imperial secretary Tarasios as Patriarch of Constantinople in order to achieve the restoration of icon veneration, and although the first attempt to restore this said icon veneration was unsuccessful at a Church Council held at Constantinople in 786 due to the Iconoclast soldiers breaking in to the meeting and dispersing its attendants, it succeeded in the following year (787) at Nicaea where the council was able to go on steadily as Irene sent these said Iconoclast soldiers on a campaign to distract them. This council therefore reunited the Church of Constantinople with the Church of Rome which had been separate ever since Iconoclasm became legal in Byzantium during the 730s, while at the same time it was under Irene's regency when the Byzantine army led by her trusted eunuch general Staurakios recaptured most of Greece from the Slavs that took over land there since the 7th century.

Eventually, Irene's son Constantine VI reached adulthood which meant he no longer needed his mother as a regent, though Irene still insisted that she would rule for him, until Constantine gained support from the Iconoclast troops in the army against his Iconophile mother, and thus Irene was briefly removed from power. Constantine VI although tried to rule in his own right but failed miserably as he was defeated in battle by the Bulgarians in 792 at the Battle of Marcellae where he almost lost his own life, and thus this defeat made him highly unpopular that a movement rose to make one of his uncles as emperor, however Constantine struck back and had his uncle's eyes gouged out while he had the tongues of his 4 other uncles cut off. The cruelty shown by Constantine VI therefore eventually created a movement that would return his mother Irene to power, and true enough she did return as his regent. The rivalry between mother and son however still remained especially because Constantine was not happy with the woman his mother chose for him to marry being Maria of Amnia and thus, he divorced her and married his mistress, therefore Irene used this as a reason to justify removing her son from power as this second marriage of his was seen as sinful. In 797, the rivalry between Irene and Constantine VI ended when Irene managed to move first by arresting her son who she then had brought to the palace where he was blinded and afterwards exiled never to be heard from again, while it is also said that the blinding was so brutal that he died shortly after it.

Now beginning 797, Irene was the sole ruler of the empire, although she still mostly referred to herself as *Basilissa* meaning “empress”, and not *Basileus* meaning “emperor”, except for a few instances where signed documents under the title “Emperor of the Romans”. As the sole empress though, Irene’s ruling style was mostly seen as incompetent as she favored two eunuchs, one being her trusted general Staurakios and the other the minister Aetios in which both hated each other, while Irene also relaxed tax policies by exempting certain groups from taxes, and also at times gave away free money to the people of Constantinople possibly to compensate for the despicable act of blinding her son. The rivalry between the eunuchs Staurakios and Aetios on the other hand almost led to a civil war in 800 whereas Staurakios raised an army with the attempt to march to Constantinople, but this conflict was averted as Staurakios died of an illness before he could march on Constantinople.

Over in Western Europe in Christmas of 800, the Frankish king Charlemagne who was mentioned earlier was crowned by the pope as the “Emperor of the Romans” as they saw that with the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire ruled by a woman, it was not legitimate, therefore Charlemagne was seen as the legitimate “Roman emperor”. Over in Constantinople, when Irene got word of Charlemagne being crowned emperor, she was said to have made a proposal to marry him in order to unite both their empires to further protect the Byzantines which were attacked in the south and east by the Arabs and in the north by the Bulgarians as Charlemagne’s Frankish Empire consisted of almost the whole Western Europe and had a more powerful army than the Byzantines. This marriage proposal however never happened and thus both empires never united, and from 800 onwards the Byzantine Empire was no longer the only Christian empire due to there now being another which was Charlemagne’s Frankish Empire. For her favoritism towards her trusted eunuchs, mismanaging the economy by relaxing taxes, and agreeing to marry Charlemagne who the Byzantines saw as a foreign barbarian, a group of government officials and aristocrats led by Irene’s finance minister Nikephoros with the backing of the Patriarch Tarasios as well hatched a plot to overthrow her in 802, and true enough it worked. Irene was thus banished to Lesbos whereas Nikephoros I took over as emperor, and just a year later (803) Irene died out of depression in Lesbos at the age of 51.

This illustration of Empress Irene depicts her at her time as the sole empress, although here she is seen wearing the everyday type of dress worn by Byzantine empresses and not the highly lavish imperial attire mostly made of gold silk and studded with jewels everywhere, as true enough this dress she wears appears to look much simpler and easy to wear compared to the ceremonial attire of Byzantine rulers. The dress Irene is wearing in this illustration is made of the purple silk reserved only for emperors, empresses, and their children with a long line of gold silk at the center studded with jewels, and attached to the dress as well is a purple cape. As for her crown, the one Irene wears here is the standard one worn by Byzantine empresses which was much taller in height than the crowns worn by emperors, and the object she is seen holding are lavender flowers which was chosen for creative purposes. This illustration of Irene was almost entirely based on the illustration of her from the YouTube channel *Kings and Generals* from its video on the Great Schism in which Irene is part of.

S-K Nikephoros II Phokas, Byzantine emperor (963-969)



One of the most colorful characters in Byzantine history was the 10th century emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963-969) as he had the reputation of a ruthless and deadly warrior and commander who his soldiers were undyingly loyal to and at the same time a hardline religious fanatic preferring to live an ascetic lifestyle by having a vegetarian diet, sleeping on the floor, and distancing himself from women, but as emperor he was highly unpopular with the people as he failed to connect with them for his heart was really in the army and not in running the empire. Nikephoros was born in 912 in Cappadocia to the influential Phokas clan which was part of the landed military aristocracy of the Byzantine Empire, and from a young age he had been trained in the ways of war. It was during the reign of Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (945-959) when Nikephoros as well as his younger brother Leo and their nephew John Tzimiskes rose to prominence in the Byzantine army due to scoring a number of victories against the Arab armies in the east. Nikephoros' career as a general particularly began in 945 when the emperor Constantine VII appointed him as the *Strategos* or Governor of the Anatolic Theme (military province) in Asia Minor, and in 955 Nikephoros took his father Bardas' place as the "Domestic of the Schools" which was a more senior position for a general.

Following the death of Constantine VII in 959 with his son Romanos II succeeding him as emperor, Nikephoros was tasked to lead the massive Byzantine invasion of Crete to recapture it from the Arab emirate based there as Nikephoros at this time was the empire's star general. After a 9-month campaign, Nikephoros had managed to capture the city of Chandax in Crete which was the base of the Arab pirates, and what followed was a bloody massacre of its Muslim inhabitants by Nikephoros' men as Nikephoros encouraged this kind of religious warfare among his troops. Nikephoros returned to Constantinople being awarded a triumph by the emperor Romanos II but shortly afterwards returned to the east to continue campaigning with his brother and nephew against the Arab Hamdanid Emirate based in Syria, and in 962 Nikephoros and his army managed to sack the Hamdanid capital Aleppo which suffered the same fate as Chandax as well. Shortly after, news reached Nikephoros and his army that the emperor Romanos II suddenly died in March of 963, and to make sure there would be no power struggle as Romanos' sons Basil and Constantine although crowned co-emperors were still very young, Romanos' widow the empress Theophano proposed to marry Nikephoros so that he could rule as the senior emperor to protect her sons. Having to move quick before someone else becomes emperor, Nikephoros was proclaimed as emperor by his troops and not too long after they took over Constantinople wherein Nikephoros married Theophano and became Emperor Nikephoros II.

As emperor, Nikephoros spent most of his reign doing what he loved to do most, which was campaigning against the Arabs in Cilicia and Syria, and in 965 the Byzantine army led by Nikephoros II and his nephew John Tzimiskes were able to reconquer the entire region of Cilicia from the Arabs all while a division of the army and fleet retook the entire island of Cyprus which had been split between Byzantine and Arab rule since the 7th century. However, in the west Nikephoros II's military campaigns were not as successful as seen when the Byzantine army and fleet was defeated by the Arabs in Sicily in 965 where a lot of their men were lost, and with the Bulgarians Nikephoros failed to maintain peace with them resulting in him allying with the Kievan Rus' state in the north only for the warrior Kievan Rus' prince Sviatoslav to invade Bulgaria and devastate it and later make raids into Byzantine Thrace. Nikephoros II too failed in stopping the German emperor Otto I from making attempts to invade Byzantine territory in Italy, and negotiations failed between them when Otto's ambassador the Italian bishop Liutprand of Cremona was insulted by Nikephoros II in Constantinople which was also due to Liutprand's letter from the pope not referring to Nikephoros as "Roman emperor" but instead as "Emperor of the Greeks".

Domestic policy and civil administration on the other hand was Nikephoros II's weak point as his popularity was all mostly based on his victories and military conquests, but without it he was very much unlikable as he lacked charm, was antagonistic in character, impatient, and ugly in appearance while he too had such harsh tax policies to further fund future conquests whereas the people on the other hand started growing tired of war. Nikephoros II too began heavily taxing the nobility and the Church as well while he too tried to stop the nobility from offering money to the Church as he believed the Church should not be involved in worldly matters, though with his money Nikephoros helped his friend the monk Athanasios establish the monastery of the Great Lavra and its community

found in Mt. Athos in Greece. On the other hand, Nikephoros often clashed with Polyeuctus the Patriarch of Constantinople as Nikephoros wanted all soldiers slain by Muslim Arabs be made martyrs by the Church, which the patriarch did not agree with it. In one instance in 967, when a brawl broke out between Nikephoros' troops and his mercenaries in Constantinople, Nikephoros tried to show that his troops were still disciplined by staging military marches in the Hippodrome only for some watchers to spread a rumor that he was planning to have them killed there which led to a stampede resulting in a number of deaths as the people evacuated and Nikephoros instead of apologizing hid himself in the palace away from the people.

Although not having a diplomatic reputation, Nikephoros II was able to annex the small Armenian Principality of Taron into the Byzantine Empire through diplomacy in 968, and when not in battle he spent his time writing military manuals in which one described the art of war during his time being the *Praecepta Militaria*. In 969, the Byzantines scored another victory by recapturing Antioch from the Arabs, although the general in charge of this attack which was Michael Bourtzes was fired by the emperor for disobeying orders as he captured the city without the emperor's go signal. With Nikephoros greatly unpopular among the public and his wife Theophano allegedly plotting against him, Bourtzes together with John Tzimiskes who had also been fired from command by his uncle the emperor earlier on hatched a plot to kill the emperor, and in one December night in 969 they sneaked into the palace wherein they successfully assassinated the 57-year-old Nikephoros who was sleeping in the floor, and thus John I Tzimiskes took the throne on the condition that he banished Theophano who was made the scapegoat in the murder of Nikephoros as she was blamed for leaving his door unlocked.

This illustration of Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas was almost entirely based off on an illustrated manuscript depicting him found at the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice, Italy. In this illustration, Nikephoros II wears the exact same jeweled crown, red-orange imperial robes with golden patterns, and the long jeweled golden scarf wrapped around it known as a *Loros* which draped over his left arm. Just like in the original manuscript, Nikephoros II here is shown with his sword which is the curved Byzantine saber known as the *Paramerion* drawn which is held by his right hand while his sword's sheath is placed on the ground and held by his left hand. As for his facial features, it faithfully follows the way he is depicted in the original manuscript with thick messy hair and a beard, though the most distinct part about this illustration is the massive number of pearls studded in his *Loros* and crown.