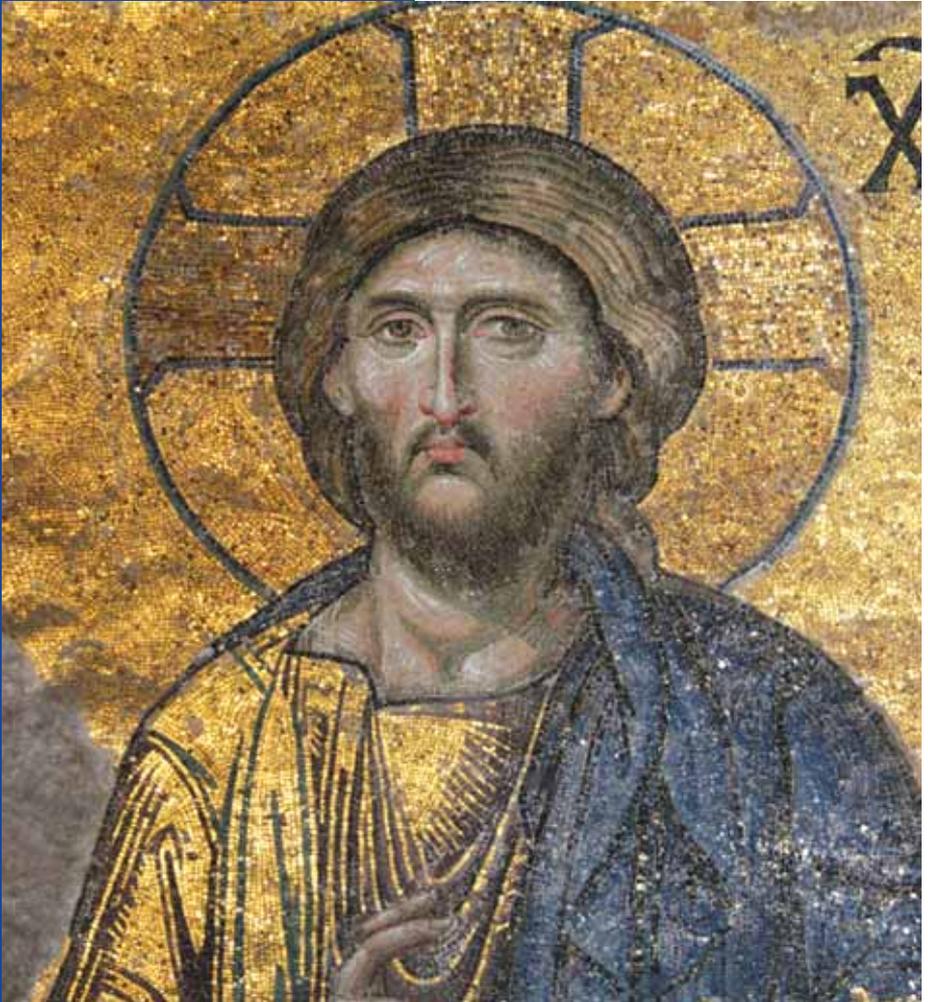


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**EMPIRE OF GOLD:
A HISTORY OF THE
BYZANTINE EMPIRE
COURSE GUIDE**



Professor Thomas F. Madden
SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

Empire of Gold: A History of the Byzantine Empire

Professor Thomas F. Madden

Saint Louis University



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Empire of Gold:
A History of the Byzantine Empire
Professor Thomas F. Madden



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#UT094 ISBN: 978-1-4281-3268-9

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Course Syllabus

Empire of Gold: A History of the Byzantine Empire

About Your Professor	4
Introduction.....	5
Lecture 1 The Emerging Empire of New Rome, 284–457	6
Lecture 2 Justinian and the Reconquest of the West, 457–565.....	10
Lecture 3 The City of Constantinople: A Guided Tour of the Greatest City in the Western World.....	14
Lecture 4 The Turn Eastward, 565–717	17
Lecture 5 Survival, 717–867	21
Lecture 6 A Golden Age: The Macedonian Dynasty, 867–1025.....	25
Lecture 7 Weakness and Wealth, 1025–1081.....	31
Lecture 8 The Turn to the West: The Comnenan Dynasty, 1081–1180	35
Lecture 9 Decline, Decay, and Destruction, 1180–1204	40
Lecture 10 Struggle for Byzantium’s Corpse, 1204–1261.....	44
Lecture 11 The Empire Reborn, 1261–1328	47
Lecture 12 The Final Decline, 1328–1391.....	51
Lecture 13 The Fall of Rome, 1391–1453.....	56
Lecture 14 Aftermath and Legacy	61
Course Materials	64



About Your Professor

Thomas F. Madden

Thomas F. Madden is a professor of medieval history and chair of the Department of History at Saint Louis University. A recognized expert on the Crusades, he has appeared in forums such as National Public Radio and the *New York Times*. Professor Madden is the author of *The New Concise History of the Crusades* and *Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice*. He is coauthor with Donald E. Queller of *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople* and the editor of *Crusades: The Illustrated History* and *The Crusades: Essential Readings*. Among his published journal articles are “The Enduring Myths of the Fourth Crusade,” “Father of the Bride: Fathers, Daughters, and Dowries in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Venice,” and “The Fires of the Fourth Crusade in Constantinople, 1203–1204: A Damage Assessment.”

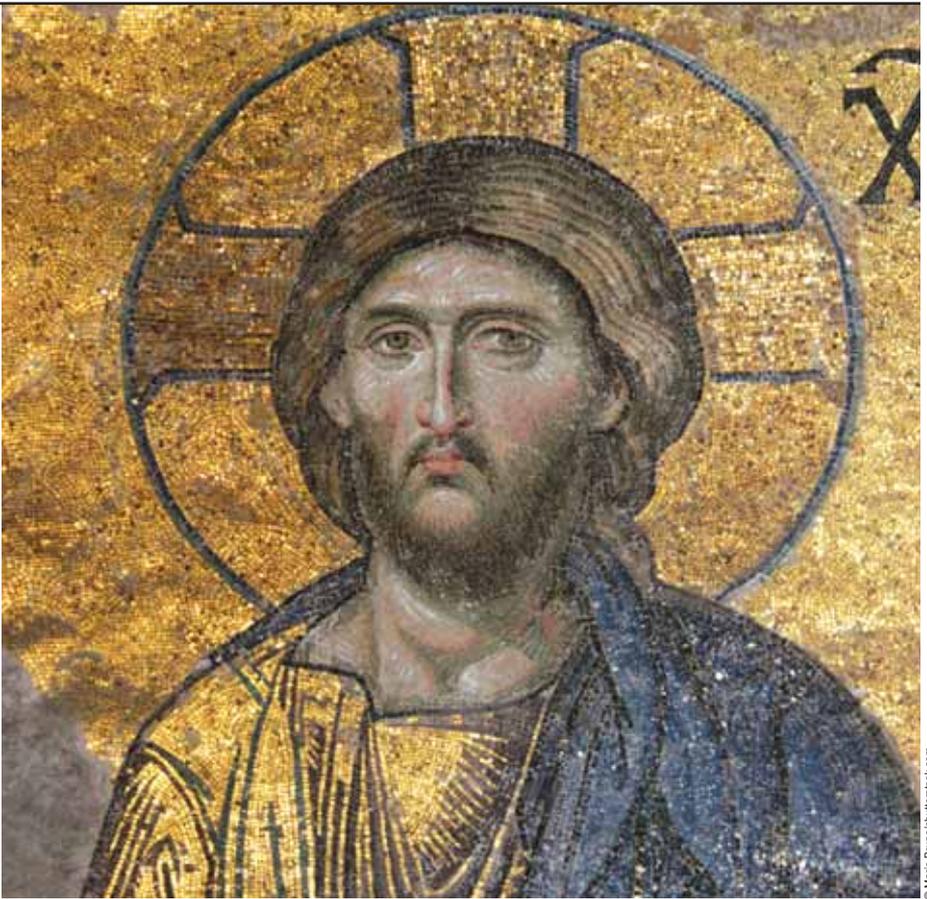
The following books provide an excellent overview of the lectures found in this course:

Hussey, J.M. *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Mango, Cyril. *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome*. London: Phoenix Press, 2005.

Ostrogorsky, George. *History of the Byzantine State*. London: Blackwell Publishing, 1980.

Treadgold, Warren. *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997.



Byzantine wall mosaic at the Hagia Sophia of Jesus.

Introduction

In *Empire of Gold: A History of the Byzantine Empire*, esteemed university professor Thomas F. Madden offers a fascinating series of lectures on the history of the remarkable culture and state that developed out of the ancient Roman Empire, particularly its eastern portion, throughout the Middle Ages. The story here therefore begins at an ending, that of the Roman Empire, in the third century AD, and continues over the next one thousand years.

This new culture arising from the old will have a dramatic impact on western European culture and on the culture of the Islamic East, and most especially on the culture and modern history of Greeks, Greek Orthodox, and Russians, who were all very much affected by the Byzantine Empire. With incisive commentary, Professor Madden leads a discussion covering Justinian's reconquest of the West, the great city of Constantinople, and the aftermath and influence of this extraordinary empire.

Lecture 1: The Emerging Empire of New Rome, 284–457

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Averil Cameron's *The Later Roman Empire*.

The Byzantine Empire

The term “Byzantine” was made up by modern historians for the last millennium or so of the Roman Empire. By the third century and into the fourth century AD, there were changes in the Roman Empire so profound that historians during the Enlightenment began to call the period Byzantine rather than Roman.

One of the primary characteristics of the Byzantine Empire was the relegation of Rome to a place of honor only. Rome was not the capital of the Byzantine Empire. The capital, instead, was Constantinople. Therefore, power was based in the eastern Mediterranean.

Next was the dominance of Greek culture and eastern perspectives, and a final characteristic was the integration of Christianity into the social and political fabric of the empire.

Emperor Diocletian (284–305)

Most historians would place the beginnings of the Byzantine Empire roughly around the reign of the emperor Diocletian, who instituted widespread reforms to halt civil wars and economic decline.

One reform was the establishment of a tetrarchy for a division of political power between eastern and western Roman Empire with clear lines of succession. This entailed two Caesars and two Augusti, a Caesar and Augustus in the east and a Caesar and Augustus in the west.

Diocletian also reorganized the provinces into a more rational structure. No position was given for capitals, which were simply wherever the Augustus happened to be.

Diocletian also instituted an economic reorganization and attempted to modify currency to halt inflation. His tax reforms relied on new census data to require city leaders to collect money and grain based on wealth assessments.

Although Diocletian's system met with opposition, it would remain the Byzantine system for centuries.

Diocletian oversaw a large increase in the size of the military, with more than 500,000 troops. He regularized the position of emperor, so emperors were absolute rulers in law as well as in practice.

Diocletian issued an edict against Christianity. He did not like Christianity and he felt it was harming the empire and upsetting the gods who had created the empire.

Diocletian retired in 305, and his system worked only so long as Diocletian managed it. Civil wars among various claimants broke out almost immediately after his retirement. By his death in 311, things were no better.

Emperor Constantine (312–337)

One of the claimants, Constantine marched on Rome in 312 against Maxentius. While approaching Rome, Constantine had a vision of a cross and a dream of Christ, which led him to convert to Christianity.

At the famous Battle of Milvian Bridge, Constantine was able to defeat Maxentius and become emperor. With his colleague, Licinius, Constantine lifted the anti-Christian edicts.

When Licinius later resumed persecutions, Constantine waged war against him, becoming the sole emperor in 324.

Constantine believed that God had chosen him to help solve problems in the church. The Arian Controversy broke out in Egypt and began to spread. The Arians believed that Christ was divine but not a deity and that God could not have become human, thoughts that led to much division among Christians.

In reaction to the Arian Controversy, Constantine sponsored the Council of Nicaea in 325. At the council, Arianism was declared a heresy.

Constantine's relationship to the Church is the foundation for concepts of church and state in both the West and the Greek East.

Throughout his reign he progressively favored Christians. By the 320s he had outlawed many pagan sacrifices and all pagan activity that was offensive to Christians, including holy prostitution, orgies, and gladiator shows.

Constantine founded Constantinople on May 11, 330, by refounding Byzantium as New Rome. Constantine laid out the streets and fora and provided incentives to get people to move there. He built several churches, and by 332 the Egyptian fleets were providing grain for the dole: free bread for all citizens living in the city.

Post-Constantine

The problem of Arianism became worse as Constantine's sons vied for power. When Constantius took sole power, he attempted to force a solution, which angered almost everyone.

In the West, where Arianism was rarer, the pope and bishops adhered to the Nicene Creed, refusing to allow the emperor to alter it. In the East, where Arianism and imperial power were prevalent, the question had become one of power. Religion had become a grave source of division.

Emperor Theodosius (379–395)

At the Battle of Adrianople in 378, the Goths had taken over much of Thrace and the Balkans. Theodosius raised troops, many among the barbarians themselves, and eventually settled the Goths in the Balkans, making them allies (*foederati*).

In 381, he summoned the Council of Constantinople, which ended the Arian problem in the East.

More Losses

The first half of the fifth century saw greater losses for the empire. Much of the West was being carved up by Germanic barbarians. So many of the Roman armies and generals were barbarian that they began to control emperors first in the West and then in the East.

When the Huns crossed the Danube and invaded Thrace, the eastern Romans were forced to pay enormous tributes. In response, the great Theodosian Walls were begun in Constantinople in 413. By the mid-fifth century, barbarian dominance in the East was secured.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What reforms were enacted by Diocletian?
2. What was the problem of Arianism?

Suggested Reading

Cameron, Averil. *The Later Roman Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Other Books of Interest

Cameron, Averil. *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, A.D. 395–600*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Jones, A.H.M. *The Later Roman Empire: 284–602*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Lecture 2: Justinian and the Reconquest of the West, 457–565

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Averil Cameron's *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, A.D. 395–600*.

Emperor Leo I (457–574)

Although placed in power by the German general Aspar, Emperor Leo I worked slowly and diligently to remove German control over the Eastern Empire.

Leo I recruited Isaurian troops under the control of Zeno to counterbalance German control of the army. Despite warfare and revolts in the Balkans, by 471 Leo had removed German control over the Eastern Empire, although they still controlled the Balkans. Similar attempts in the Western Empire failed.

In 476, the barbarian leader in Italy, Odoacer, deposed Romulus Augustulus and sent the regalia to Constantinople. Emperor Zeno refused to accept the state of affairs, but there was little he could do.

In 488, Zeno deputized Theodoric, the leader of the Goths in the Balkans, to conquer Italy and rule it in Zeno's name. Thus the Byzantine Empire was freed of the barbarians, but at the expense of the West.

Anastasius I (491–518)

As the West crumbled, the East strengthened. Emperor Anastasius I was able to quell rebellions and riots in the cities and take advantage of the relative peace on the borders.

Monophysitism was becoming an increasing source of disunity. Monophysitism was the belief that Christ had one nature, a fusion of divine and human, while the Orthodox view was that Christ had two separate natures as true god and true man. Monophysitism was also a way of being anti-government. Anastasius's own support for Monophysitism meant that the East was in schism with the pope in Rome.

By his death in his eighties, Anastasius left a prosperous and well-protected empire with coffers brimming with cash. Since Anastasius had no heirs, the crown eventually fell to a high official, Justin, who was from a peasant family in the Latin-speaking Dardania.

Justin (518–527)

Justin and his nephew Justinian represented a shift of focus back to the West. Justin and Justinian healed the schism with the pope, repudiated Monophysitism, and removed Monophysite bishops. Monophysitism remained strong in Egypt, however.

Relations with Theodoric in Italy were tense, particularly with regard to the papacy. When Pope John came to Constantinople as Theodoric's ambassador in 525, he was celebrated. Theodoric, thinking him disloyal, imprisoned him upon his return. However, Theodoric died shortly thereafter, leaving a regent government in Italy for the Goths.

Emperor Justinian I (527–565)

A man of great abilities, Justinian I worked hard to restore the greatness of Rome. He had little connection or sympathies with entrenched elites and worked to end abuses and corruption.

Justinian had married Theodora, an actress, over the protests of senators. She was generally disliked among the elites.

In 528, Justinian commissioned the best jurists in Constantinople to produce a new legal collection: the Justinian Code. It was finished within the year, proving an extraordinarily important achievement.

In subsequent years, the commission produced the Digest (533), which organized commentaries; the Institutes, which was a legal text book; and the Novels; which included Justinian's own laws. Together they were the *Corpus Juris Civilis*.

To protect the religious and moral health of the empire, Justinian issued decrees against homosexuals (especially pederasts), heretics (except Monophysites—Theodora was probably one), and pagans.

The Platonic Academy in Athens was closed, and Justinian extended Byzantine control in Armenia and Crimea and managed to establish peace with the Persian Empire.

John of Cappadocia, as prefect, managed an overhaul of administrative and military structures in Thrace and Asia Minor. His work continued to root out corruption and bring in more revenues.

The Nika Revolt in 532 almost toppled Justinian. When the circus factions, factions that developed around teams of chariot racers, began a riot, some of the city leaders and senators supported it. Much of the military in the city did the same, and much of the city center was burned to the ground.

Justinian's plans to flee were vetoed by Theodora. Justinian's loyal general, Belisarius, was in town with his troops. He put down the rebellion and restored Justinian's authority.

The Reconquest of the West

In 533, Belisarius sailed from Constantinople with a fleet to reclaim Africa from the Vandals. Within a year, Belisarius had restored Africa to Roman control as well as Sardinia, Corsica, and the Balearics. Belisarius returned to Constantinople to receive a triumph—something not done since Augustus.

After securing Sicily and extending control of Africa, the Byzantine forces moved into Italy. Gothic power, beset by leadership problems, began to crumble.

Naples fell quickly. With the help of Pope Silverius, Rome returned to the control of the Roman Empire. By 540, Belisarius had conquered all of Italy,

with the exception of Ravenna, where the Gothic king Vitigis held out.

Justinian needed peace to move his forces to counteract Persian attacks. He offered to let Vitigis keep half his treasury and all lands south of the Po.

Belisarius opposed the deal. He made a separate one in which the Goths surrendered completely to him, but would serve under him as the emperor of the restored Western Empire (in other words, Belisarius led the Goths to believe that he would double-cross Justinian). When during the summer of 540 Belisarius was recalled by Justinian to fight the Persians, the Goths realized that they had been had.

Amazingly, and with little cost, Justinian had succeeded in erasing the conquests of centuries.

The 540s brought serious setbacks to Justinian's plans. The Persian Empire attacked Syria and Mesopotamia, demanding tribute payments. Belisarius returned and stabilized the situation. However, he was implicated in a plot when news of Justinian's impending death arrived, and he lost much of his influence thereafter.

As a result of the extension of trade routes to the Far East, the Bubonic Plague made its way to the eastern Mediterranean. The results were catastrophic, particularly in big cities like Constantinople, where half or more of the population died.

Justinian himself lay seriously ill for a long time, leaving control of the empire to Theodora.

The Goths under Totila rallied in Italy, recapturing most of the peninsula.

Theodora died in 548. Although she had been supportive early on, her activities supporting Monophysitism and against Belisarius had been corrosive.

By 550, however, Justinian had recuperated and matters were improving. The Persians, equally harmed by the plague, made peace.

More troops were sent to Italy under the command of the aged eunuch Narses. Additional troops were sent to Spain. By 555, Justinian had defeated the Goths and taken complete control of Italy. He had also taken southern Spain.

Our Sea

The Mediterranean Sea was once again "Mare Nostra" ("Our Sea"). Justinian's successes included an explosion in art and architectural achievements, only a few of which survive.

He built churches and other public buildings and richly decorated them. He was responsible for the San Vitale in Ravenna, and the greatest of his architectural achievements was Hagia Sophia (The Church of Holy Wisdom), dedicated in 537 after six years of construction. This church would become the very heart of the Byzantine Empire.

Sometime around 555, Byzantine agents smuggled silk worms into Constantinople from China, ushering in the very lucrative silk industry.

Although another plague hit in 558, the Empire was in its strongest position for many centuries when Justinian died in 565. He was the last emperor to speak Latin as his native tongue.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What was Monophysitism?
2. What brought on the Nika Revolt?

Suggested Reading

Cameron, Averil. *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, A.D. 395–600*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Other Books of Interest

Jones, A.H.M. *The Later Roman Empire: 284–602*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Moorhead, John. *Justinian*. London: Longman, 1994.

Wolfram, Herwig. *History of the Goths*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Lecture 3: The City of Constantinople: A Guided Tour of the Greatest City in the Western World

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Sarah Bassett's *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople*.

The Heart of an Empire

Constantinople was not just a capital, it was the beating heart of the Byzantine Empire and was the greatest city in the Western world at this time. Constantinople sat at the crossroads of the world and controlled east-west land traffic.

Constantinople was founded on a triangular peninsula. Two sides of the triangle were water. The Bosphorus and Sea of Marmara provided easy access to shipping, while the Golden Horn formed a secure harbor.

The third portion was one long line of land walls. The Theodosian Walls were a six-mile defensive system built in 412. The walls consisted of ten gates, with four main gates, and were three walls deep, with each wall taller than the one before it. There was also a great moat before the first wall.

The Golden Gate was the southernmost gate and was covered in bronze gilding and statues. It was the triumphal entryway and was used only by emperors. Today it is part of an Ottoman castle called Yedikule.

Mese was Constantinople's central street, and all of the following forums would have been found along this street.

The Forum of Arcadius

The Forum of Arcadius was a wide forum created in 402. In its center stood the Column of Arcadius, depicting the victories and achievements of Arcadius's father, Theodosius I. This column was modeled on the Column of Trajan in Rome.

Forum Bovis

This forum was probably named for a giant bronze ox and is today located in Aksaray Square.

Philadelphion

This is a small square with columns depicting the tetrarchy. Today, the bronze statues of the tetrarchy, formerly found in this forum, are located in Venice.

Forum of Theodosius (Forum Tauri)

This very large forum area was adorned with massive triumphal arches, perhaps the largest in the Roman world. It was built around 390 and was probably formerly a cattle market, thus its name.

In the forum stood the Column of Theodosius, depicting the victories of

Theodosius, modeled on Trajan's forum in Rome. Today the forum can be found at Beyazit Square.

Forum of Constantine

This was a circular forum, dedicated with the foundation of the city, and featured the Column of Constantine. The statue of Constantine atop the column remained until almost 1100, when it was pulled down by a windstorm. The column still stands today and is known as Cemberlitas.

Milion

This milestone monument is the point from which all roads were measured in the Eastern Empire.

Hagia Sophia

The Hagia Sophia was the greatest church in the Christian world and the place where all triumphs ended.

Augusteion

Just south of the Hagia Sophia was an open area called the Augusteion, which featured the Column of Justinian.

Great Palace Complex

South of the Augusteion was the Great Palace Complex.

Hippodrome

Attached to the Great Palace Complex was the Hippodrome, which featured the Spina, around which chariots raced. The Spina itself featured two giant obelisks and the Serpent Column of Delphi. Today, it is called the Atmeidan.

Water Supply

Constantinople featured massive water projects and numerous open air and underground cisterns. Today, people can view the Basilica and Binbirdirek Cisterns. The Aetius Cistern is now a soccer field. The Aqueduct of Valens, completed in 368, was used well into the Ottoman period.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. How did Constantinople's geography contribute to its defense?
2. How could Constantinople's water supply have contributed to its defense?

Suggested Reading

Bassett, Sarah. *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Other Books of Interest

Freely, John, and Ahmet S. Çakmak. *Byzantine Monuments of Istanbul*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Lecture 4: The Turn Eastward, 565–717

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is A.H.M. Jones's *The Later Roman Empire: 284–602*.

Trouble from the East

Problems in the East would soon lead the successors of Justinian to focus their attention there. Justin II (565–578) and Tiberius II (578–582) stopped tribute payments to the Persians, and the general Maurice scored victories against the Persians, shoring up the eastern border.

The Avars, however, although they were paid tribute money, still raided the Balkans.

The Lombards invaded Italy in 568 and soon captured much of the peninsula. The Byzantines were confined to Ravenna, Veneto, Rome, Sicily, and the south.

Maurice (582–602) became emperor and worked to stabilize the empire. Because of his support for the Persian claimant to the throne, Persia allowed the Byzantines to regain Armenia.

Maurice put western territories under military commanders: the exarches of Carthage and Ravenna. Dukes, drawn from local rulers, served under them.

The army Maurice sent to fight the Avars revolted in 602, proclaiming their leader, Phocas (602–610), as emperor. The coup was successful when factions turned against Maurice, who, along with his sons, was brutally killed.

Rebellions of this sort, of such Roman pedigree, would remain a constant problem throughout Byzantine history.

Heraclius (610–641)

The son of the Exarch of Carthage, Heraclius sailed to Constantinople to claim the throne. He killed Phocas and most of the high officials promoted by him.

In the first ten years of his reign, the empire suffered severe losses. The Visigoths reconquered southern Spain, and the Avars continued to attack Thrace and the Balkans.

The Persians invaded the empire, conquering Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. They placed Monophysites in positions of authority. Jerusalem was sacked and the True Cross carried off to Persia.

Heraclius responded with a Byzantine holy war. Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople handed over enormous amounts of church money to fund the war. Icons of Christ and the Virgin were constant helpers and protectors.

The Persian War

Heraclius bought an uneasy peace with the Avar khan, who controlled most of Thrace. In 624, after amassing a large army of Byzantines and mercenaries, he headed directly east, into Armenia and then toward Persia.

Heraclius caused great damage to the Persian Empire, causing the recall of troops. The Persian leader, Khusrau, decided to try the same strategy. He invaded Anatolia, heading straight for Constantinople, where he arrived at Chalcedon on the Asian side in 626.

Khusrau allied himself with the Avars, who attacked along the land wall. Despite great numbers, the siege on Constantinople failed, in large part because the Avars were unable to ferry the Persians across the Bosphorus.

More Byzantine armies joined Heraclius in 627. He continued his push toward the capital at Ctesiphon. Khusrau was overthrown and peace was settled. Borders were returned to the 602 status.

In March 630, Heraclius brought the True Cross back to Jerusalem. Byzantium had won an astonishing, although draining, victory. Persia was weak and no longer a threat. Persian treasure allowed Heraclius to repay the church.

Succumbing to internal dissension, Avar power crumbled, allowing the Slavs to take over in the Balkans. Heraclius returned to Constantinople for a glorious triumph.

The Storm of Islam

Although Arabs had always raided Roman borders, they were never more than a nuisance. But that would change.

Mohammad made his Hegira (trip) to Medina in 622. At that point, he became a ruler, not just a religious leader. He conquered all of Arabia by his death in 632.

Islam unified and compelled the Arabs toward world conquest. The concept of jihad held that the domain of Islam was a place of peace, but everywhere else was a place of war.

The successors of Mohammad, the Caliphs, directed the wars against the unbelievers in the Byzantine Empire and Persia.

Byzantium was seriously weakened by the Persian War and the Monophysite crisis, made worse by the restoration of Orthodoxy in Syria and Egypt.

Heraclius was ill, old, and afflicted with a fear of water that kept him from sailing.

The Arabs defeated Byzantine defenders at the Battle of Yarmuk River in 636. Palestine and Syria were in serious danger. Heraclius ordered the True Cross relocated to Constantinople.

In 637, the Arabs conquered the Persian capital as well as Antioch, Damascus, and Syria. In 638, Jerusalem fell to the Arabs.

Egypt was cut off from the Empire. Heraclius sent troops to defend it, but the results were not encouraging. Heraclius died in 641.

Despite the attempts of Heraclius's successors, Egypt fell in 642. The Arabs continued across North Africa, eventually conquering all of the Byzantine territories there by 711.

With control of the coast, the Arabs began building fleets, taking control of the eastern Mediterranean. In 673, they captured Rhodes, using it as a base for attacks on Asia Minor.

In 674, a large fleet sailed directly into the Sea of Marmara, terrorizing those living on its shores. These operations continued for years, but were ended in 678 when Constantine IV used Greek Fire, a petroleum-based substance that only the Byzantines knew how to make. Greek Fire could be lit on fire and projected a great distance, which proved very useful against the wooden ships of the day.

The new Muslim Empire was an amazing achievement, stretching from India to Spain. Rome had plenty of experience with barbarians, but not with the religious fervor of the Arabs.

Separating themselves at places like Cairo, the Arabs retained their language, culture, and religion.

Although they tolerated monotheists like Christians and Jews, they sought to conquer all non-Muslim territories. Constantinople, as the greatest Christian city in the world, was a natural target.

A new people, the Bulgars, invaded Thrace. The Byzantines recognized them in the northern Balkans as having an independent kingdom. Slavs in the south, though, were integrating into the Byzantine society, allowing Constantinople to take firm control of the region.

In the West, all was lost except Sicily and the exarchate of Ravenna.

The System of Themes

The old military system was no longer feasible given the lack of resources. Heraclius's successors (probably Constans II, 641–668) created the themes, which were areas of provincial administration governed by generals.

Soldiers were given land in the themes with which to support themselves. This reduced their pay by half. The system, which stationed troops everywhere and helped to expand agriculture in Asia Minor and Greece, was used for centuries.

The period between the death of Heraclius (641) and the accession of Leo III (717) saw numerous dynastic disputes, causing Constantinople to churn with factional violence. And this was at a time when the Byzantine Empire would meet its greatest foe, the new Muslim Empire.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. How did Heraclius respond to the removal of the True Cross to Persia?
2. Why was Heraclius ill-prepared for Arab invaders?

Suggested Reading

Jones, A.H.M. *The Later Roman Empire: 284–602*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Other Books of Interest

Kaegi, Walter E. *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

———. *Heraclius: Emperor of Byzantium*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Lecture 5: Survival, 717–867

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Warren Treadgold's *Byzantine Revival, 780–842*.

Leo III (717–741)

Leo III came to power through a civil war, while the Arabs continued to raid or capture Asia Minor coastal areas and threaten the capital itself.

Caliph Suleiman was determined to conquer Constantinople. In 717, he sent 120,000 men and 1,800 ships—more than the entire forces of the Byzantine Empire—against Constantinople.

With the help of fireships and a good deal of luck, the Byzantines were able to hold out and bring in food. The city was fed, but the attackers were not.

After thirteen months, the Arabs retreated on August 15, the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, who was the special protector of Constantinople. This victory saved not only the capital, but also Asia Minor, the Balkans, and perhaps Europe.

Despite this success, the empire continued to suffer setbacks in the West and East. Leo believed that God was angry and he sought to discover the reason for His displeasure. Law codes were revised to more closely match the Bible.

Iconoclasm

Leo slowly began removing icons and finally banned them altogether in 730. The decree was done without a church council, but by imperial fiat, and it would remain unpopular, especially in the monasteries.

Weakness in Italy had led the popes to become increasingly frustrated by the emperors in Constantinople. Iconoclasm was the last straw. In 731, Pope Gregory III convened a synod that condemned iconoclasm as a heresy.

Nevertheless, Leo was able to secure the borders and even dealt the Arabs a defeat in 740, which added much to his argument about icons.

Constantine V (741–775)

Son of Leo III, his accession was almost peaceful, although he did have to defeat a rival.

In 751, the Lombards finally captured Ravenna, and Italy was lost.

Pippin the Short of the Franks defeated the Lombards in 754, realigning the focus of Rome and creating an alliance between the Franks and the papacy.

Taking advantage of the civil war in the Muslim empire, Leo III won victories in northern Syria and waged a series of successful wars against the Bulgars,

severely weakening them. These victories kept him in power, but they did not make iconoclasm more appealing.

Leo III called a church council, which he pressured to declare iconophiles as heretics. This put him at odds with many of his people, the monasteries, and the West. Only the civil bureaucracy and the military supported it.

Leo III ordered a persecution of iconophiles, destroying hidden icons, killing or maiming monastics, and even going so far as to condemn relic veneration and prayers for intercession. Iconophiles later dubbed him *Kopronymos* (Name of Dung).

Empress Irene

Leo IV, the son of Constantine, came to the throne peacefully. He was married to Irene, a Khazar princess and iconophile. Irene was ejected from the palace when it was discovered that she had secret icons.

Leo died in 780 under suspicious circumstances, leaving Irene as the regent for her nine-year-old son, Constantine VI. Irene had many rivals, including the other sons of Constantine V. But with the help of allies in the bureaucracy and eunuchs, she was able to outmaneuver them.

Sending eunuch generals out, she won impressive victories in Thrace and Asia Minor. In 787, she convened the Second Council of Nicaea, which condemned iconoclasm. Her power was secure enough that no one objected.

Constantine came to power in 790, yet he remained devoted to and reliant on his mother. She began plotting against him in 795 and her allies seized him and blinded him in 797. He died of his wounds.

Guilt stricken, Irene lost much of her abilities. Still, she ruled in her own right, the first empress in Roman history.

In 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne emperor of Rome. His justification was that the throne was said to be vacant in Constantinople (he would not recognize a female emperor).

In 802, Charlemagne sent ambassadors to Constantinople to propose marriage to Irene. But a coup overthrew her, and she retired to a convent that she had founded.

The decades that followed Irene saw more setbacks for the Byzantine Empire. Cyprus and most of Sicily were conquered by the Arabs.

Iconoclasm continued to cause problems until it was finally suppressed in 843 by Theodora, the mother and regent of Michael III. In fact, to celebrate the end of iconoclasm, Patriarch Photius later had a magnificent mosaic of the Virgin and Child placed in the central apse of Hagia Sophia.

Photian Schism

Michael III, “the Drunkard” (842–867), lived up to his name, spending more time at the games, with favorites, or drinking than with the state.

The Patriarch of Constantinople, Ignatius, an austere man, saw little to like about Michael. Ignatius refused to allow Theodora, Michael’s mother, to be unwillingly sent to the convent.

Ignatius excommunicated Barda, Michael's uncle and the real power behind the throne. Michael ordered the patriarch to abdicate, appointing in his stead Photius, a layman of great learning.

Pope Nicholas I refused to confirm the change, insisting that Ignatius be restored. In 867, Photius responded with a council that declared Nicholas deposed.

Photius declared Western practices heretical: Saturday fasting, unleavened bread, excluding married men from the priesthood. For special condemnation was the Filioque Clause (that the Holy Spirit proceeded from both the Father and the Son).

Although the schism would later be healed, the battle lines between the two churches were drawn. Tensions between east and west played out in the missionaries to the Slavs as well.

Ignatius sent Cyril and Methodius to Moravia. Cyril invented the Cyrillic alphabet in order to translate Scripture and liturgical texts into Slavic languages. This would lead to the conversion of the Slavic world, extending Orthodoxy far beyond the borders of Byzantium.

When Michael's mistress became pregnant, he insisted that his favorite, Basil, marry her. Basil was then crowned co-emperor so that the son could be the next emperor.

An athlete, Basil was known for his strength and conviviality. When Michael later began to suspect Basil of treachery, Basil had him murdered after a party.

By 867, the Byzantine Empire had stopped the hemorrhaging and established a secure empire once more.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What was iconoclasm?
2. What was the Filioque Clause?

Suggested Reading

Treadgold, Warren. *Byzantine Revival, 780–842*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988.

Other Books of Interest

Gero, Stephen. *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Constantine V*. Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1977.

———. *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III*. Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1973.

**Lecture 6:
A Golden Age:
The Macedonian Dynasty, 867–1025**

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Dimitri Obolensky's *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500–1453*.

Expansion of Empire

The years of the Macedonian dynasty saw the Empire expand not only its borders, but also its influence into the Balkans and Russia.

Basil I (867–886)

Basil I, called “The Macedonian” because of his birth, was actually of Armenian stock. He had made his way from peasant beginnings to the highest office at age fifty-five, with considerable skill and plenty of blood.

He remained married to Michael's former mistress, Eudocia Ingerina, but he designated his son by a previous marriage, Constantine, as his heir by crowning him junior emperor.

Of Michael III's sons, he castrated one (Stephen) and sent him to a monastery. The other, Leo, he allowed to remain in the palace, largely ignored.

Almost immediately, he ended the Photian Schism by sending Photius to a monastery and restoring Ignatius. A Council in Constantinople in 869-70 excommunicated Photius; however, it also decreed that the recently converted Bulgarian Church be subject to Constantinople.

Basil's wars kept the Arabs at bay in the East and Sicily. He was also able to crush the Paulicians, a dualist heretical group in Anatolia that had declared its independence. Basil was the last emperor to personally lead troops for a very long time.

In his monastery, Photius was busy. Researching the emperor's ancestry, he discovered that he was actually the descendant of Armenian kings. This won him a place at court and the appointment as tutor to the emperor's sons, Leo and Alexander, both of whom were crowned junior emperors. When Ignatius later died, Photius was named patriarch once again, and Rome allowed it.

In 879, Constantine died. Basil was crushed. The new heir was Michael III's son Leo. Photius declared Constantine a saint and one of his bishops claimed to be able to conjure his ghost for the emperor. Basil detested the young Leo and the feeling was mutual.

Basil forced Leo at sixteen to marry Theophano, despite Leo's desire to marry his mistress. Leo's plots landed him under house arrest, but as Basil entered his seventies, he realized that he needed an heir and accepted Leo as such.

Leo VI, or Leo the Wise (886–912)

At nineteen years of age, Leo came to the throne. Although his half-brother Alexander was a junior emperor, he was ignored.

Leo immediately dismissed Photius, replacing him as patriarch with his brother Stephen. A man of education and wisdom, Leo wrote numerous artistic and religious works.

Leo continued and completed Basil's project of producing the Basilica, a new codification of Byzantine law. The emperor was clearly defined as chosen by God and the giver of law. The Senate was abolished. The only exception to the emperor's power is regarding the Church, which he must protect. Leo's concept of law enshrined the Byzantine concept of one God, one emperor, one empire.

Empress Theophano, whom Leo did not like, died in 897 and was soon after declared a saint. Leo married his mistress Zoë in 898, but she died the following year.

This left only his hated half-brother, Alexander, as heir. The Orthodox Church did not sanction third marriages, yet in this case the patriarch allowed it. Leo married the beautiful Eudocia Baeana, but she died in 901 during childbirth. The child also died.

Because the patriarch refused to allow a fourth marriage, Leo took a mistress: Zoë Carbonopsina ("Coal Eyes"). Yet the fact that Alexander seemed the only possible legitimate heir encouraged conspiracies, which Patriarch Nicholas supported.

When Zoë gave birth to a son, Constantine, the patriarch allowed his baptism, but stalled on the marriage indulgence, hoping to overthrow the emperor.

In 906, Leo petitioned Pope Sergius III for permission to marry Zoë, and permission was promptly granted.

Nicholas was forced to resign. The new patriarch, though, insisted that Leo forbid fourth marriages by law for the future, which he did.

He was also required to do penance, which is memorialized in a mosaic in Hagia Sophia. When he died in 912, an unhappy emperor left the care of his six-year-old son to his brother, now senior emperor Alexander.

Alexander was angry and ill when he became senior emperor. Although he attempted to wreak revenge on his enemies, he soon succumbed to his disease.

When he died in 913, he left the restored Patriarch Nicholas as regent of Constantine. Zoë had been sent to a convent.

Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–959)

Intrigue ruled the early years of his reign. Nicholas was replaced by Zoë, who was then replaced by Romanus Lecapenus, an admiral, as imperial regent.

During this time, the Bulgarians, ruled by Symeon, raided Thrace and the Balkans at will. Several times Symeon marched to the walls of Constantinople, demanding to be named emperor himself.

After Romanus removed his rivals, he married his daughter, Helena, to Constantine. As the father-in-law of the emperor, he was crowned by Constantine as co-emperor in 920.

Shortly thereafter, Romanus proclaimed himself senior emperor and crowned his own son, Christopher, as a junior emperor. For the next two decades Romanus ruled wisely and well.

Bulgarian power waned after the death of Symeon. Taking advantage of Muslim disunity, Romanus expanded the eastern frontier. Restoring Edessa to Christian control, Romanus had the celebrated relic, the Mandylion, brought to Constantinople in 944. Modern studies suggest that this may have been the Shroud of Turin.

By the time of his death, Romanus thought well of Constantine VII and his grandson, Romanus. Leaving power to Constantine, Romanus went to a monastery to die.

Constantine VII came to full power at age twenty-nine. Although his various campaigns came to nothing, Constantine would best be remembered for his literary works: *Book of Ceremonies* and his Didactic works, written primarily for his son, Romanus.

Romanus II (959–963)

Romanus II was twenty years old and without a rival when his father died. He immediately crowned his young son, Basil, as junior emperor. His wife, Theophano, was a former tavern owner, whom Romanus married for love.

Romanus directed his generals to wage more vigorous wars against the Arabs. In 962, after a long siege, the Byzantine Empire recaptured Crete. The general, Nicephorus Phocas, enjoyed a glorious triumph in the capital.

Nicephorus went to the East, where he led a massive army against Aleppo, sacking the city. Both campaigns were aimed at stopping raids. At a young age, Romanus died while hunting. He left two young sons, Basil and Constantine.

Basil II, “The Bulgar-Slayer” (963–1025)

Once again, the throne fell to a child, Basil, who was five years old. Empress Theophano was to rule as regent, but palace intrigue took over.

Nicephorus Phocas, who was loved for his victories, marched on Constantinople and was crowned co-emperor. Having no children, he married Theophano. The match was strained, for the two were not at all alike.

An accomplished general, Nicephorus resumed the practice of the emperor, leading his troops when he could.

Byzantine forces defended what was left of Sicily and southern Italy. Otto I of the German Empire, who had extended his power in Italy, sought a marriage alliance.

Liudprand of Cremona was sent, giving a glimpse of western perceptions of Byzantine society. Both sides were firming up these perceptions.

Additional gains against the Arabs culminated in the reconquest of Antioch in 969. Nicephorus began to consider the reconquest of Jerusalem.

In every respect, Nicephorus was a successful emperor. But Theophano disagreed. She was bored of his austerity and piety.

Relying on popular discontent over a recent famine, she hatched a plot with another general, John Tzimisces, to kill Nicephorus and marry Tzimisces. One evening Theophano let Tzimisces into the palace with supporters. They murdered the emperor, who was asleep on the floor before icons.

In order to win the patriarch's acceptance of John Tzimisces's position, he was required to give his private fortune to the poor, exile the empress, and punish the other assassins. These things he did, and he was crowned co-emperor.

Tzimisces proved to be an even more successful general than Nicephorus. He defeated the Bulgarians, capturing half of the area and subjecting the people. He pressed southward into Syria, reaching even the Holy Land, in preparation for a campaign to conquer Jerusalem. Even the strongest of the Arab powers, the Fatimid caliphate, feared him.

Had he lived, Tzimisces might well have recaptured Jerusalem and perhaps even Egypt. He died, probably of poison, in 976.

Neither Basil, who was nineteen, nor his younger brother Constantine were much interested in ruling.

The Grand Chamberlain Basil Lecapenus took real power in Constantinople, while humoring the fun-loving young men.

Civil War

A powerful general and kinsman of Tzimisces, Bardas Sclerus, was proclaimed emperor and with the support of most of Asia Minor marched to the Bosphorus. Basil Lecapenus turned to the canny general in the West, Bardas Phocus. After four years of destructive civil war, Bardas Phocus was successful. Bardas Sclerus fled to Baghdad.

In a surprise move, in 985, Basil II, now twenty-seven years old, placed the Grand Chamberlain under house arrest and began ruling directly.

In order to prove his mettle, Basil led forces against the Bulgarians, which were destroyed.

Bardas Sclerus left Baghdad and put together another large-scale rebellion. Basil ordered Bardas Phocus, who commanded the eastern forces, to put down the rebellion. Instead, he joined it.

After winning over Sclerus's trust, he imprisoned him and took sole control of Asia Minor and the East. With few supporters, Basil turned to the northerners. He made an alliance with Vladimir of Kiev in return for the hand of his sister, Anna.

In 988, the marriage took place and the Russians were baptized. Vladimir sent six thousand men, which became the foundation of the permanent mercenary army, the Varangian Guard. This elite force would play a critical role in Byzantine history for the next two centuries.

After three years of fighting, Basil at last defeated the rebels, but the civil wars had changed him. He trusted very few people, least of all generals. He did not marry, and he thought even less of the Bulgarians.

Basil spent the next three decades in almost constant warfare. Leading troops himself, he moved frequently between fighting the Bulgarians in the West and the Arabs in the East.

In a series of campaigns, he completely subjugated the Bulgarians, extending the Byzantine Empire across the Balkans and incorporating protectorates in Dalmatia. He held onto southern Italy, but his dream of restoring control of Sicily could not be finished before he ran out of time.

In the East, he consolidated and expanded Byzantine power. Basil was the longest reigning emperor in Roman history. At the end of his reign, the Byzantine Empire was wealthy and secure. No power in the East could rival it.

Although he warred frequently, Basil's strategy was to establish buffer states when possible. The Macedonian dynasty would limp along until 1056, but it would never again reach the heights of Basil II. A new era of sophistication and wealth along with extraordinary danger was dawning.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What was the Basilica?
2. How did the Varangian Guard come about?

Suggested Reading

Obolensky, Dimitri. *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe 500–1453*. London: Phoenix Press, 2000.

Other Books of Interest

Toynbee, Arnold J. *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Lecture 7: Weakness and Wealth, 1025–1081

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Michael Angold's *The Byzantine Empire, 1024–1204: A Political History*.

Civil vs. Military

After 1025, two groups in Byzantine society vied for control. The civil bureaucracy represented the wealthy, highly educated families of the capital. They were a product of the great prosperity of Constantinople.

The military aristocracy represented generally rural families and large landowners that favored strengthening the military and looked to it for support. Both sides, however, were made up of men who hoped to expand their own power and wealth and thereby helped to choose emperors who were weak and docile.

This was also a time when the Latin West would make itself increasingly felt by the Byzantine Empire, leading to tensions.

Constantine VIII and Zoë

Constantine VIII, age sixty-five, at last came to the throne, although he did not live much longer. He had only daughters, all probably past child-bearing years, and these included Zoë (forty-nine) and Theodora (forty-five).

Zoë was married to the city prefect, Romanus Argyrus, who was crowned emperor after Constantine died in 1028. Empress Zoë was the conduit of power in the empire. When she became bored with the sixty-year-old Romanus, she took up with a twenty-something member of the court, Michael the Paphlagonian.

Zoë and Michael began poisoning Romanus and finally drowned him in his bath in 1034.

When Michael IV died in 1042, the populace refused to accept anyone but Zoë and her sister Theodora, who was in a convent. They ruled jointly during 1042, with Zoë as the senior empress.

Finally, Zoë, who disliked ruling, married Constantine Monomachus and Theodora returned to the convent. Zoë died in 1050.

Constantine IX

Constantine IX was of a sort that was increasingly common. Interested more in the luxurious elegance of the imperial office, he neglected much else. He gave away titles—not only honorifics, but even those with handsome salaries.

Constantine funded the building of beautiful churches, monasteries, and academies. The theme system was decaying. Land holders increasingly paid

money rather than having to provide military service, which led to an increasing reliance on mercenaries.

The Schism of 1054

Pope Leo IX, having allied with the Byzantine Empire against the Normans, was captured. He sent legates to Constantinople to discuss common interests and to deal with the disagreements between the two halves of Christianity.

The disagreements grew within a context of papal reform. Patriarch Michael Cerularius had learned much from the popes, including belief in the Donation of Constantine, which granted the papacy dominion over Rome and the entire Western Roman Empire.

He viewed his power as superior to the emperor and quite possibly the pope. Relations between Legate Humbert and the patriarch were bad from the start. Mutual excommunications were the result. The schism, although not complete, would be important.

New Enemies

With the death of Constantine IX in 1055, there was only one Macedonian left. At age seventy-five, Theodora returned from the convent and ruled for more than a year. Thus ended the dynasty.

The next twenty-five years saw a struggle between the military and civil powers that largely favored the latter. Ironically, as Constantinople and the Byzantine people became more sophisticated and wealthy, the empire became weaker and more at risk.

The Byzantine Empire was beset by powerful new enemies. The Pechenegs, a Turcoman people, began regular raids into Thrace and Macedonia. The Normans in southern Italy had fought for years with the Byzantines and Arabs. Under Robert Guiscard, in 1071 they captured Bari, the last Byzantine possession in Italy.

The Seljuk Turks were a new and fierce Muslim people who swept into the east with a spirit of jihad. In 1055, they conquered Persia and then entered Baghdad. Their leader became a sultan, claiming protection over the Abbasid caliph.

From the Byzantines they captured Armenia in 1065 and then moved deep into Asia Minor.

Romanus IV Diogenes (1068–71), a candidate of the military, took power and began mustering a very large army, mostly mercenaries, to push back the Turkish advance. At the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, he was defeated and captured.

Sultan Alp Arslan agreed to free him in return for money, annual tribute, cities, and an alliance. Yet when Romanus returned, he was deposed, causing the Turks to invade.

The next ten years saw disorder and rebellion outside Constantinople and constant intrigue within. Imperial claimants used the Turks to support their sides, which only allowed the Turks to expand their position.

By 1081, the Turks had captured most of Anatolia, including Nicaea. So successful were they that they separated themselves from the Seljuks, proclaiming a new Sultanate of Rum (Rome).

The effects were disastrous. The empire had shrunk by half. Without Asia Minor, the Byzantine Empire could scarcely raise an army. All seemed lost.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. In what ways was Constantine IX representative of the period in which he lived?
2. What led to the Schism of 1054?

Suggested Reading

Angold, Michael. *The Byzantine Empire, 1024–1204: A Political History*. London: Longman, 1997.

Other Books of Interest

Neville, Leonora Alice. *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950–1100*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Runciman, Steven. *The Eastern Schism: A Study of the Papacy and the Eastern Churches During the XIth and XIIIth Centuries*. London: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005.

Lecture 8: The Turn to the West: The Comnenan Dynasty, 1081–1180

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Thomas F. Madden's *The New Concise History of the Crusades*.

Alexius I Comnenus (1081–1118)

Western Europe, which Byzantines still viewed as a barbaric backwater, had grown up. The Byzantine Empire would find itself no longer able to ignore, or worse, provoke Western powers.

Alexius I Comnenus, a military lord, came to power by using a hodge-podge of mercenaries to wage war against the emperor. He was a man of his times. Unlike previous emperors, he was able and determined to turn things around.

He searched everywhere for money and men. He sought allies and took treasure wherever it could be found. And his daughter, Anna Comnena, wrote the *Alexiad*.

Immediately, the Normans under Robert Guiscard and his son, Bohemond, crossed the Adriatic and laid siege to Durazzo. Alexius made a deal with Venice.

Venice

Venetian power had been growing and they were considered poor cousins of the empire. In return for aid, Venice was given a quarter in Constantinople and generous trading privileges. The first of many deals with Italians, these would bring to the populace a familiarity with the West that would breed contempt.

Venice dealt blows to the Normans, but Alexius and his troops were defeated. By 1084, Robert was prepared to move directly to Constantinople. He died, and his sons returned to Italy.

Having lost almost all of the Asian mainland, it was all Alexius could do to hold Greece and the islands. Alexius knew that the health of the empire could only be secured if they reclaimed Asia Minor.

In 1095, Alexius sent ambassadors to Pope Urban II asking for help against the Turks. Urban took the call to the knights of Europe, framing it as an act of Christian charity that would serve as penance for sins.

More importantly, Urban set a goal for the warriors to not only push back recent Turkish conquests in Asia Minor, but those in Palestine as well.

The First Crusade (1095–1099)

Alexius could never have expected the enormous response to his request. He worked hard to plan for the peaceful movement of troops through his lands to Constantinople.

Peter the Hermit and his followers arrived in 1096, but were massacred by the Turks soon after. The arrival of the main body of the Crusade impressed itself on the Byzantine people.

Anna saw them as rude and barbaric, but also strong and in their way noble. Alexius made each of the leaders take an oath to him, although Raymond of Toulouse declined.

Bohemund angled unsuccessfully for a military position as Domestic of the East. The Byzantine and Crusader forces marched on Nicaea, which surrendered to the Byzantines.

The Crusaders crossed Anatolia, defeated the sultan at Dorylaeum, and headed to Antioch. Baldwin of Boulogne won Edessa and much of Armenia for himself. Alexius did not protest.

Alexius and his forces moved against the coast, recapturing for the empire Ephesus and Smyrna and mopping up behind the Crusaders. Antioch fell to the Crusaders, but they were scarcely able to hold it.

Alexius, believing they were doomed, failed to respond to their plea for help. When the Crusaders defeated the Turks, they repudiated their vows to Alexius.

Bohemond received the city, although Alexius continued to demand its return. This episode set the tone for relations between Byzantines and Crusaders for centuries.

The First Crusade changed the landscape of Asia Minor and brought western Europe much more forcefully into the Byzantine East.

Alexius fought against Bohemond in Asia and Europe, finally defeating him but not securing Antioch. He fought against the Turks, who reclaimed some lands, but Alexius held onto the wealthier and more populated coast.

John II Comnenus (1118–1143)

In an earlier age, John's age (thirty) and status as heir would have made him the clear choice to succeed his father. But in twelfth-century Byzantium, where intrigue was everywhere, he was not.

Beginning with plots to murder him hatched by his mother and sister, John foiled numerous attempted coups and rebellions during his reign. These were becoming the norm.

Realizing that all of his military resources needed to be focused on the empire's remaining lands, John let the Byzantine navy decline. He relied instead on Italians for protection.

The growth of Italian, particularly Venetian, power rankled the people and worried John. He granted the Pisans a quarter in Constantinople and trading privileges in return for their help. In this way he hoped to play Italians off of each other.

When he revoked Venice's trading privileges, the Venetians detoured their own crusade of 1122 to attack first Corfu and then later raid the Asian coast. Powerless to stop them, John eventually renewed the privileges.

John took particular interest in Antioch and the Kingdom of Jerusalem. He hoped to secure control over the former and a protectorate over the latter.

Although he was hailed in Antioch, his power there remained ephemeral. He continued to favor partnerships with the Latins in the East.

John believed that by co-opting the power of the youthful and often erratic Western Christendom that it could be turned to the empire's advantage. This marked a shift to a new West.

Manuel I Comnenus (1143–1180)

Young Manuel I continued his father's policy of focusing increasingly on the growing West. Manuel was half-Western himself, because his mother was a Hungarian princess. Manuel married a German princess, Bertha. Manuel introduced Western ways, including chivalric poetry and tournaments to Constantinople. Westerners were placed in court and even given high office.

Manuel increasingly used the Blachernae Palace, which was more casual and somehow more Western. Yet Manuel continued to view the Byzantine Empire as universal. He could not conceive of the idea that it was simply one more Christian power.

Manuel's marriage to Bertha helped to seal an alliance with Conrad of Germany against the Normans of Sicily. An attack was planned, but other matters intervened.

The Second Crusade

In 1144, Nur-ed-din captured Edessa and threatened Antioch. The pope called for a new crusade and Europe responded.

Conrad joined the crusade, thus forestalling any new campaigns. Louis VII of France also joined. He rebuffed an offer by Roger of Sicily to transport the French crusade via a conquest of Constantinople.

Conrad's forces were destroyed, although the crusade did provide a means for him to get to know Manuel. Most of Louis's forces were also destroyed.

When the crusade came to nothing, Louis bitterly blamed Manuel, whom he believed had hindered the crusaders.

When Conrad returned, Manuel and he made plans to attack Sicily, but when Conrad died in 1152, so did the plan. Nevertheless, Manuel remained determined to bring the West back into the empire.

His agents were active in courts across Europe. He made additional treaties with Italians, such as the Genoese, gaining their support and giving away more quarters and concessions.

During the 1160s, when Pope Alexander III was at war with German emperor (Holy Roman emperor) Frederick I Barbarossa, Manuel funneled money and support to the pope through Venice.

He attempted to get the pope to name him sole emperor, and in return he would name the pope as patriarch of Constantinople. After his capture of Dalmatia and Bosnia, Manuel prepared for an invasion of Sicily.

Venice refused to aid him, as this would break their treaty with the Normans and put them at odds with the pope. This upset Manuel.

When Manuel restored the Pisan and Genoese Quarters, Venetians attacked them. In 1171, Manuel arrested most of the Venetians in the empire.

Venice launched a retaliatory fleet in 1172, but it was destroyed by plague. This forced Manuel to rely on the unreliable Genoese.

Manuel's full attention was on a massive expedition, almost a crusade, against the Turks. It was meant to demonstrate to pope and people that he was the clear leader of Christendom.

At the Battle of Myriocephalum in 1176, his armies were crushed. Manuel was broken. His intricate web of treaties fell apart.

In desperation, he opened negotiations with the Venetians, even releasing some hostages. Realizing that the end was near, Manuel married off his relatives to Westerners and left the throne to his eleven-year-old son, Alexius II, under the regency of his wife, Maria.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What brought about the First Crusade?
2. What was Manuel I's attitude toward the West?

Suggested Reading

Madden, Thomas F. *The New Concise History of the Crusades*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005.

Other Books of Interest

Lilie, Ralph-Johannes. *Byzantium and the Crusader States*. Trans. J.C. Morris and Jean E. Ridings. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Magdalino, Paul. *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Lecture 9: Decline, Decay, and Destruction, 1180–1204

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald E. Queller and Thomas F. Madden's *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople*.

Continuing Decline

The factors that had led to decline since 1025 had been somewhat mitigated by the competency of Comnenan rule. With the fall of the Comneni, the empire would continue its slide unabated.

The empire had developed a reliance on foreign mercenaries, and there was an increasing dominance of Italians in Byzantine commerce and naval defense of the empire. There was an increasing number of revolts, rebellions, coup attempts, and palace intrigue.

Maria of Antioch

After the death of Manuel Comnenus, his wife, Maria of Antioch, was the regent for their eleven-year-old son, Alexius II Comnenus (1180–1183).

Maria, a Norman, strongly supported the remaining Italian merchants—the Genoese and Pisans. Although she took monastic vows at her husband's death, she took as a lover one of her husband's younger nephews named Alexius.

A conspiracy coalesced around Manuel's daughter, Maria, and her new husband, Rainier of Montferrat, who was Caesar. The plot was revealed. Maria and Rainier fled to sanctuary at Hagia Sophia.

Patriarch Theodosius, some Italians, and many citizens supported them. The "Holy War" continued for two months until they were granted amnesty.

With the crumbling of the empire, Manuel's older cousin, Andronicus Comnenus, raised an army in Asia Minor and marched on Constantinople. Seen as an anti-Latin candidate (despite his previous career in the Kingdom of Jerusalem), Andronicus was supported by the mobs.

The regency collapsed and Andronicus signaled to his supporters that they could do as they wished before his arrival in the city. The Latin Massacre of 1182 was without precedent. It cleansed Constantinople of Westerners, but left a long legacy.

Andronicus took the regency and began doing away with his enemies. John and Maria died under suspicious circumstances (they were probably poisoned).

Maria, the mother of the emperor, was drowned. Others were blinded, impaled, or otherwise dealt with.

Andronicus

In 1183, Andronicus had himself crowned co-emperor, with many protestations, and then had Alexius II strangled. He married Alexius's eleven-year-old widow, Agnes of France.

Faced with belligerent Normans, Andronicus was forced to turn to Venice. All Venetians were released, their Quarter returned, and compensation payments agreed to.

King William II of Sicily launched an attack on Durazzo and then pressed onward to Thessalonica in 1185. The Normans captured the city and sacked it.

The Hungarians attacked and conquered Byzantium's Dalmatian territories. Rebellions and conspiracies abounded. Andronicus dealt with them brutally.

Suspecting Isaac Angelus, a former rebel, of treason, Andronicus sent soldiers to his house in Constantinople to arrest him.

Isaac killed one of them and rode his horse to Hagia Sophia, gaining support along the way. Under popular pressure, the patriarch crowned Isaac. Andronicus was arrested and cruelly executed in the hippodrome.

Isaac II Angelus (1185–1195)

Isaac II Angelus, young and sober, was nonetheless unable to deal with the host of problems that beset the empire. Under the command of his general, Alexius Branas, Isaac pushed the Normans back to Durazzo.

He made peace with Hungary, accepting the losses, and married King Bela's daughter, Margaret. He was unable, though, to recapture Cyprus, ruled by the rebel, Isaac Comnenus.

He married his sister, Theodora, to Conrad of Montferrat, who took his brother's old title of Caesar. When Branas revolted and marched on Constantinople, Conrad led the defense.

The Third Crusade

In 1187, Saladin captured Jerusalem and most of the Latin Kingdom there. A new crusade—the largest yet—was called. Conrad, who had been on his way to the Holy Land, left immediately and became the savior of Tyre.

This left Isaac in difficult straits. Isaac considered the Westerners to be the greatest threat to his empire. He made a secret alliance with Saladin to hinder the crusade. Word invariably leaked out, only increasing East/West tensions.

Frederick Barbarossa's march across the empire went badly from the start. There were disputes over imperial status and Byzantine delays. Frederick captured Adrianople. After taking and sacking the capital of the Sultanate of Rum, Iconium, Frederick drowned.

Richard I Lionheart of England and Philip II Augustus of France traveled by boat. Richard captured and retained Cyprus in 1191. Rebellions continued across the small empire, often in the name of pretenders claiming to be Alexius II.

Genoese and Pisan corsair warfare became so damaging that Isaac finally made peace with them, restoring their Quarters. In 1185, while on campaign, Isaac's brother Alexius seized and blinded him, claiming the throne for himself.

Alexius III Angelus (1185–1203)

Alexius III Angelus was even less able to stop the decline of the empire. He was much more interested in court life and fortune telling.

More rebellions broke out, some in the name of Alexius II, others from the Bulgarians led by Kalojan, others supported by Turks. By 1201, much of the empire was in rebellion from the capital.

Alexius played the Italians off of each other, which was tolerated only because of the lucrative markets there. He and his patriarch opened negotiations with Pope Innocent III concerning differences, but the talks went nowhere.

In 1201, the son of Isaac II escaped Constantinople and fled to Germany, where his sister was married to Philip of Swabia. At Christmas, he met Boniface of Montferrat, the brother of Conrad and Rainier, who had recently become the leader of the Fourth Crusade, called by Innocent.

The Fourth Crusade

To avoid Byzantine troubles, the Crusaders planned to sail to the Holy Land and so contracted vessels from Venice. The inability to pay for the vessels led to a crusade wracked with poverty, defections, and lack of supplies.

In 1203, Alexius Angelus offered to join the Crusade with Byzantine forces, pay an enormous sum, and reunite the Churches if the crusaders would place him on the throne. The crusade, made up of equal portions Frankish knights and Venetian sailors, went to Constantinople.

After an attempt to scare them off, Alexius III was forced to flee from the crusaders. Isaac II was restored and Alexius IV was crowned. The failed attempt to pay the crusaders angered the people and the crusaders.

A massive fire that swept across Constantinople drove anti-Latin sentiments to their highest level. Isaac II died and Alexius IV was deposed. The new anti-Latin claimant, Alexius V Mourtzouphlus, took the throne.

In April 1204, the Fourth Crusade captured Constantinople and sacked it. The people believed it was a coup led by Boniface. Booty was immense. Relics were especially valued, notably the Horses of San Marco. Pope Innocent condemned the attack, but accepted its results.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What was the Latin Massacre of 1182?
2. Who did Isaac consider to be the greatest threat to his empire?

Suggested Reading

Queller, Donald E., and Thomas F. Madden. *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.

Other Books of Interest

Brand, Charles M. *Byzantium Confronts the West, 1180–1204*. London: Ashgate Publishing, 1992.

Madden, Thomas F. *Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice*. New ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.

Lecture 10: Struggle for Byzantium's Corpse, 1204–1261

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Michael Angold's *A Byzantine Government in Exile: Government and Society under the Lascaris of Nicaea (1204–1261)*.

A New Government

The Crusaders created a new government for the Latin Empire of Constantinople in a very Western way. Committees of Franks and Venetians elected Baldwin of Flanders to be the new emperor.

An assessment of the empire was made in order to partition it: three-eighths to the Venetians, three-eighths to the Franks, one-fourth to the emperor.

The neat partition, however, was never more than paper. The empire remained in rebellion, with four different men claiming to be emperor. Two of them, Alexius III and Alexius V, had actually been crowned.

Boniface believed that Thessalonica should belong to him, because it had once been promised to his brother. When his offer to trade his other allotments for Thessalonica were rejected, Boniface rebelled in the name of Manuel, the son of Isaac II. Boniface had earlier married Isaac's widow, Margaret.

Eventually, Boniface was pacified, selling his claim to Crete to the leader of the Venetians, Doge Enrico Dandolo, and taking Thessalonica. He began building his kingdom there.

Crusaders marched off to conquer land, competing with Byzantine governors and pretenders. All was chaos.

In 1205, Baldwin was captured by the Bulgarians and his brother, Henry, became emperor.

Balance of Power

After numerous battles and intrigues, the situation settled somewhat by 1210. Henry ruled Constantinople and Thrace, and his vassals ruled much of the rest of Greece.

Alexius, the emperor of Trebizond, controlled the Crimea and the southern shore of the Black Sea. Theodore Lascaris, the emperor of Nicaea, controlled much of western Asia Minor.

Michael Ducas ruled Epirus. All sought various accommodations with the pope in order to better their position.

An End to Schism?

Innocent was optimistic that this would end the schism and provide a united front in the crusades. Union talks were held frequently, but with little result.

Although Greek rulers were eager for union, their clergy and monks were not. Sticking points were filioque and diversions in practices. The Greeks considered the pope a heretic and would not place him in the diptychs.

Latins were upset over the purification of altars used by them. The Latin Empire would prove a drain on Europe's crusading energy.

Two Greek Successor States

As Trebizond faded, the two Greek successor states at Epirus and Nicaea began to grow. Epirus captured Thessalonica and Nicaea grabbed Thrace. Yet neither of the leaders was willing to work together to capture Constantinople, because they both wanted the throne.

In 1230, the ruler of Thessalonica, Theodore Ducas, invaded Bulgaria. He was defeated and much of his state collapsed.

John III Vatazes, the emperor at Nicaea, moved further into Europe, allying with and then defeating the Bulgarians, and capturing Thessalonica in 1246.

He was further helped by the invasion of the Mongols, who crushed the Turkish sultanate of Iconium. With Constantinople surrounded, John pressed negotiations with the pope for union that would hand over the city.

Although powerful, he feared a new crusade should he take Constantinople by force. In 1254, both he and Pope Innocent IV died.

Capture of Constantinople

Vatazes' son Theodore II ruled for four years before his young death, leaving his seven-year-old son John. The general, Michael Palaeologus, took the regency and in 1259 was crowned co-emperor.

Michael continued his negotiations with the pope and kept up pressure on Constantinople. In July 1261, Michael's general was sent with a small force to spy on the city.

The defenders were gone, staging an attack on a nearby island. They entered the city by night and captured it.

Michael rode triumphantly into Constantinople. Venice was removed. Genoa, who had assisted Michael, received their own outpost, Galata.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What effect did the Latin Empire have on Europe's crusading energy?
2. How was John III Vatatzes helped by the Mongols?

Suggested Reading

Angold, Michael. *A Byzantine Government in Exile: Government and Society under the Lascarids of Nicaea (1204–1261)*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

Other Books of Interest

Angold, Michael. *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081–1261*. New ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Fine, John V.A. *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994.

Lock, Peter. *The Franks in the Aegean, 1204–1500*. London: Longman Publishing Group, 1995.

Lecture 11: The Empire Reborn, 1261–1328

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Angeliki Laiou's *Constantinople and the Latins: The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II, 1282–1328*.

A Troubled Empire

Although he had restored Constantinople and much of the territory of the Byzantine Empire in 1200 and established what would be the longest dynasty in Roman history, Michael VIII still had considerable problems in 1261.

Successor states like Epirus, Thessaly, and Latins in the Peloponnese were still outside of his control. Pope Gregory IX was displeased that the city was taken by force.

Michael sent letters assuring him of his continued interest in union. After Charles of Anjou took the Kingdom of Two Sicilies in 1266, he began preparations for an attack on Michael to restore the Latin Empire.

Constantinople was a dilapidated shell of its former glory. Michael began building programs on churches and the walls, attempting to get people to return to the city.

Wishing his son, Andronicus, to succeed him, Michael had John IV Lascaris blinded. Patriarch Arsenius excommunicated the emperor.

Deep divisions remained. Many in Asia Minor refused to accept the deposition of the Lascarids. Latins and some local Greek lords refused to recognize Michael. Arsenites, who refused to accept the new patriarch, Joseph, denied Manuel's legitimacy. The Arsenite Schism ensued.

Council of Lyons (1274) and Its Aftermath

Charles of Anjou continued to prepare for an attack on the empire, capturing Durazzo and enlisting Albanians in preparation.

While his brother, Louis IX, lived he was forestalled. After Louis's death on crusade in 1270, Charles had a free hand.

In 1272, the new pope Gregory X called an ecumenical council to meet at Lyons in two years. He invited the emperor and patriarch to attend.

They sent delegates, who accepted full union, saving only the right to retain their rites. Michael attempted to enforce the council's canons.

He replaced Patriarch Joseph, who rejected the union, thus creating a new schism of Josephites. The monasteries refused to accept union. Wars of propaganda raged and in the end, the union was ignored.

In 1281, Pope Martin IV was elected. His patience with Michael was at an end. He excommunicated him and encouraged Charles of Anjou to capture Constantinople.

Venice allied with Charles. In desperation, Michael sent agents to Sicily, who spent freely to foment rebellion. The Sicilian Vespers, 1282, ended Charles' empire. Nevertheless, Michael held to union until his death later that year.

Andronicus II Palaeologus (1282–1328)

In his twenties, Andronicus saw that his father's union had done nothing to buy peace from the West and had caused many divisions in the East. He repudiated union and did not allow his father to be buried in holy ground.

At a council, the unionists were condemned and Patriarch Joseph was restored. This angered the pope and the West, but did not appease the Arsenites. It would not be until 1310, when all seemed lost, that the Arsenites would relent.

With so many enemies—Thessaly, Epirus, the Turkish emirates—Andronicus attempted to find better ways to defend the empire.

He debased the currency so much that the Venetians minted their own new coin, the ducat. He dismantled the navy, relying instead on the Genoese. This led to wars between Genoa and Venice, who had moved into the Black Sea.

Military service was increasingly replaced with monetary payments, increasing the empire's already high reliance on mercenaries.

As the Turks began to regroup, many of them did so under Osman I, who then defeated Byzantine forces in 1302 near Nicomedia. Osman would be the founder of the Ottoman Empire. Turkish forces poured into Byzantine territories in Asia Minor, causing a wave of refugees. Andronicus did not have the means to defend against them.

It was at this point that a large band of mercenaries from Aragon offered their services to the emperor at a highly inflated price. They called themselves the Grand Catalan Company.

Andronicus accepted the offer and made the leader, Roger de Flor, a Grand Duke. They defeated the Turks in 1303, but also ravaged the Byzantine countryside. They then retreated to Gallipoli to winter.

While there, more Catalans arrived and Roger demanded that they be hired as well. Andronicus accepted, although he was almost bankrupt. After naming Roger a Caesar, he coaxed them into attacking Asia Minor.

Roger agreed, but the situation was becoming extortionist. In 1305, Roger made a visit to Adrianople, where Andronicus's son, Michael, was stationed. Michael had Roger stabbed to death and his escort killed.

The Catalans responded by killing Byzantines at Gallipoli and crushing any attempts to stop them. They then pillaged across Thrace, stealing everything and selling people into slavery with little opposition. They brought Turks across at Gallipoli to help in the mayhem.

By 1310, they were moving south and had captured Athens from the Latins. All seemed lost.

The Catalans settled in their Duchy of Athens. Andronicus was able to rally, forcing them out of Europe. But the empire remained extremely weak. Asia Minor was largely gone except for the lone outpost of Philadelphia, one hundred miles from the nearest Byzantine border.

Renaissance

Despite all of these troubles, Byzantium was experiencing an artistic and intellectual renaissance in Constantinople. A new religious art made its debut, which can be seen most clearly in the Chora church today.

A movement of intellectuals began that sought to bring Latin learning into Greek circles. Scholars like Maximus Planudes and Demetrius Cydones began translating Latin works into Greek, such as the works of Thomas Aquinas.

The aged Andronicus had already crowned his son, Michael, and his grandson, Andronicus, as co-emperors to avoid dynastic problems. One night in 1370 young Andronicus's bodyguards killed a man who demanded to see him while he was in bed with a married noblewoman at her home.

The man turned out to be young Andronicus's brother Manuel. Their father, Michael, was so upset that he died soon after.

Andronicus II was so angry that he began to consider disinheriting his namesake. Young Andronicus fled to Adrianople, which he took, and his supporters proclaimed him Andronicus III.

Given Andronicus II's failures, it was not a hard sell. Andronicus was especially supported by his protector, a wealthy land-owner in Thrace, John Cantacuzenus.

From 1321 to 1328, the empire was divided between the two emperors. The divisions frequently flared up into warfare.

Finally, in 1328, Andronicus III was able to enter the city and Andronicus II abdicated. The empire in 1328, despite its capital, was weaker than the Empire of Nicaea in 1260.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. Why did Pope Martin IV excommunicate Michael VIII?
2. How did the Catalans respond after Michael had Roger stabbed to death?

Suggested Reading

Laiou, Angeliki. *Constantinople and the Latins: The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II, 1282–1328*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972.

Other Books of Interest

Geanakoplos, Deno J. *Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West, 1258–1282*. Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1973.

Lecture 12: The Final Decline, 1328–1391

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald M. Nicol's *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261–1453*.

Andronicus III Palaeologus (1328–1341)

Andronicus III Palaeologus inherited an empire with severe problems. Despite the efforts of Andronicus and his general John Cantacuzenus, the Ottoman Turks continued to push westward.

In 1331, Nicaea fell and, in 1337, Nicomedia was lost. Cantacuzenus came to terms with Ottomans and the other Turkish emirs, accepting the permanent loss of the territories.

He became friends with the Emir of Aydin, Umar, whom he looked to for support. The Serbs, Bulgarians, and Latin barons in the Balkans remained powerful, as did the Genoese among the Greek islands.

Realizing the desperate need for friends, Andronicus reopened union negotiations and begged for crusades against the Turks. Several Holy Leagues, consisting of Venice, the papacy, and the Knights of Rhodes, were launched.

Civil War

Andronicus died unexpectedly in his mid-forties. His son, John V, was only nine. John Cantacuzenus was given the regency by Andronicus.

When John marched south to take back the Peloponnese, a conspiracy of the empress Anna, the patriarch, and others removed Cantacuzenus as regent and recalled the army. What was left of the empire split into civil war.

The war raged across the Balkan peninsula, causing great damage. The Serbs and Bulgarians joined for their own purposes, hoping to acquire new lands and further weaken Byzantium.

Cantacuzenus turned to Umar, who sent him Turkish forces to fight for him. Later, the emir Orhan did the same.

Cantacuzenus married his daughter to Orhan. By 1346, Byzantium was no stronger than Serbia or Bulgaria. The Serbian leader, Stefan Dushan, had himself crowned emperor of the Romans. The Bulgarian leader, Alexander, likewise had himself crowned emperor of the Bulgarians and the Greeks.

Cantacuzenus in Adrianople had himself crowned emperor. Anna back in Constantinople was so poor that she had to hock the crown jewels to Venice.

The people of Thessalonica, sick of the whole mess, declared themselves an independent commune under the "Zealots."

After five years of warfare, Cantacuzenus finally slipped into Constantinople and took control of the weakened empire. He was crowned by the patriarch in St. Mary of Blachernae because the dome of Hagia Sophia had collapsed and was not yet repaired. Costume jewelry was used in place of the crown jewels in Venice.

John VI Cantacuzenus (1347–1354)

John VI Cantacuzenus was extremely able, but he had little to work with. His plans to push the Serbs back home were interrupted by the coming of the Black Death in 1347.

This hit coastal and urban Byzantium especially hard, probably killing one-third or more of the population. It went on to Europe where it caused similar devastation.

When the plague subsided, he managed to get Thessalonica back in 1350. He was determined to rebuild a Byzantine navy, but the Genoese in Galata burned it in the docks.

Cantacuzenus built another fleet, allied with Venice, and declared war on Genoa. Venice lost interest and Genoa fought to a standstill. Clearly, Byzantium was not in control of the waves.

In 1351, another civil war broke out when John V rebelled, demanding that Cantacuzenus hand over all power. John V was supported by Serbs and Bulgarians.

Cantacuzenus called on the Ottoman Turks, who sent him ten thousand men. They easily defeated John.

The Turks supported themselves by raiding Thrace and demanded additional payment to stop. Cantacuzenus paid them. Then, in 1354, an earthquake at Gallipoli brought down the fortifications of the city.

Orhan's son Suleiman captured the city and refortified it. Cantacuzenus attempted to pay them to leave, but they refused.

Thus the Turks acquired Gallipoli, and with it the gateway to Europe. The Byzantines were disgusted by events at Gallipoli, blaming it on Cantacuzenus' over-reliance on Turks. A coup sent him to the monastery, leaving young John V in power.

Despite Cantacuzenus's skill, he could not acquire sufficient legitimacy against the Palaeologus name.

John V

John V was twenty-three when he became emperor in December 1354. From his Italian mother, he had a Western focus, believing that the empire's only hope lay there.

He favored Genoa, giving away Chios and seeking closer relations. In a letter to Pope Innocent VI, he made plain that he was willing to unite the churches and become a Catholic himself in return for military support.

The pope and other Europeans were alarmed at the Turkish foothold in Europe. Various crusades were planned and executed, particularly along the Aegean coast, but John took no part in them.

Venice offered to forgive the emperor's enormous debt if he would give the island of Tenedos as a base for the anti-Turkish league. The emperor refused.

In 1364, John traveled to the court of King Louis of Hungary—an event unprecedented in Roman history. Louis was planning a crusade, but nothing came of their talks.

Count Amadeo of Savoy led a crusade that captured Gallipoli and returned it to the Byzantines. He urged John to go to Rome, where the popes had recently returned from Avignon, to seek help.

Despite this victory, the Turks still poured over into Europe. In 1369, they captured Adrianople, which they made their capital in the West.

John headed to Rome, where he professed his Catholicism. On the return journey, he was held as an insolvent debtor in Venice until his son, Manuel, could bail him out in 1371.

While he was away, the Turks overran much of the Balkans. Serbian and Bulgarian power was broken and their leaders became vassals of the now-sultan Murad.

Byzantium followed suit, becoming a vassal of the sultan. John's position as a vassal emperor was new for the Byzantine Empire. It put them completely within a much larger Ottoman Empire.

It would also bring them into closer contact with the Turkish system of male heirs and the harems that produced them.

In 1373, John's eldest son, Andronicus, joined up with one of Murad's sons to topple their fathers. The fathers defeated the sons. Murad blinded his son, who died of the wounds, and demanded that John do the same to Andronicus and his son.

John blinded his son in one eye only and only injured one eye of his grandson. The kindness was a mistake, for in 1376 the Genoese of Galata, angry that John was selling Tenedos to the Venetians, got Andronicus released from prison. With help from Murad and the Genoese, Andronicus took the capital.

He ordered the imprisonment of his father and younger brother, Manuel.

Andronicus IV Palaeologus

Andronicus IV Palaeologus immediately paid his debts, giving Tenedos to Genoa and Gallipoli back to the Turks. Venice declared war.

In 1379, John V and Manuel escaped to the court of Murad. In return for handing over Philadelphia, the sultan agreed to help them.

Venice ferried Turkish soldiers across the Bosphorus and put John back on the throne. Andronicus fled to Galata.

In a few years, more peace was made by all parties. But at the same time, the Turks continued to expand into the central Balkans.

Manuel Palaeologus left to govern Thessalonica. He attempted to resist the Turkish advance, but could get no support from his father or even Venice.

After a three-year siege, Thessalonica finally fell to the Turks in 1387.

By 1389, the Turks had conquered all of Bulgaria and were preparing to crush Serbia. Serbian princes made a last stand at Kosovo in a battle that took the sultan's life.

Nevertheless, the Turks won and captured Serbia. When Philadelphia refused to surrender to the new sultan, Bayezid, the latter demanded that Manuel be sent to him to help with the siege.

It was a clear demonstration of the power of the Turks. Bayezid openly boasted that he would be the sultan and make Constantinople his capital. With Manuel as a hostage, John V did whatever he was told. When John V died in 1391, only the faintest shadow of the old empire still survived.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. How did the Turks acquire Gallipoli?
2. What was the result of the conflict between John and Murad and their sons?

Suggested Reading

Nicol, Donald M. *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261–1453*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Other Books of Interest

Dennis, George T. *The Reign of Manuel II Palaeologus in Thessalonica, 1382–1387*. Rome: Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies, 1960.

Nicol, Donald M. *The Reluctant Emperor: A Biography of John Cantacuzene, Byzantine Emperor and Monk, c. 1295–1383*. New ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Lecture 13: The Fall of Rome, 1391–1453

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Steven Runciman's *The Fall of Constantinople, 1453*.

Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425)

By 1391, the Byzantine Empire consisted only of the capital, Constantinople, a few ports in Thrace, part of the Peloponnese, and a few islands. Even these areas were largely autonomous and under the vassalage of the Ottoman sultan. Given that the heir was a prisoner of the sultan, it appeared that the empire had come to an end.

Manuel II Palaeologus escaped from the sultan's court at Brusa and was crowned in Constantinople. He was forty years old, scholarly, and wise.

Displeased, Sultan Bayezid demanded an enormous annual tribute, Turkish officials resident in Constantinople, and the emperor's participation in the sultan's campaigns in Anatolia. Otherwise, his view was "shut the gates of your city and govern what lies behind them; for everything beyond the gates belongs to me."

Manuel wrote of his melancholy on seeing the ruins of the empire and conducted dialogues with a Persian scholar regarding the clear preference of God for Islam.

In 1392, the Russian church stopped commemorating the emperor in its liturgy, saying that he was no longer an emperor. Patriarch Antonius wrote a letter encapsulating the centuries-old perspective of the empire as ecumenical in all respects, even if other rulers have wrongly taken some of its lands.

The problem of a Church without an emperor would remain for Orthodoxy. In 1393, Bayezid summoned the Byzantine and Serbian leaders to meet with him. It was quickly leaked to them that they were all to be assassinated.

As it happened, Bayezid, who was unstable, decided against it and even gave them presents. This so frightened the leaders that they resolved no longer to respond to his summons.

When Manuel II ignored the sultan's summons in 1394, Bayezid ordered the naval blockade of Constantinople and began conquering what little remained of Byzantine lands. Shortages in the city became acute. They relied heavily on Venetian charity.

Crusades

King Sigismund of Hungary convinced both popes to call a crusade to aid Constantinople. The Crusade of Nicopolis, made up mostly of Hungarians, French, and Venetians, was the largest ever.

It was crushed by Bayezid near Nicopolis in 1396. Most of the crusaders were beheaded. Bayezid returned to Constantinople and began a full-scale siege of the city.

Additional crusades were called in the West and some troops and money did begin to flow. In 1399, one of the crusade leaders convinced Manuel to travel to Europe personally to raise funds and military aid. He agreed.

Manuel's tour in Europe was a public relations success. The Renaissance had created an appetite for Greek and Roman antiquity. He began in Italy, where he was warmly received everywhere. He probably met with the pope.

Times had changed. Westerners revered the emperor. He asked for aid, not in return for union, but simply because it was right. He arrived in Paris in 1400 and was entertained and toasted by King Charles VI.

In 1401, he visited England and received similar treatment from King Henry IV. He then spent another year in Paris, corresponding with European monarchs.

Manuel's trip had an impact on European fashion and perspectives of the East, but the enormous military aid that he was promised never materialized. Back in Constantinople, Bayezid had by 1402 captured everything outside of its walls and was preparing for the final assault.

Then came Timur the Lame (Tamerlane), a Turkish/Mongol ruler. He led massive Mongol armies into Anatolia.

Bayezid defied him, amassing a large army near Ankara. Timur defeated the Ottomans, captured Bayezid, and swept through Asia Minor. Then he left.

Christians across Europe invoked Prester John. The shattering of the Ottoman Empire gave a reprieve to the Byzantine Empire and to Europe.

Anatolia was awash in petty emirs newly liberated and sons of Bayezid competing for the throne.

Suleiman held Turkish power in Thrace, but he realized his extraordinary weakness. Fearing a new crusade, in 1403 he agreed to return to Byzantium a number of territories, including Thracian ports, the Peloponnesus, Aegean islands, and Thessalonica.

He further lifted the annual tribute, abolished the vassalage of the emperor, and even professed to hold the Balkan territories as a vassal to the emperor if he would support him.

Musa crossed over and attacked Suleiman in 1410. Manuel aided his vassal, but Musa won and strangled his brother. He then besieged Constantinople and Thessalonica.

Manuel supported a third brother, Mehmed, who in 1413 came across and defeated and killed Musa and restored the former arrangement with Byzantium.

Another brother, Mustafa, fled to Constantinople, where Manuel agreed to keep him.

Mehmed I then proceeded to consolidate power.

The Death of Manuel

In 1421, Manuel crowned his son, John, as co-emperor. Mehmed died shortly thereafter.

As Mehmed's son, Murad, began to assume power, John urged the release of Mustafa, who had promised to restore Gallipoli. Manuel opposed this, but relented.

Mustafa took Gallipoli and the European portion of the Turks' lands, but then refused to honor his promises to the Byzantines. Murad defeated Mustafa and prepared to wipe out the Byzantines once and for all. He laid siege to both Constantinople and Thessalonica.

Manuel's peace overtures were strongly rejected. After a four-month siege, complete with a new prophet, Murad was finally forced to leave when the Byzantines supported his last remaining brother in rebellion in Anatolia.

The legend of the Angel on the Wall began to gain more currency. When Murad finally put down the rebellion, he made a truce, although the emperor had to agree to pay an annual tribute.

Already bed-ridden and largely out of power, Manuel II died in 1425. His prayer was granted: The empire did not fall under his reign.

John VIII Palaeologus (1425–1448)

Murad captured Thessalonica in 1430, leading John to the inescapable conclusion that only the West could salvage the Byzantine Empire.

The Council of Ferrara/Florence occurred in 1437 to 1439. Pope Eugenius IV called an ecumenical council in Ferrara to look at Christendom's problems. John VIII, Patriarch Joseph II of Constantinople, and a large body of leading Byzantine clergy attended. Representatives were also sent from Russia, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem.

Over the course of two years the council moved to Florence. Matters of rites and practices were allowed to differ. The filioque was left ambiguous. All agreed, however, that union existed under the obedience and communion with the See of Rome.

To celebrate the union of the Church, the pope called a new crusade against the Turks. The union with Rome was strongly opposed back home. The Russians repudiated it, as did the patriarchs in the East.

Despite John's best efforts, he could get only a portion of the clergy to accept it, thus causing schism again. Despite the failure of the union, Pope Eugenius sent a large crusade. This large crusade, composed of Hungarians, Wallachians, and Poles, was crushed by Murad at Varna in 1444.

John died in 1448.

Constantine XI Palaeologus (1448–1453)

The younger brother of John, Constantine was in his forties when he took the throne. In 1451, Murad died and was succeeded by his son, young Mehmed II.

Mehmed professed peace, but he immediately started building a fortification just north of Constantinople on the European side of the Bosphorus that was

obviously designed for an all-out assault. He hired a Hungarian engineer who built cannons for him.

Constantine became a Catholic himself and proclaimed the union in Constantinople. He begged the West for help.

The pope sent troops, as did Genoa and Venice. Altogether, the city was defended by around five thousand Byzantines and three thousand foreigners.

In April 1453, Mehmed began his siege, first offering to spare the inhabitants' lives if they surrendered. They refused.

The siege lasted for two months with around-the-clock bombardment. Mehmed brought ships overland into the Golden Horn.

On May 28, 1453, it was clear that the city could not hold out much longer. A Mass, the last ever, was held in Hagia Sophia among all the Christians.

The following day, the wall was breached. Constantine XI died in the melee.

The Turks killed the Italians and enslaved most of the Byzantines, many of whom had holed up in Hagia Sophia, expecting a miracle. Thus the event for which Scipio Aemilianus wept almost sixteen centuries earlier came to pass. Rome had fallen.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. What was the result of the Crusade of Nicopolis?
2. How were Bayezid and the Ottomans defeated?

Suggested Reading

Runciman, Steven. *The Fall of Constantinople, 1453*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

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Barker, John. *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1969.

Nicol, Donald M. *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261–1453*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Lecture 14: Aftermath and Legacy

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Donald M. Nicol's *The Immortal Emperor: The Life and Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of the Romans*.

The Last Remnant of Free Christendom

The fall of Constantinople reverberated across the Christian world. Europeans now saw a world in which nothing stood between them as the last remnant of free Christendom and the ever-growing powers of Islam.

Numerous crusades were planned, but none materialized. Greeks under Turkish domination could still hold to the fact that Constantinople, its patriarch, and its emperor were still free. Now that was gone.

Invariably, laments were penned that referred to the sins of the Greeks and the later restoration of the empire. Orthodoxy became the last vestige of the empire, to which they clung in hopes that it would return.

Russians, who had already lost respect for the empire, saw their own kingdom as the natural successor. Moscow became the Third Rome.

From Christianity to Islam

Mehmed II saw the conquest of Constantinople as the passing of the greatness of Rome from Christianity to Islam. He vowed to reunite Rome and Constantinople under his rule.

Aside from the destruction of the Column of Justinian, he worked to preserve, restore, and repopulate his new capital. Hagia Sophia became a mosque, although the patriarch, who would henceforth be chosen by the sultan, was given other churches.

For the Ottoman Empire, the future was bright. Constantinople was once again a teeming capital of a powerful empire.

Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, and other Christians learned to live under Turkish rule. As *dhimmis*, they were required to pay a head tax and were excluded from offices and rights reserved for Muslims.

The Greek Orthodox Church, still headquartered at Constantinople, continued to operate, although under the supervision of the sultan. Patriarchs were appointed or approved by the sultan. Even today, patriarchs must be Turkish citizens.

Those under Turkish rule were subject to the *devshirmeh*, a "tax" of boys seven to twelve years of age for the sultan's Janissary corps.

Numerous myths and legends began to spread among Greeks and even Turks concerning the eventual restoration of the Byzantine (Roman) Empire.

Among these were those of the Sleeping Emperor and the Golden Gate and the Interrupted Mass.

As the centuries passed and Ottoman power declined in relationship to the West, Greeks were able to achieve positions of great authority in the Turkish government. Disagreements arose about the best way to restore the empire—from within or without.

Two elements, both of European origin, changed the situation. Nationalism in the nineteenth century held that national groups should be independent. Phil-Hellenism extolled the beauty and richness of classical Greek civilization.

To this mix the Greeks added the Great Idea: a desire to rebuild the Byzantine Empire.

The Greek War of Independence, 1821

With European support, the Greeks carved out a new state, which they called Greece (Hellas). This garnered European support and reflected the fact that Constantinople was still in Turkish hands.

But the people saw their country as a rebirth. Even the kings were called *basileus*, or emperor.

Under British protection, the Greeks pursued the Great Idea, supporting Greek nationalist rebellions in Ottoman lands. Some of these were successful.

The Balkan Wars broke out in 1912 when Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria declared war on the Ottoman Empire. Greece captured new lands, including Thessalonica.

The Ottoman Empire collapsed after World War I. The Allies held Constantinople, unsure what to do with the strategic port.

Greece launched an attack on Smyrna and began to conquer Anatolia. This rallied the Turks under Kemal Ataturk, who defeated the Greeks and removed them from Asia Minor. Ataturk proclaimed a Turkish Republic with its capital at Ankara.

Constantinople, now renamed Istanbul, remained in Turkish hands. Population exchanges took place in 1923: 1.3 million Greeks and 300,000 Turks were deported.

Denied the restoration of their empire, Greeks in the twentieth century increasingly blamed the West for their problems. This was made especially plain during the 2001 visit of Pope John Paul II to Athens.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Questions

1. How did Mehmed II view the conquest of Constantinople?
2. What was the Greeks' Great Idea?

Suggested Reading

Nicol, Donald M. *The Immortal Emperor: The Life and Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of the Romans*. New ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

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- Ostrogorsky, George. *History of the Byzantine State*. London: Blackwell Publishing, 1980.
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- Bassett, Sarah. *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Cameron, Averil. *The Later Roman Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.
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Suggested Readings for Individual Lectures (continued):

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Toynbee, Arnold J. *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

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These books are available online through www.modernscholar.com or by calling Recorded Books at 1-800-636-3399.