



UC Davis Model
United Nations
Presents

Aggie MUN V

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Head Chair: Cameron Lallana
Crisis Director : Matt Craig



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Distinguished delegates:

Welcome to the Cabinet of Basil crisis committee at AggieMun 2018!

My name is Cameron Lallana and I have been given the honor of being your head chair this conference. I am a fourth-year International Relations major who specializes in Russian studies and national security policy. MUN has been a large part of my life for the past two years, during which I've staffed several events and served as a head chair for the 2017 DMUNC conference. Outside of MUN, I also work at the Davis radio station (where I serve as the co-host of The Cycle News Hour, a host of After Hours, and the Division Head of International News), and as a clerk in the Davis Unitrans business office. I don't care for the West Wing.

Since Eastern European and Middle Eastern history are topics of particular interest to me, I have found the preparation for this committee both illuminating and fascinating as I have learned about the origin and evolution of certain features of these areas which still exist in or affect these regions today. Given that the Byzantine era of the Roman empire is often overshadowed by its republican-turned-imperial western predecessor—as is much the same with other powers in this part of the world at this time—it will be interesting to see where and how all the delegates involved will focus their attentions.

If you have any questions about the committee, the topic at hand, or regarding procedure, don't hesitate to contact me at: ctlallana@ucdavis.edu

See you all in committee!

Cameron Lallana



LETTER FROM THE CRISIS DIRECTOR

Greetings Delegates,

My name is Matthew Craig. I am a senior at UC Davis with a major in communications. For me, having a clear and effective communication style is the easiest and most important skill that people need. I'm a man of details, presentation, and style. I like to think Model United Nations is what made me the person I am today. I can genuinely say that the experiences I have had has changed my life for the better.

My career in Model United Nations has been long, often difficult, but more rewarding than I can fit into this letter. I started off wide-eyed and bushy-tailed as a new delegate at Riverside City College's MUN team before I transferred to UC Davis. While there, I fell in love with the creativity of speech craft, the tension of negotiation, and the thrill of the competition. I was fortunate enough to be a part of a team that had massive school support and a faculty advisor who fought tooth and nail for resources to send our team across the world. I was a delegate for a semester before I worked my way to officer, then Head Delegate shortly after. Hosting regional conferences on my school's behalf. I ran the team for about 3 years.

In this time, I had attended a mix roughly 30 local conferences and skirmishes with other schools. I have competed at the National Model United Nations conference in New York where our team was recognized with highest honors as a team as well as for position papers three years in a row. In between our New York conferences we competed internationally. I had amazing experiences competing in the Czech Republic and as the adviser for Japan. At the Harvard National Model United Nations conference is where I was first introduced to the ruleset in use at this conference. It has certainly come in handy for transitioning to a new school with a new system. Since entering my senior year, I've slowed down a bit with MUN but still help where I can. This leads to the crisis committee at hand.

I've ran and designed a few crises before. What I've done much more of is run Dungeons and Dragons campaigns for a decade. The skillset is the same, the rules are different. Given I won't be sitting in the room watching a dozen people roll dice, there's a few points I want to emphasize. First and foremost, I hope for everyone to enjoy themselves and have a good time. I want everyone to have as much freedom in creativity as possible but there's a catch. The more wild or insane the plan, the more detail I expect in how you will accomplish it. Consider it like a monkey's paw wish. If you aren't as detailed as possible there will be hilarious back firing. I want the who/what/when/where/how and everything in between. Hitting those marks will



drastically increase your chances of things going well, regardless of actual logic. Second, as tempting as it is to try and kill each other's characters, this won't fly until the final day of committee and even then, it's going to have to be perfect circumstances for it to work effectively. Focus on bolstering your own powers and weakening others as opposed to, 'I send my servant to stab him.' Third, don't be afraid to try complex or complicated plans that are outside the box. The more creative the plan, the more willing I am to help you make the plan work behind the scenes.

It is my wish that this committee becomes an enjoyable and memorable experience for everyone involved. Have fun, be creative, and get ready for all hell to break loose,

Matthew Craig



HISTORY OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

Evolutionary Genesis

Whatever ideas books may have given us of the greatness of that people, their accounts of the most flourishing state of Rome fall infinitely short of the picture of its ruins. I am convinced that there never before existed such a nation, and I hope for the happiness of mankind there never will again.

—Edward Gibbon

The term ‘Byzantine’ empire, though commonly recognized today as its own *imperium*, is most accurately described as a classification created by historians; ‘Byzantine’ was not a descriptor used by the so-called Byzantine people, notes Professor Ostrogorsky, who rather “called themselves Romans...and [whose] Emperor considered himself as a Roman ruler, the successor and heir of the old Rome”.¹ We, however, consider the changes in power structures and culture to be so drastic that the Byzantine empire should be classified separately from the earlier Rome-centric era.² Creating a clear line of demarcation between the two empires, though, can be somewhat difficult, as the Byzantine empire came into existence over several centuries, the result of reform upon reform attempting to reinvigorate the unstable Roman empire.

Throughout much of the 3rd century, Rome experienced such tumult from a variety of sources in the period between 235 and 284, experiencing civil and extra-state war, economic downturns, and a near-continuous revolving door of Emperors. By the time Emperor Diocletian took the throne, it was clear that major changes were needed if he wanted to pull Rome out of its tailspin. This perhaps contributed to his decision to split the empire administratively in 286 CE when he appointed the military officer Maximian as *augustus*, or co-Emperor, to reign over the Western

¹ Ostrogorsky, 1969, p.28

² The unique culture of the Byzantines is described by Professor Ostrogorsky as a combination of Hellenistic culture, Christian religion, and the Roman imperial framework (1962, p.27).



Roman empire while keeping the East as his own dominion. Diocletian also revamped, expanded, and modernized the administrative and legal state, changes that would be continued by his ultimate successor, Constantine the 1st.

Constantine the 1st, also known as Constantine the Great, came to be the lone regent some number of years after Diocletian abdicated power. Although Diocletian had created an official system of succession, his retirement was followed by twenty years of power struggles that concluded, perhaps fatefully, with a siege of the city of Byzantium.³ Constantine, then the *augustus* of the West, defeated the Eastern *augustus* Licinius in 323 CE, becoming the lone autocrat of Rome⁴. It was during his stewardship of the empire that two of the most characteristic foundations of Byzantium were laid: firstly, the transfer of the capital city from Rome to the city Byzantium (later renamed Constantinople); and secondly, his conversion Christianity, which had the effect of popularizing the religion.⁵ Though it may seem quite odd for the capital of the Roman empire to be moved out of the city of Rome, the move was perhaps inevitable. Rome, notes Oman, had long been a “most inconvenient residence for the Emperors...handicapped by its bad harbours and separated from the rest of the empire by the passes of the Alps;” preceding Emperors to Constantine had long neglected the city, either preoccupied with lengthy military campaigns or simply preferring to live in other sections of the empire—in fact, according to Suetonius, a Roman historian, even Julius Caesar had wanted to move the capital to the the city of Ilion, formerly known as Troy.⁶

³ Each co-Emperor (*augustus*) was to choose a subordinate Emperor (*caesar*) who could succeed them, a system called *tetrarchy* (Vasiliev, 1952, p.62); Oman, 1892, p.11-12

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Vasiliev, 1952, p.44

⁶ Oman, 1892, p.16; as cited in Vasiliev, 1952, p.58; see Appendix A for more information about Byzantium at the time.



The word *Byzantine* in common usage today refers to systems with a confusing and kafkaesque character; although it is unclear when the association began, this particular association was widely propagated by a variety of prominent intellectuals: Edward Gibbon, Montesquieu, and Voltaire being perhaps the most widely known today⁷. Their writings, says Professor Herrin, created a “stereotype of Byzantium [as a] tyrannical government by effeminate, cowardly men and corrupt eunuchs, obsessed with hollow rituals and endless, complex and incomprehensible bureaucracy,” though these men alone are far from enough to fully explain the equation between the word and the meaning.⁸ This notion, though, does have hold a grain of truth, as lies often do. The complex bureaucracy of the Byzantine empire was one of its most characteristic features, and was in a constant state of evolution through the empire’s ages.

Byzantine Institutions

Although the bureaucratic state was ever-evolving, the most significant changes were made right at the conception of the Byzantine era: during the reign of Diocletian, and, to a lesser extent, Constantine. Among the most notable was Diocletian’s division of Rome’s largest provinces into smaller units—adding an unknown number of provinces to Rome—and his careful separation of “civil and military organization, [and] central and provincial administration.”⁹ These alterations were “unmistakably” done with the intent to solidify his grasp on the empire, by undercutting the massive amount of power that some governors in larger provinces (who commanded both the local armies and bureaucracies) posed to the Tetrarchy.¹⁰

⁷ Herrin, 2007, p. ;Gibbon, 1952, 17.

⁸ Herrin, 2007, p.

⁹ Although there are a variety of sources which give us the exact numbers of Roman provinces, these documents are not dated and thus are unable to tell us exactly when the empire possessed them. It is possible that newer studies than the cited works have been able to date these sources by some method; Ostrogorsky, 1969, p. 34

¹⁰ Additionally, it was this massive amount of power to the Emperor that perhaps incentivized the creation of the ‘four Emperor’ model to administer to the many prefectures of the Roman imperium; Ibid.



Constantine's restructuring had much the same effect (though he assumed power as a singular Emperor): among the most important was the separation of military and civil authority to separate administrators, the many new offices that oversaw various tasks, and the continued relegation of the Constantine senate to a mere advisory body.¹¹ All of these changes, more than simply reorganizing an overstretched empire, had the effect of centralizing power in the throne; though Imperial, not republican, Rome had already been the default mode of the empire's political life since Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon in 49 BCE, the matter of solidifying and maintaining control against internal foes remained an issue of great importance for Roman/Byzantine Emperors.

Conflict, Loss, and the Iconoclast Crisis: From 340 CE to 843

Although Diocletian had sought to put an end to the issue of succession from one Emperor to the next—and thus prevent conflict among aggrieved siblings, or the influence of powerful governors or the Senate—the tetrarchy, as Ostrogorsky puts it, “was all too logical in its conception and it caused endless civil wars.”¹² When it came time to pass on the throne, Constantine reverted to succession by way of hereditary monarchy, passing on the East to his son Constantius and the West to his eldest Constantine (though the latter soon died and was replaced by Constans).¹³ Though the exact passage of power between Emperors would vary through the coming periods—ranging from dynastic to revolutionary—certain features were maintained: the division between East and West would only continue to grow over time and the system of co-Emperors was commonly employed thereafter.

¹¹ Перестройка, is the word for restructuring in Russian, if anyone was wondering. Does anybody read the footnotes? Can I leave as many inane thoughts as I want without fear that anyone will notice?; Ostrogorsky, 1969, p.35-39

¹² Ostrogorsky, 1969, p.34

¹³ Addendum: Constantine II was the eldest among Constantine's living sons; Ostrogorsky, 1969, p.39



The following five-hundred years of Byzantine history, simplified to the point of being reductive, could be described as development driven by external and internal warring, theological strife between the Roman and Byzantine churches, and bureaucratic and juridical development. Of course, there was also more than its fair share of palace intrigue as Emperors and pretenders to the throne fought for power—but this is hardly unique to Roman history, let alone the story of empires. It was primarily in those three areas that the ‘character’ of Byzantium became truly distinct from its cultural predecessor.

Over the years, the empire had to content not only with constant challenges from various Arab powers, but also other incursions by the Huns, Slavs, Persians, and Germanic peoples; this constant warmaking created an ebb and flow of power for Byzantium.¹⁴ Both halves of the Empire had their fair share of conflict, though the West was undoubtedly hit much worse by conflict: during this period much of its territory was lost, and reconquered and lost again, and even the city of Rome itself was sieged and sacked more than once. In perhaps one of its more embarrassing episodes in the late fourth century, the Gothic invasion penetrated the empire so deeply that the sitting Emperor was able to make peace only by giving the Goths land with complete “autonomy, exemption from taxation, and a high rate of pay for their military services;” this, in effect, turned a hostile Germanic invasion into a peaceful one.¹⁵

One of the more notable theological issues of the era—one of many factors that continued to drive the Western and Eastern churches apart—was the Iconoclast crisis that would ebb and flow throughout the 7th century. Deeply influenced by Hellenistic sensibilities of worship, the Byzantine empire had a proud tradition of representing their faith visually in architecture, interior

¹⁴ Ostrogorsky, 1969, p.57, 79, 82

¹⁵ Ostrogorsky, 1969, p.52-53



design, and, especially, iconography. Centuries onward from these series of crises, emissaries of Prince Vladimir of Kyiv would be brought to rapture by the sight of Byzantine churches, writing:

the Greeks led us to the buildings where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss to describe it. We know only that God dwells there among men and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations.¹⁶

It was this precise beauty that some found distasteful. Among them, at varying times, were emperors and metropolitans, who would engage in repressive campaigns against icons and their supporters in the Church in the 7th and 8th century. Although the issue mostly drew to a close at the 787 council of Nicene which declared icons to be holy, there were still some iconoclast remnants which waited in the wings for their time.

For the sake of brevity—or at least what little possibility of it is left—the following period will be simplified into an explanation of the reign of Michael the Third.

The reign of Michael 3rd

[His uncle Bardas] brought up the young Michael in the most reckless and unconscientious manner, teaching him his own vices of drunkenness and debauchery. Michael was an apt pupil, and ere he reached the age of twenty-one had become a confirmed dipsomaniac.¹⁷ History knows him by the dishonourable nickname of “Michael the Drunkard”.¹⁸

As noted by many historians of this era, the rule of Michael III can safely be segmented into three eras: the regency of his mother Theodora, the regency of his uncle Bardas, and his own regency. It should be noted, before delving into further discussion, that although Michael has

¹⁶ Billington, 1970, 6

¹⁷ An archaic word for alcoholic.

¹⁸ Oman, 1892.



since gained a reputation as a disinterested ruler and debaucherous drunk that contributed little to the Empire, this is something of an exaggeration; of course, this scholarship has also produced several counter-trending narratives which praise Michael as the real progenitor of the conditions which made Basil 1st such a successful ruler. This later tendency, too, takes the ball too far. The truth of the matter, and of Michael's character, is a fair sight more complex and requires an understanding of *who* exactly held power at different times in his reign.

Because Michael was only 2 when he took the Byzantine throne, it was first necessary for his mother to rule for him. Theodora, with the support of her uncle Sergios and minister Theoktistos, ruled the empire for thirteen years. In this time, she managed to put an end to institutional iconoclasy by deposing opposing clergy members and replacing them with a firm iconodules; additionally, she also replenished the Byzantine treasury, and oversaw military campaigns against the Bulgars and Paulicians. In the end, it would be her attempts to maintain power that would bring her downfall: she neglected Michael's education to keep him from being fit for power; this had the side-effect of leaving him quite influenceable, something his uncle Bardas took advantage of when he brought Michael under his wing. Soon after Theodora nipped a budding romance of Michael's by attempting to marry him to another Eudokia Dekapolitissa, he and Bardas made their move. They deposed Theodora, sending her to a convent where she would later die, though not before outliving her son.

After her overthrow, Bardas effectively took control of the Empire as Michael, at fifteen, was still unfit for rule. Though Bardas has often been described as a deeply self-centered and overly-ambitious man, his abilities as an administrator are not disputed: during his tenure, he founded a school and supported the work of many missionaries and academics, including the



legendary Cyril and Methodius. His generals also won many decisive victories against the Abbasids in the East, and put great effort into the christianization of Bulgaria. He also deposed the Eastern patriarch Ignatius, fatefully installing Photius (later known as Saint Photius the Great) in his place.¹⁹ This success, however, was not enough to guarantee Bardas this power in perpetuum.

The rise of Basil the 1st is perhaps best described as legendary, in multiple senses of the word. His background, subject to no shortage of scrutiny, is a matter of some contention. From the matter of his heritage to how he spent his youngest years, disputes rage. What is known, though, is that Basil's long path to Byzantine—after earning the favor of a noblewoman while in the service of a relative of Bardas's—led to the palace after Basil impressed Michael with his horse-taming and wrestling abilities. The two grew very close—Michael even had Basil marry Eudokia Ingerina, his favorite mistress. And as Basil's influence with Michael grew, he began to turn the tables on Bardas, turning the conspirator into the conspired-against. After ten years as *de facto* regent, Bardas's path came to an end when he was murdered by Basil, with Michael's approval, during a campaign against a Saracen stronghold in crete. The position of Caesar now free, Basil managed to use the favor he had curried with Michael to maneuver his way into the position of co-emperor. From there it was only a matter of time before the ambitious Basil would begin to feel threatened by Michael's growing closeness to another courtier, and began a plan to gain sole control of the empire. One night, after an evening partying, Basil and a cohort entered the chambers of the drunken emperor and ended his reign with a sword.

¹⁹ Even after Basil came to power and returned Ignatius to his throne, Photius remained a person who Basil was highly dependent on in academic and religious matters. Given that he was even the tutor to Basil's children, it is perhaps no surprise that Photius was quickly re-installed as patriarch after Ignatius's death.





CURRENT SITUATION

In the wake of the assassination of Michael the 3rd, the peasant turned co-emperor Basil has ascended to the throne as the *basilius* of the Byzantine Empire. Luckily for the stability of the Empire, Michael's debauched and impious tendencies in addition to his neglect of the civil service left him unpopular enough with the Church, Constantine bureaucrats, and general populace that Basil's ascension-by-sword has been accepted with relatively little challenge to his legitimacy. This does not mean that he has been received with open arms, though; the sense of alienation Michael's rule engendered has persisted, leaving a lingering distrust of the potentially capricious nature of the throne. Domestically, this creates a difficult path for Basil to walk as he must both set himself apart from Michael to shake the association of years of co-rule while also keeping the favor of the Church and bureaucracy, which both possess many elements that came to power during Michael's rule. The people of Constantinople are ready for a new regent to lead them into the future—and Basil must prove to them that he is that emperor.

Compounding these—and more—domestic issues is the matter of management of an Empire in relation to its peers. Although the Abbasid caliphate has been fought to a standstill after the defeat of Mutasim, it, like any good Empire, still covets the properties of their neighbors, and especially those of Byzantium's. Their power stretches in scope from Antioch in Arabia to Carthage in Northern Africa—and they can strike anywhere from Asia Minor to the Italian peninsula. The threats do not stop there—the Bulgars to the north might be enemy or friend, still choosing between friendly Orthodox Christianity and the estranged brother to the West, Roman Catholicism.



These are only some of the issues on Basil's plate as he comes into his own as a regent. As his courtiers, friends, and family, you all have a duty to your emperor and your empire to ensure that he and his ventures are successful; not only does a rising tide lift all of your boats, but there is also no way to ensure that your position is secure in the event of a coup. Of course, though you and your cohort all have the same goal, there is more than one way to skin a cat. There is no reason that your fortunes shouldn't grow with the empire's. After all, Basil's fortune was secured by faithful service to Michael III—well, that and more than a little bit of skillful subterfuge.



SURROUNDING COUNTRIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS



The Byzantine Empire in 814 BCE

Although the Byzantine Empire has been experiencing a military revival in the years leading up to Basil's reign, primarily driven by several successful generals under Michael III—including his uncle Bardas and the general Petronas—there are no shortage of factions which still seek to conquer land or challenge Byzantine authority. Though not every foe poses a military threat, it would be prudent to keep them all in mind as Basil interacts with them. As the Mongols know well, an army is but one of many instruments that can be used to defeat an opponent.

The Abbasid Caliphate

The Abbasid Caliphate's relationship with Byzantium has been long and adversarial. Since the days of the now nearly defunct Umayyad Emirate, Byzantine emperors have had near constant on-and-off clashes with various Arab powers, a status quo that continued quite readily



with the ascension of the Abbasid Dynasty in the mid-8th century. Like all other empires, the Abbasid Caliphate is subject to the winds of history and has been experiencing a period of relative decline, as the loss of Caliph authority and stress of administering to such a large empire has led to a greater devolution of power into the hands of local governors, backed by their own troops and revenue-streams. Short of the glory of their Golden Age they might be, the Abbasids are still a powerful and imperial force to be reckoned with, especially since they have little love for those in the seats of power in Constantinople.

The Paulicians

Originating in the 7th century, the Paulicians are a divergent Christian sect that believe in a dual godhead, the evil God of the world that is and the good God of the world that is to come; Jesus Christ as a part of the world that is, therefore, could not be the good God made into flesh. Thus, they continue to wait. It is unclear who the 'Paul' that the Paulicians are named after. This sect was largely suppressed under the rules of Constantine II and Justinian II in the late 7th century, but has since been revived in the south of Asia Minor. Currently lead by Sergius-Tychius, the Church emerged from the extensively attempted purges of Empress Theodora and her son Michael III relatively unscathed. There are whisperings that the sect has even managed to re-establish itself in the heart of the Empire, Constantinople, although it is not clear whether or not these rumors are true.

The Bulgars

Traditionally a semi-nomadic people, the Bulgar empire was 'established,' so to speak, in 681 when the Bulgars moved to the Balkans and secured their right to the land by defeating the Byzantine army led by Constantine IV. As they established their empire over the next two



centuries, the Bulgars developed a complex relationship with Byzantium. Sometimes friends, sometimes enemies, the relationship between the two has veered from war to alliance against a third party to war again, rinse and repeat.

Although the Bulgars are currently on friendly terms with the Byzantine empire, the court would do well to be wary and welcoming in equal measures. Emperor Michael, formerly known as Boris, was on good terms with the Byzantines during the reign of Michael III—both his godfather and the man from whom he took his baptismal name—but has been somewhat cooler, if still cordial toward the new Byzantine regent. Given the utility the Bulgars have provided in the past and that a hostile Bulgar power would leave Byzantine more or less surrounded by enemies, it would be advantageous for Basil to re-establish himself in their good graces. Compounding the complexity of the problem is the recent Bulgar adoption of Christianity. In the years since, Michael has wavered between gaining the favor of the Western and Eastern Churches, trying to avoid being overly beholden to a distant center of power. If the Bulgars were to ultimately turn to the Western Church, it would be a major loss of face for the Patriarch Photius and would make cohabitation with the Bulgars more difficult down the road.

Kievan Rus'

Led by the varangian Rurik, the Rus' are a people only recently, tenuously, and incompletely united under one banner. And before 860, they and the Byzantines had no major contact—a fact which changed suddenly and violently when a contingent of the Rus' laid waste to the Byzantine countryside. In response to this, Photius dispatched the monks Cyril and Methodius to act as missionaries among the Slavic peoples, a task which they achieved with great success to the chagrin of the Western Church. Their standardization of the Slavic languages



into Old Church Slavonic and creation of the Glagolitic writing system (which would later evolve into modern Cyrillic) brought literacy to a much greater mass of people, creating a wide audience for Cyril and Methodius's translations of the Greek bible and other documents.

Currently, there is little in the way of a formal relationship between Byzantium and Kievan Rus', outside of church influence.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- 1. Given that the empire is still in a time of transition, and a vulnerable one at that, how can you help to ensure that your position at the foot of autocratic power is secure?**
- 2. This question, of course, does not exist in a vacuum: your position is only as secure as Basil's, so what threats to his power exist, within and without the Empire?**
- 3. At the same time, Basil is still a young monarch. Perhaps his rule may not be as favorable to you as you would wish; perhaps it will be more so. Might there be a way to ensure a better state of affairs?**
- 4. Just as Basil came to the throne by way of the sword, others may be planning a change of lordship through force. Keep this possibility in mind.**



APPENDIX A: BLOCK QUOTE

Byzantium, which had not yet fully recovered from the severe destruction caused by Septimius Severus, was at that time a mere village and occupied only part of the cape extending to the Sea or Marmora. In 324 A.D. Constantinople decided upon the foundation of a new capital and in 325 the construction of the main buildings was begun. Christian legend tells that the Emperor, with spear in his hand, was outlining the boundaries of the city when his courtiers, astonished by the wide dimensions planned for the capital, asked him, "How long, our Lord, will you keep going?" He answered, "I shall keep on until he who walks ahead of me will stop." This was meant to indicate that some divine power was leading him.

...

Constantine, with the insight of a genius, appraised all the advantages of the position of the city, political as well as economic and cultural. Politically, Constantinople, or, as it was often called, the "New Rome," had exceptional advantages for resisting external enemies. It was inaccessible from the sea; on land it was protected by walls. Economically, Constantinople controlled the entire trade of the Black Sea with the Aegean and the Mediterranean seas and was thus destined to become the commercial intermediary between Europe and Asia. Finally, in the matter of culture, Constantinople had the great advantage of being situated close to the most important centers of Hellenistic culture, which under Christian influence resulted in a new Christian-Greco-Roman, or "Byzantine," culture.²⁰

We are at present qualified to view the advantageous position of Constantinople, which appears to have been formed by nature for the centre and capital of a great monarchy. Situated in the forty-first degree of latitude, the Imperial city commanded from her seven hills the opposite shores of Europe and Asia; the climate was healthy and temperate, the soil fertile, the harbour secure and capacious, and the approach on the side of the continent was of small extent and easy defence. The Bosphorus and Hellespont may be considered as the two gates of Constantinople, and the prince who possessed those important passages could always shut them against a naval enemy and open them to the fleets of commerce. The preservation of the eastern provinces may in some degree be ascribed to the policy of Constantine, as the barbarians of the Euxine, who in preceding

²⁰ Vasiliev, 1952, p.59-60



age had poured their armaments into the heart of the Mediterranean, soon desisted from the exercise of piracy and despaired of forcing this insurmountable barrier. When the gates of the Hellespont and Bosphorus were shut, the capital still enjoyed within their spacious enclosure every production which could supply the wants or gratify the luxury of its numerous inhabitants. The seacoasts of Thrace and Bithynia, which languish under the weight of Turkish oppression, still exhibit a rich prospect of vineyards, of gardens, and of plentiful harvests; and the Propontis has ever been renowned for an inexhaustible store of the most exquisite fish, that are taken in their stated seasons without skill and almost without labour. But when the passages of the straits were thrown open for trade, they alternately admitted the natural and artificial riches of the North and South, of the Euxine and of the Mediterranean. Whatever rude commodities were collected in the forests of Germany and Scythia, as far as the sources of the Tanais and the Borysthenes; whatsoever was manufactured by the skill of Europe or Asia; the corn of Egypt, and the gems and spices of the farthest India, were brought by varying winds into the port of Constantinople, which for many ages attracted the commerce of the ancient world.²¹

²¹ Gibbon, 1952, 330-331



Characters

Niketas Ooryphas. **Droungarios tou ploimos** - δρουγγάριος τοῦ πλοῖμου.

The Commander of the central fleet, stationed in Constantinople. A commoner by birth, Niketas has always made his fortune with a mixture of perseverance and luck. He was appointed to the Byzantine Navy by Michael III in order to counter a Rus' Naval invasion, eventually being promoted to the Commander of the Central Fleet. Perhaps feeling a kinship with the self-made Admiral or perhaps recognizing his military necessity, Emperor Basil kept him on. For now.

Manuel Ducas. **Vicar Bishop**.

An assistant to the newly-restored Patriarch Photius, tasked with helping the religious leader re-establish his rule. A long-dedicated member of the first estate, Manuel has managed to work his way up the hierarchy of the clergy slowly, rarely outstanding and never threatening. His unassuming reputation has kept him safe through regular bureaucratic reshuffles, often being promoted after his superior's removal. Though he himself is not encumbered with special ecclesiastic powers, Manuel is a well-connected member of the Church, which is deeply connected with daily life all across the city and empire.

Maria Philapona. **Sekretis** - σηκρη̃τις.

A secretary to Constantine Kapnogenes, the Urban Prefect of Constantinople, Maria is charge of overseeing the import of foodstuffs into Constantinople, and ensuring its proper distribution throughout the mighty capital. After working as a manager at her family's import business for years, Maria gained the first-hand experience that made her one of the capital's foremost experts on the process. At the same time, Maria worked hard at developing the right friendships and currying favors with important people, a complex net that would eventually launch her into the capitol building—an ending far greater than most of her class origin could have expected.

Florus Melodus. **Protasekretis** - πρωτασηκρη̃τις.

The secretary who oversees the bureaucratic divisions dealing with all official documents of the government. A well-travelled and well-educated man, Florus has made a career of positioning himself as a bureaucratic keystone. He is among the few who not only have a comprehensive understanding of the Byzantine bureaucracy, but thrive in it. As the First Secretary, Florus is in control of what written information does and does not reach the Emperor—after all, Basil's time is precious—and also commands and oversees the creation of all official public documents.

Leo Ingerinus. **Parakoimomenos** - παρακοιμώμενος.

Meaning “the one who sleeps beside,” this title was originally granted only to Eunuchs who slept outside the emperor's bedchamber and carried out other small bureaucratic duties. Over time,



this role came to be granted to those who were particularly close to the Emperor, often becoming confidants or acting in some official capacity in an unfilled position. Leo has long been a eunuch on the periphery of the Byzantine court, competent enough but not close enough to the right people—in other words, the perfect combination experience and lack of connection for a new emperor. As the highest-ranking eunuch, Leo oversees other eunuchs, including chamberlains and pages, and has eyes and ears all throughout the palace.

Sergius Raskolnikas. **Spatharios** - *σπαθάριος*.

A member of the imperial guard, tasked with defending the palace and the emperor. A Constantinople native, Sergius has never seen much of the outside world; this familiarity with the city served him well as a young guardsman. This knowledge in conjunction with his quick thinking made him a natural fit for the Spatharios. As a member of these elite guardsmen, Sergius has access to the city armory and near unhindered movement in the palace.

Nicetas Lucaenus. **Protospatharios** - *πρωτοσπαθάριος*.

A leader of the Spatharios, the imperial guard. A battle-hardened veteran of many wars prosecuted by many regents, Nicetas was a natural first choice for organizing palace security. He is also the ultimate power in charge of ensuring the emperor's safety. To this end, Nicetas has full control over scheduling and training the palace Spatharios, as well as creating security details for the Emperor when he is away from the palace.

Aphranius Bulgakos. **Derasinskios** - *δαιρφαν*.

The head of the Emperor's secret guard in Constantinople. It is known that Aphranius was once a decorated officer in the Imperial army, a hardened veteran of many conflicts with the Rus' and Abbasids, but it is unclear how he made the transition to working directly for the palace. An indispensable ally, Aphranius is one of the few to survive the transition entirely untouched.

Regino Bardas. **Protomagistros** - *πρωτομάγιστρος*.

Although this role does not confer specific duties, it still indicates that the holder is a person held in the highest esteem by the emperor. The son of noble family, Regino has managed to stay in the court of four successive regents now, deftly maneuvering his way back into positions of favor with an almost surprising quickness. Even now, having swayed Basil with promises of loyalty and financial support, Regino already occupies a most favored position within the bureaucracy—the Magister officiorum, or protomagistros. He possesses an unusually large amount of wealth, and extensive connections and respect among the noble families of Byzantium.



Silvia Bardane. **Patrikia** - πατρικία.

A title denoting that the holder was the wife of a Patrikios. Like so many other members of the royal court, Silvia is a high-born member of Byzantine nobility who has, by all accounts, lived a rather average life. Like many of her peers, Silvia was highly educated, married young, and has spent most of her life taking care of her children or taking part in the festivities of noble and court life. As a result, Silvia has a deep well of connections across the Constantine upper class, being the friend of many an important wife.

Germanus Stratioticus. **Patrikios** - πατρίκιος.

An honorary title often awarded to generals, provincial governors, and other high-ranking officials to denote their special importance. For Germanus, the title of Patrician is almost entirely a formality. Though he was once a well-travelled ambassador, well-versed in the Slavonic and Arab languages and cultures, he is now deep into his retirement, and only interested in the palace power struggle for personal entertainment. He is one of the few who maintains cordial relationships with officials in the Bulgar khanate and Abbasid empire.

Helena Constantina. **Logothetes tou dromou** - λογοθέτης τοῦ δρόμου.

Officially the head of the Public Post, the Empire's postal service, the Logothetes also oversees foreign and domestic intelligence work. Helena has managed an extremely unusual life for a woman in the Byzantine empire: though admittedly quite typical until the death of her husband during a campaign against the Abbasid empire, Helena then acquired the sole rights to her family's vast holdings. Using this capital as a base, Helena managed a quite shrewd career as a businesswoman, known for her methodical and comprehensive approach. This reputation would come in handy when Michael needed someone to replace the former Post Master, and decided her style would be perfect for *all* the duties the role entailed. As such, Helena has access to all of the Empire's surreptitious gathered intelligence.

Romanus Lascaris. **Logothetes tou genikou** - λογοθέτης τοῦ γενικοῦ.

The head of the Financial ministry, which oversees taxation and revenue-streams in the empire. A lifelong tax collector, Romanus is no stranger to being hated and ostracised. This callousness has served him well, never phased by angry or confrontational opponents—a common event as the head of the Financial ministry. Taxes are a tetchy subject. Romanus is also in charge of deciding who needs to be audited, which has perhaps made him the most unpopular man in the kingdom.

Sophie Kurkua. **Quaestor** - κοιτίστωρ.

A general judge of Constantinople, tasked with overseeing the execution of wills, investigating cases of forgery, dealing with tenant complaints, etc. Blessed with an exceptional memory and a childhood with the sort of library that only nobles can afford, Sophie has memorized more



Byzantine law than the people who write it. This makes her an extremely efficient member of the judiciary. Though she does not often need it, Sophie has access to the lengthy legal libraries of Constantinople.

Paternus Acropolita. **Domestikos tōn scholōn** - δομέστικος τῶν σχολῶν.

Although technically not the highest military honor that one can receive, the Domestic is, in practice, one of the most powerful generals in the eastern Roman Empire, generally being the closest to the emperor. Like many of his contemporaries, Paternus is a veteran of many wars to both the west and east, and just diplomatic sense enough to climb the hierarchy during times of turbulence. Although the Paternus does not directly command grand armies, the holder does oversee the elite tagmata regiments, currently housed in Constantinople in the event of civil unrest.

Viator Phocus. **Advisor**.

A native of Antioch, which lies to the east of Constantinople, Viator grew up among tradespeople, exposing him to a wide variety of cultures and languages. He used this as a base for his studies of diplomacy, and especially of the Abbasid empire and culture. This specialty has made him an invaluable companion for every regent in recent memory, and especially so for Basil. In addition to his language skill, Viator is also well-placed among the Arab communities of Constantinople.

Einar Henriksen. **Ethnarh** - ἔθναρχης.

The commander of a foreign contingent of the Byzantine Army. A Varangian mercenary, Einar was chosen to lead his peers due to his natural eye for strategy and cool head under pressure, and has become one of Byzantine's most effective counters to Rus' aggression. After Basil's coup, the new emperor recalled Einar and his men to the capital city, in order to supplant Paternus' special troops' order-keeping and to act as an additional bulwark against any further coup attempts.

Maurice Zonaras. **Patrikios** - πατρίκιος.

An honorary title often awarded to generals, provincial governors, and other high-ranking officials to denote their special importance. Maurice was the former governor of a now-lost border territory with the Bulgar Khanate, forced to flee to the capital following the Bulgar incursion, and has languished in Constantinople, waiting for the imperial army to retake his former territory since. As an official in Scythia Minor, Maurice has developed a familiarity with Greek and the Bulgar language, and still possesses the fortune he brought with him from his former territory.



Petrus Comnenus. **Primicerius** - πριμικήριος.

A title given to the heads of various departments. Petrus has never been a man to mince words. Appropriately maligned as an overly-direct businessman, his cutthroat history has earned few friends but great respect, almost exclusively among those who have never met him. Petrus was appointed the Primicerius of armament factories under Regent Bardas, and has since been left alone to do as he sees fit as long as the needed number of weapons are produced.

Aelia Psella. **Primicerius** - πριμικήριος.

A title given to the heads of various departments. Aelia has been a member of the clergy since the day she became old enough to join their number; the duration of this membership is exceeded only by her dedication to being a lifelong student. This drive for education has indirectly prepared her to first teach, and later lead a religious school for noble girls of Constantinople. This privileged position has granted her the the prerogative of setting the studies of Byzantine's best and brightest, as well as use of one of the few printing presses in the capital.



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