LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

HISTORY 1130: Themes in Global History: Trade, Economy, and Empires

Dr. Jari Eloranta
Professor of Comparative Economic and Business History
Appalachian State University, Department of History
Office: Anne Belk Hall, 249S (Office hours: see syllabus)
Phone: 262-6006
E-mail: elorantaj@appstate.edu
http://www.appstate.edu/~elorantaj

Middle Ages I: Byzantium and the Legacy of Rome

Division of Rome
Early history of the Byzantine Empire
Political turmoil and decline
Religion and culture
Warfare
The successors of Rome in the West
LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

DIVISION OF ROME:

http://go.hrw.com/hrw.nd/gohrw_rls1/pKeywordResults?keyword=st9%20roman%20empire

LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

The Roman Empire was ruled by a single Emperor, but with the death of Constantine in 337, civil war erupted among his three sons, dividing the empire into three parts. The West was reunified in 340, and the complete reunification of the whole empire occurred in 353, with Constantius II.

Notably, Constantius II focused most of his power in the East, and he is often regarded as the first Emperor of the Byzantine Empire. Under his rule, the city of Byzantium, only recently refounded as Constantinople, was fully developed as a capital.

In 361, Constantius II took ill and died, and Constantius Chlorus’ grandson Julian, who had served as Constantius II’s Caesar, took power. Julian was killed carrying on Constantius II’s war against Persia in 363, and was replaced by Jovian who ruled only until 364. Following the death of Jovian the empire fell again into a new period of civil war. In 364, Valentinian I emerged. He immediately divided the empire once again, giving the eastern half to his brother Valens. Stability was not achieved for long in either half as the conflicts with the barbarians intensified, especially with the Huns and the Goths. A short period of stability under the puppet emperor Flavius Augustus Honorius controlled by Flavius Stilicho ended at Stilicho’s death in 408. After this, the two empires truly diverged, as the east began a slow recovery and consolidation, while the west began to collapse entirely.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Roman_Empire
While the West was experiencing a huge economic decline throughout the late empire, the East was not so economically decadent, especially as Emperors like Constantine the Great and Constantius II began pouring vast sums of money into the eastern economy. The economic decline of the West, especially following the Crisis of the Third Century in the end helped to aid in the eventual collapse of this area of the empire. As the central power weakened, the State also lost control of its borders and provinces and the vital control over the Mediterranean Sea. To the last Roman Emperors tried to keep the ‘barbarians’ away from it, but once the Vandals conquered North Africa the imperial authorities had to cover too much ground with too few resources. Decisive intervention from the East could have reversed the situation. The Roman institutions collapsed along with the economic stability. Most barbarian invaders required a third of the land they conquered from their Roman subjects, and this could turn into much more, as different tribes conquered the same province. This was a severe economic setback. This occurred because most plots of land required a certain investment of time and money in simple maintenance to maintain production. Unfortunately, this meant that any attempt to recover the West by the East was very difficult, for the huge decline in the economy made these new reconquests too expensive to maintain.
LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

Emperor Justinian:

http://www.nipissingu.ca/department/history/MUHLBERGER/4505/JUSTRET.GIF

LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

Byzantine empire in 814:

http://wps.ablongman.com/wps/media/objects/262/268312/art/figures/KISH_07_151.gif
LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

TIME LINE:

- **The first period of the empire**, which embraces the dynasties of Theodosius, Leo I, Justinian, and Tiberius, is politically still under Roman influence.

- **In the second period** the dynasty of Heraclius in conflict with Islam, succeeds in creating a distinctively Byzantine State.

- **The third period**, that of the Syrian (Isaurian) emperors and of Iconoclasm, is marked by the attempt to avoid the struggle with Islam by completely orientalizing the land.

- **The fourth period** exhibits a happy equilibrium. The Armenian dynasty, which was Macedonian by origin, was able to extend its sway east and west, and there were indications that the zenith of Byzantine power was close at hand.

- **In the fifth period the centrifugal forces**, which had long been at work, produced their inevitable effect, the aristocracy of birth, which had been forming in all parts of the empire, and gaining political influence, at last achieved its firm establishment on the throne with the dynasties of the Comneni and Angeli.

- **The sixth period** is that of decline; the capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders had disrupted the empire into several new political units; even after the restoration, the empire of the Palaeologi is only one member of this group of states. The expansion of the power of the Osmanli Turks prepares the annihilation of the Byzantine Empire.

LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

The 6th century was a difficult time for the fledgling Byzantium. The Empire's borders to the north, along the Alps and the River Danube, were placed under pressure in the late 6th century, and finally breached by a succession of barbarian invasions from Lombards, Avars, and Slavs. Meanwhile in the east a catastrophic, though ultimately victorious struggle with the Persian Empire had been surmounted by the sudden eruption of Islam from the Arabian Peninsula.

For a number of reasons, which are still debated - religious and political alienation of local populations, economic and military exhaustion, failure of strategic oversight - the Byzantine was unable to prevent the loss of Egypt, Palestine and Syria. The newly established Umayyad Caliphate, with its capital in Damascus, placed constant pressure upon Byzantium.

Map of the Byzantine Empire 668 AD:
By 780 the situation along Byzantium's eastern frontier had stabilized, and the Empire had been consolidated. Byzantium was now transformed from the sprawling Mediterranean empire of late antiquity into a relatively compact medieval state with its most important lands, in terms of agricultural production, tax-base, and military manpower, in Asia Minor.

However reduced in territorial extent, Byzantium had proved its tenacity and ability to adapt and survive under severe pressure from east, west and north. The next two and a half centuries will see an amazing recovery in the Empire's fortunes, based upon the administrative and military structures put in place during its long battle for survival.
LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

POLITICAL TURMOIL AND DECLINE:

At the death of the Emperor Basil II in 1025 Byzantium stood apparently unassailable; the premier power of medieval Europe and the Middle East. Half a century later the situation was very different. Byzantium had lost control over its heartland in Asia Minor to the Seljuk Turks and the empire also had to fight desperately to resist invasion from the Normans, based in southern Italy.

The reasons for this dramatic reversal are manifold, and controversial, but include periods of misrule, military breakdown, the nature of Turkish settlement in Asia Minor, and structural changes in economics and society which made maintenance of the self-contained and centralized Byzantine state more difficult.

Map of the Byzantine Empire 1092 AD

LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

http://www.ata.boun.edu.tr/Faculty/Nadir%20Ozbek/courses/Hist121/Maps/Byzantine%20Empire%201000-1100.jpg
LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

Byzantine Empire in 1143:


LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

Byzantine empire in 1265:

http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/shepherd/byzantine_empire_1265.jpg
LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

The death of Manuel Komnenos in 1180 exposed the improvised nature of the Komnenian revival and ushered in a new period of instability and weakness, culminating in the disaster wrought by the 4th crusade in 1204. This early exercise in western commercial and military imperialism led to the conquest and partial destruction of Constantinople. A new so-called “Latin Empire” was established upon the ruins of Byzantium, whilst Byzantine refugees established fragmented successor states in Northern Greece and Asia Minor, each claiming the the Byzantine inheritance.

The Empire of Nicaea emerged as the most viable successor state and was to go on to recapture Constantinople in 1261.

Map of the Byzantine Successor States 1218 AD

LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

The closing decades of the 13th century mark Byzantium's last period as a significant player in European and Middle-Eastern affairs.

Byzantine diplomatic and espionage activity supplemented the Empire's rather meager military resources. Despite occasional periods of recovery, the Byzantine Empire was in terminal political decline by the middle of the 14th century. A bitter civil war, which saw the Ottoman Turks become intimately involved in Byzantine affairs for the first time, was coupled with the outbreak of bubonic plague in 1349, as well as a general failure in the dying Empire's financial and military resources. The Empire's main possessions were now restricted to Thrace, Thessalonika, the Peloponnese, and Constantinople itself.

Map of the Byzantine Empire 1350 AD
On the eve of its final battle for survival, Byzantium was reduced to a few isolated territories surrounded by the Ottoman Empire, which had experienced a rapid expansion in power and territorial extent. Constantinople, still under Byzantine control, but situated in the heart of Ottoman territories, had become an anomaly and irritant, which the Sultan Mehmet II finally removed on 29 May 1453 after an epic siege and heroic last-ditch defense.
LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

The Dark Angel

*The Dark Angel* (original title *Johannes Angelos*) is a novel by Finnish author *Mika Waltari* about a hopeless love affair during the fall of Constantinople. It was published in 1952.

LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

RELIGION AND CULTURE:

Religion as well as law served one of the best-known emperor’s, Justinian’s, efforts to centralize the imperial office. Since the 5th century the patriarch of Constantinople had crowned emperors in Constantinople, a practice which reflected the close ties between secular and religious leaders. In 380, Christianity had been proclaimed the official religion of the eastern Empire. All other religions and sects were denounced as “demented and insane.” Orthodox Christianity was not, however, the only religion within the Empire with a significant number of followers. Nor did the rulers view religion as merely a political tool. At one time or another the Christian heresies of Arianism (*the belief that Jesus was not of one substance with God*), Monophysitism (*Jesus has one nature – a composite divine/human one, not a fully divine and fully human*), and Iconoclasm (*the attempt to abolish the use of icons/images in church services*) also received imperial support. Persecution and absorption into popular Christianity served to cut short many pagan religious practices.
LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

Byzantine Christianity was a substantially different religion and cultural practice than Latin Christianity. The Byzantines, for example, inherited the Roman idea that the emperor was near divinity and practiced a form of Christianity where enormous ecclesiastical and theological authority was vested in the emperor. This would eventually create a permanent breach in the world of Christianity between west and east and the event that would produce this breach was the Iconoclastic controversy.

Iconoclasm, however, was fiercely opposed by the papacy which saw it as a threat not only to Latin ecclesiastical practices, but to the authority of the pope himself. Eventually, the breach between the Latin and Byzantine church became permanent. Even though Iconoclasm would be abandoned in the ninth century—the breach, however, would never be healed.

The most significant result of the Iconoclastic controversy was the adoption of a strict traditionalism in the Byzantine church. The eastern church had long been characterized by speculation and innovation, but the Iconoclastic controversy was too disorienting. Almost overnight, the Byzantine church became averse to innovation and speculation. This created a more or less static religious culture and it also permanently ended the intellectual dynamism of Byzantine life.

http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/MA/BYZ.HTM

LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

Perhaps the single most salient aspect of Byzantine culture was the transmission of classical culture. While classical studies, science, and philosophy largely dissipated in the Latin west, Byzantine education and philosophy still zealously pursued these intellectual traditions. It was in Byzantium that Plato and Aristotle continued to be studied and were eventually transmitted first into the Islamic world and then back into western Europe. A basic education in Byzantium consisted first of the mastery of classical Greek literature—almost all of the Greek literature we have today was only preserved by the Byzantines.

Byzantine culture is important because of two lines of transmission. One of line of transmission involved the exporting of classical Greek and Roman culture into Islam and, to a lesser extent, the transmission of Byzantine theological speculation into Islamic theology. The second is the transmission of Byzantine culture and religion to Slavic peoples, especially to the Russians.
LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

General view of Hagia Sophia, Istanbul (constructed 533-537AD) from the south:

Closer view:


LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

Hagia Eirene, Istanbul, from the south-east. Hagia Eirene was the original Cathedral Church of Constantinople, until it was supplanted by Hagia Sophia:

Interior view of the 6th century Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus, Istanbul. The church is laid out as an octogon, surmounted by a central dome, and enclosed within an irregular square. Saints Sergius and Bacchus were Christian military martyrs of the 3rd Century:

LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

WARFARE:

Byzantine Army took several forms during its long history - from Roman legions to feudal armies in the late Middle Ages. Because of its position, the Empire had to maintain strong and large fleet in order to control the seas. The most important of all was the Mediterranean sea because it has been the central communication and trade line between distant Byzantine provinces.

A typical Byzantine infantry soldier, armed with a sword, shield, lancets (short lance, long lance), the helmet, bow and arrows, the cudgel for near battle contact, the sling that was used for hitting rocks and metals, and personal clothes including the mantle and an armor.

http://www.neobyzantine.org/byzantium/army/infantry.php

LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

City of Constantinople was heavily fortified and resisted invasions effectively:

Depiction of the fleet:
LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

The Byzantines' most important weapon, which played a decisive role in all naval operations, was "Greek" or "liquid fire". It consisted of a developed recipe of older chemical compounds attributed to Kallinikos, a 7th-century Greek engineer from Heliopolis in Syria. Liquid fire contained sulphur, nitrogen, and naphtha (petrol) and other substances and put fear into the enemy fleet, since it burnt even on water.

For further discussion, see e.g. http://www.harpers.org/MilitaryPyrotechnics.html

LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

THE SUCCESSORS OF ROME IN THE WEST:

By the end of the 5th century the western Empire was split into various Germanic kingdoms. The Ostrogoths settled in Italy, the Franks in northern Gaul, the Burgundians in Provence, the Visigoths in southern Gaul and Spain, the Vandals in Africa and the western Mediterranean, and the Angles and Saxons in England. Barbarians were clearly the masters of western Europe, but they were also willing to accommodate themselves to the people they conquered.
LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

Barbarian kingdoms in 526:

http://wps.ablongman.com/wps/media/objects/262/268312/art/figures/KISH_08_171.gif

The Merovingian dynasty owes its name to Merovech (sometimes Latinised as Meroveus or Merovius), leader of the Salian Franks from c. 447 to 457, and emerges into wider history with the victories of his son Childeric I (reigned c.457 – 481) against the Visigoths, Saxons, and Alemanni. Childeric’s son Clovis I went on to unite most of Gaul north of the Loire under his control around 486, when he defeated Syagrius, the Roman ruler in those parts. He won the Battle of Tolbiac against the Alemanni in 496, on which occasion he adopted his wife’s Nicene Christian faith, and decisively defeated the Visigothic kingdom of Toulouse in the Battle of Vouillé in 507. After Clovis’ death, his kingdom was partitioned among his four sons, according to Frankish custom. Over the next century, this tradition of partition would continue. Even when multiple Merovingian kings ruled, the kingdom — not unlike the late Roman Empire — was conceived of as a single entity ruled collectively by several kings (in their own realms) and the turn of events could result in the reunification of the whole kingdom under a single king. Leadership among the early Merovingians was based on mythical descent and alleged divine patronage, expressed in terms of continued military success.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merovingians
Charlemagne (742 or 747 – 28 January 814) (also Charles the Great; from Latin, Carolus Magnus or Karolus Magnus), son of King Pippin the Short and Bertrada of Laon, was the king of the Franks from 768 to 814 and king of the Lombards from 774 to 814. He was crowned Imperator Augustus in Rome on Christmas Day, 800 by Pope Leo III and is therefore regarded as the founder of the Holy Roman Empire (as Charles I). Through military conquest and defense, he solidified and expanded his realm to cover most of Western Europe. His was the first truly imperial power in the West since the fall of Rome.

Depictions of Charlemagne:
LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

Charlemagne’s empire in 814:

http://wps.ablongman.com/wps/media(objects/262/268312/art/figures/KISH_08_180.gif

Division of Charlemagne’s empire:

Empire of Otto the Great:

http://wps.ablongman.com/wps/media(objects/262/268312/art/figures/KISH_08_188.gif
LECTURE 11: Byzantium and the Successors of Rome

Five questions. Getting three right = attendance. Getting five right = automatic half a point of extra credit.

1. What was the “Greek fire” that Byzantine warriors used so effectively? [A] a naval formation [B] a form of biological warfare [C] a cannon [D] a tactic of setting all opponent cities on fire [E] none of the above

2. According to Cameron and Neal, economic development can be defined as: [A] economic growth arising from agriculture [B] a by-product of the industrial revolution [C] economic growth arising from trade [D] economic growth accompanied by organizational and structural change [E] none of the above

3.

4.

5.

ANY QUESTIONS ON TODAY’S LECTURE?

ANYTHING ELSE?