stresses the modernity not only of the economic and political vision of the empire; but above all of its religious message. There are lengthy descriptions of the native rites, and all of these are characterized as dark, superstitious, irrational and bloody. The poet deliberately places these beside examples of Christian prayer and liturgy, which are pictured as enlightened and modern. In the end this religious motif becomes the dominant one in the Roman argument for empire. Christianity is seen as the ultimate reason for the imperial oikoumene with its economic, legal and political structures. It is the embodiment of reason and revelation and of enlightened humanitarianism. In light of this, the imperial poet tells his audience, standing outside the oikoumene, insisting upon freedom from Roman rule makes little sense.40.

In sum, what we have found in analyzing the information provided by Corippus is that Justinian and his generals employed a coherent strategy in Africa, supported by cogent arguments for Roman rule. In part, both strategy and justification were similar to imperial policy elsewhere and even in earlier times. However, these were carefully adapted to the complex political and economic situation in Africa and took into account as well special geographical, climatological, and social factors peculiar to that land.

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40. For native rites, see ibid., 3:81-105, 6:147-165; for Roman ceremony, ibid., 8:321-369.

THE FIRST SIEGE OF CONSTANTINOPEL BY THE OTTOMANS (1394-1402)
AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS ON THE CIVILIAN POPULATION OF THE CITY

The end of the fourteenth and the first years of the fifteenth century were marked by the first major Ottoman effort to capture Constantinople. For nearly a decade the Byzantine capital sustained a very severe siege. The city’s civilian population was devastated by famine and outbursts of the plague, and as a consequence a great part of the population fled Constantinople.

A detailed study of the events between 1394 and 1402 shows that the Ottomans used in their assault upon Constantinople their proven method of blockading the enemy city for a long period of time, thus causing its surrender. The method had been successfully tried on Greek cities in Asia Minor. The Byzantine capital, however, escaped the same fate because of the Mongol intervention and the subsequent Ottoman defeat at Ankara in July, 1402.

During the siege Constantinople sustained a number of violent Turkish attacks, especially those of the summer and fall of 1395 and that which followed the Christian disaster at Nikopolis in September, 1396, and lasted until the early spring of the next year.1 The arrival in the latter half of 1399 of the French expeditionary corps led by Marshal Boucicaut brought temporary relief. In fact, the combined operations outside the capital of the Byzantines and their French allies are the only engagements which ended in victory due to the absence of the bulk of the Ottoman army that was away on military operations elsewhere.

The Byzantine inability to break the long siege produced isolation and increased hardships. Contacts with the West were maintained thanks to the fleets of the Italian maritime republics. Western help, however, was limited, and did nothing more than sustain life in the city, especially after the crushing defeat of the Christian army at Nikopolis. But the Byzantine government was unable to defend itself against the Ottoman onslaught, mainly because of serious political mistakes committed in the past which tied the survival of Constantinople to the assistance of its Western allies.

Even before the beginning of the war, the grain situation in Romania was

THE FIRST SIEGE OF CONSTANTINOPLE BY THE OTTOMANS

the food problem became once again so acute that, according to Manuel Calecas who at times lived in Constantinople and also in Pera, thousands of people had fled by famine, thousands of people.

4. In a letter of 1 July 1397, addressed to Charles VI of France, Manuel II confirms this information. The staple food of a great number of Constantinopolitans, it seems, consisted of the produce of the city gardens: e.g., the cabbage sold in the markets. Doukas also speaks of the lack of andrailum, a staple food. 11 meat and fish undoubtedly were more scarce. Because of the presence of Turkish vessels in the waters near the capital, fishing had become a dangerous operation. A similar situation prevailed in the fall of 1398. Available sources mention again the pressures brought upon the population as a result of famine, and the exodus of a large number of people from the city. 12

During the period between the accession to the throne of John VII (December 1399) and the battle of Ankara (28 July 1402), we lack specific information concerning food shipments to the besieged city. However, this does not mean that grain had disappeared. In fact, John VII himself was involved in scandal concerning a small quantity of grain, of unknown origin. In May, 1403, during the interrogation of witnesses in Pera, concerning the administration of the colony by the “Massari,” whose functions had expired, evidence was presented that they had received from John VII a quantity of wine, as well as seven modii of grain. In the same transaction, the emperor, his “Factor” Leontiris and the “Massari” Hector Pieschi and Ottobone Giustianino, had gained diversis modis, a thousand hyperpera. Although we do not have any further details, the character of this transaction resembles what is known today as a “black market.” Also, Doukas says that before the end of 1399 one modios had reached in Constantinople the price of twenty hyperpera.


4. Lorenz, Calecas, lr. 16, pp. 189-89.


February-March, 1401, the price in the besieged city had reached new heights and eight mouzouria cost now ten hyperpera, which translated into 23.6 hyperpera per modios. This price corresponds to the one contained in a document drawn up in Crete, in September, 1401, in which it is mentioned that, one modius frumenti valebat aspers centum in Caffa, while in Romania the price had reached twenty-four hyperpera per modios. Thus, between 1399 and 1401 the price had increased by almost four hyperpera per modios. The impoverished population, unable to afford such a price, was forced to abandon the city in order to escape death by famine.

Meanwhile, during the blockade, the urban landscape of Constantinople, already marked by vineyards and gardens, saw the addition of some wheat fields belonging either to monasteries or members of aristocratic families. The decrease in supply and increase in prices were due first to the blockade and second to the international situation.

Officials responsible for the defense of Constantinople tried to control the mass exodus of the inhabitants and especially those who were needed for the defense of the city. Manuel II prevented the departure of his okios Manuel Palaeologus Raoul, who, unable to sustain any longer the difficulties caused by the situation in the capital, decided to leave the city during 1399, taking along his wife who was still a minor. He sold a field which he owned in the city with the intention of taking the money with him. However, the emperor intervened because he wanted to keep his okios in the city, and ordered the money from the sale to be handed over to Raoul’s father-in-law. The latter was instructed to provide the couple with a monthly amount sufficient to satisfy their needs. Thus, Manuel Palaeologus Raoul remained in the besieged capital.

The same policies were enforced by the authorities after the departure of Manuel II for the west in December, 1399. Indeed shortly after his departure conditions became so difficult that, according to the Livre des Faits of Marshal Boucicaut, people left the city by night, lowered themselves from the walls by ropes, and surrendered afterwards to the Turks. John of Chateauromand, one of Boucicaut’s lieutenants left behind with a small force in order to assist the defenders, realized that the mass exodus had to be checked if any able-bodied men were to remain within the city. Thus, Chateauromand organized a series of sorties into the surrounding area, and managed to return to the city carrying at times food supplies and at other times good prisoners who were exchanged for food and money. On the other hand, the Venetian and Genoese galleys left behind after the departure of the allied fleet in December, 1399, acted similarly: they attacked isolated Turkish vessels, which were sailing in the vicinity of the city. This sort of military activity lasted until the eve of the battle of Ankara “et ainsi la garde l’espace de trois ans contre la puissance des Turcs.” However, the tactic did not improve the food situation. Chateauron’s men also suffered famine together with the urban population.

During the years of 1399 to 1402 the city lost a steady stream of inhabitants: many crossed over to the Turkish lines, others attempted to escape by sea only to be made prisoners when they reached the Straits. The latter, using various types of boats, hoped that if they were able to cross the Dardanelles they could take refuge on one of the Christian possessions in the Aegean. The former simply θυσίαλλοι to the Turks without apparently having to suffer any particular ill-treatment.

That the exodus of the Constantinopolitan population clearly constituted a grave danger for the defense of the city is reflected in the Récit inédit sur le siège de Constantinople par les Turcs (1394-1402). According to this source the Turks deemed it unnecessary to attack the city, because they were aware that it would eventually pass into their hands. Indeed, they hoped that famine and misery would arrange everything.

The patriarchal acts which predate the battle of Ankara list the names of people who had left the city for the above reasons or were preparing to leave
it shortly. Among them we find a certain Mavrommatis, a landlord. He abandoned a field about Kyngios and his neighbor, the oikose of the emperor, Marc Palæologus lagaris, had sown wheat in that field and had even built a wall around it in order to protect it from thieves who were frequenting the area.

In 1400, the sons of the late priest Pepagomenos wanted to mortgage their estate—one house and the Church of Saint Theodore of Vlahcopolos—in order to raise a loan. Afterwards, πεθομένη ὑπὸ τῆς τοῦ καιροῦ ἐνδέκα, they wanted to leave the city and return when and if the situation improved. But a case of mass desertion of a whole urban region is mentioned in a patriarchal act in July, 1402. John Melidonis, ὑπὸ τῶν πολιτῶν ἡμῶν, had acquired with patriarchal approval the κτητορεία of the Church of Saint John the Theologian. In order to undertake the necessary repairs, Melidonis obtained permission to farm an abondoned plot belonging to the church which was located near the Hippodrome. To do so, he had to demolish some porticoes belonging to the church which were previously rented to civilians. But in 1402 the tenants, forced by the κανονοῦς, not only had left their dwellings, they left the city too. One or two people still lived there and Melidonis obtained the patriarchal permission to pay a legal indemnity to those tenants remaining and proceed with their eviction. This is a clear example of mass desertion of a neighborhood by people with low incomes whose situation was difficult. They were among the first to leave the besieged city.

Another case involved the sale of sacred objects by the monks of the urban monastery of Kosmidon. The patriarch made them sign a declaration according to which they promised never again to engage in this sort of activity. The Acta does not reveal the reasons which caused the monks to sell sacred objects. However, considering that they received a very lenient reprimand from the patriarch, most probably they were provoked by the economic hardships of the times.

Careful reading of the patriarchal acts presents a clear picture of the economic plight of the inhabitants of Constantinople. Almost everyone was struck by ἄσκομα, and among the common people. Among those struck by the καιροῦ ἀκομα, καὶ ἔθνεα were members of the families of the Palæologi, Gavras, Raoul, Vranas, and Philanthropinos. To survive a large number of oikoi spent their wives' dowries and either sold or mortgaged their houses or lands within the city. Some examples are:

In December, 1399, a patriarchal tribunal intervened in favor of Maria Hagiopoulos, the wife of John Gavras who had been sued by her creditors. Because of her husband's debts, her dowry had been completely wiped out. She, therefore, demanded and obtained from the court the right to be given priority over her husband's creditors, in order to recover her dowry, which according to the marriage contract, was calculated to be 170 hyperpera. Through this argument she succeeded in saving her husband from serving his prison sentence.

In February, 1400, because of the financial stresses, the oikos of the emperor, Michael Raoul, Gabriel Palæologus, and the adolescent John Palæologus, petitioned the patriarchal court for authorization to proceed with the sale of the estate (οἰκία) that they had inherited and which, left untended, would collapse. With monies from the sale they intended, first, to repay their creditors and, then, to use the remainder for their subsistence.

In April, 1400, Manuel Paphlas, whose daughter was married to Alexios Palæologus, lodged a complaint against his son-in-law with the patriarchal court. Forced by poverty and the abnormal situation, Alexios spent his wife's dowry which amounted to 1,000 hyperpera. Paphlas asked for its restitution. The court accepted the father's claim and ruled that part of the Palæologus' estate—equal to the claimed amount of his wife's dowry—ought to be ceded to her.

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29. Miklosch-Müller, II (610) 443.
30. Ibid., II (658), 514.
31. Ibid., II (646), 497-96.
34. Miklosch-Müller, II (565), 375-77; (569), 382-84; (678), 557-58; (554), 355-58.
35. Ibid., II (523), 299-300.
36. Ibid., II (528), 304-12.
37. Ibid., II (592), 420-21.
38. Ibid., II (646), 492-94.
40. Miklosch-Müller, II (554), 355-58.
41. Ibid., II (565), 375-77; Matsis, pp. 91-92, 107.
In 1401, the ὀξέων of the emperor, Manuel Vouzenos, having sold or mortgaged everything he possessed, found himself in complete poverty and asked the patriarch for permission to sell his wife's house for 275 hyperperea to the businessman Argyropoulos. Taking into consideration the interests of the young wife, the patriarch agreed but, in order to help the couple, he decided that the house had to be sold in auction (εἰς τὸ κάτω τοῦ καταταγοῦ), hoping that a bidder would offer more than the 275 hyperperea offered by Argyropoulos. When the bid closed, no superior offer had been made; furthermore, Argyropoulos changed his mind and withdrew his offer. Sometime later, another buyer was found who gave the same amount which had been offered earlier by Argyropoulos. The new buyer was Thomas Kalokyris, ἀπὸ τῶν πολιτικῶν ἄρχοντων.42

In November, 1401, Michael Palaeologus, whose wife was a minor, overpowered by famine and debts, asked the patriarch to allow him to sell his own vine in the city.43 The demand was granted under certain conditions and some days later, Gabriel Palaeologus, the brother of Michael and also ὀξέων of the emperor, purchased the vine in order to prevent any outsider from buying it. However, having no money himself, he asked the patriarch to allow him to use his wife's jewels in order to raise a loan.44

Thus, members of the aristocracy residing within the besieged city suffered side by side with the commoners. The widespread misery neutralized at least partly the economic privileges of this class.45 Others, like the monk Methodios, "because of the misery and the lack of things," could not pay to the Church of Saint Euphemia his annual rent of three hyperperea for the use of a small garden plot. He received a favorable opinion from the empress, the wife of John VII, who earlier had granted him an interview and interceded with the patriarch to lower the rent to one hyperperea per year.46 Also, because of the ἀνακολοθία προμήτευσης, the merchant Constantine Perdicaris could not repay to his old associate, Thomas Kalokyris, a debt of 500 Hyperperea.47

The general misery also affected men like Manuel Chrisoboris, a baker by trade. He had nothing to eat, was unable to pay his debts and had to sell his possessions in order to survive.48 The wine merchant Stylianos Chalkeopoulos had been unable for six years to pay his creditors; he owed them 300 hyperperea.49 The two sons of the priest Papagomenos, crushed by misery caused by the "difficult times," decided to mortgage their possessions, pay their debts and then leave the city.50 Living in complete misery, suffering from the cold and having nothing to eat, the son of the late Exotrochos wanted to sell the house he had inherited from his father. No information is given on the size of the house and its condition. However, despite the selling price of 250 hyperperea fixed by the patriarchal agent Michael Palaiologus who took under consideration τὸν κατατάσσεται πατρών, no prospective buyer appeared.51 On the other hand, Constantine Pegenitis tried to escape his misery by investing unsuccessfully so in business all that was left of his money. Moreover, Pegenitis, to the despair of his mother, began demolishing his paternal house, most probably, in order to sell the timber.52

Those possessing property on the Propontide Islands had serious problems. In fact, they could not look after their lands because of the menacing presence of Turkish vessels sailing in the area. Thus, we have the case of a certain Nicholas, owner of vineyards on the isle of Prinkipos, who had been captured by the Turks. His wife Irene reached an agreement with a certain Pachoumas, a wine merchant, who could secure the release of her husband. According to their agreement, Pachoumas conceded to pay for the still undelivered wine. In turn, Irene was to use the monies for her husband’s release from the Turks.53

For others, however, contrary to what was happening to the majority of the population, their situation was far from disastrous. They knew how to profit from it. We have already encountered the references to the black market activities of John VII and his associates. The sources give us information about others who lent money, bought commercial establishments, houses or land, and were even able to leave the city to conduct commercial activities elsewhere.

It should be pointed out, however, that not all sailings from Constantinople’s ports were successful, even those of armed vessels. For example, the merchant Constantine Angelos was taken prisoner by the Turks while travelling from Constantinople to Chios when the armed vessel on which he was a passenger was captured, probably at the large of Gallipoli. He had missed an earlier vessel and had to wait one month before boarding the next ship bound for Chios. Through his misfortune, he was captured by the Turks.54 Moreover, it is evident that contacts between the Byzantine capital and other regional commercial centers were few and irregular, because of the Turkish naval presence.

42. Miklošich-Müller, II (646), 492-94; Matis, pp. 92, 102, n. 2.
43. Miklošich-Müller, II (678), 557-58; Matis, pp. 91-92, 114.
44. Miklošich-Müller, II (679), 559; Matis, pp. 124-25.
45. V. Ferjančič, Posede prihodnika rodu Paleologov (Possessions de la famille des Paléologues)," Zbornik roda vavzhitołoske izvestiya, 17 (1976), 164 (French résumé).
46. Miklošich-Müller, II (560), 370. For this Church, see Janin, La géographie ecclésiastique, III, 120-24.
47. Miklošich-Müller, II (562), 372-74; Matis, p. 112.
48. Miklošich-Müller, II (609), 441-42.
49. Ibid., II (617), 452-54.
50. Ibid., II (610), 443-44.
51. Ibid., II (613), 447-48.
52. Ibid., II (571), 386-87.
53. Ibid., II (604), 433-34.
54. Ibid., II (680), 560-61.
One may suggest that the impoverishment of a very large part of the Constantinopolitan population, without class distinction, caused the enrichment of another whose numerical composition remains unknown. Thus, during the years of the blockade, we have a concentration of capital in the hands of those who were able to profit from the widespread misery. Moreover, it seems that some creditors preferred to transfer outside the capital moveable securities as jewelry. They preferred the hazards of sea travel to the uncertainties of Constantinople. We are informed from a patriarchal act, dated December 1401, that a creditor, probably a Genoese, brought to Chios some jewels given to him in Constantinople in order to secure a loan. Chios, then a Genoese colony, could offer the security of their naval power.

The members of the Constantinopolitan aristocracy profitted most from the plight of the urban population. They included the archontes, senators, bishops, and kryptai of monasteries bearing the names of the great families of the capital. Thus, the archontes Nicholas Sophianos, in his capacity as krypta of the urban monastery of Saint Mamas, bought the field sold by Manuel Raoul Palaeologus for 800 hyperpera. He also bought a perfume shop, located near the gate of Kynigos, for 200 hyperpera. He was, perhaps, the same person who lent 100 hyperpera to a clothmaker named Koumoussi. Sophianos received his money back in 1399-1400 after Koumoussi's death. In the Acta he is called Sophianos.

The archontes Thomas Kalyviris was also involved in business; he too lent money with interest. He entered into a short-lived partnership with Constantine Perdicaris, aiming at the exploitation of the kryptai of his associate. He lent 300 hyperpera at an interest rate of 15 percent to a certain Panopoulos, who had mortgaged his house; he was also involved in the real estate business and bought the houses of famine-stricken owners. Another, Andreas Argyropoulos, who was archontes and archon of the polites, bought real estate and was involved in the fur trade in Valachia.

55. Matschke, p. 75.
58. On this monastery, see Janin, La géographie ecclésiastique, III, 314-19; and idem, Constantinople byzantine, p. 274.
59. Miklosich-Müller, II (528), 304-12; Matschke, p. 86.
60. Miklosich-Müller, II (566), 377-79; Matschke, p. 86.
61. Miklosich-Müller, II (566), 377-79; Matschke, p. 64.
62. Miklosich-Müller, II (536), 326-28. We ignore the function of this workshop. See Oikonomides, pp. 403, n. 215.
63. Miklosich-Müller, II (568), 390-82; (646) 492-94; Matschke, pp. 88, 89.
64. Miklosich-Müller, II (564), 374-75; (646), 492-94; Matschke, pp. 88, 89.
65. Miklosich-Müller, II (675), 546-50; (581), 400-01; Matschke, pp. 86-88; Oikonomides, pp. 64, 66.
66. Miklosich-Müller, II (656), 511-12.
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55. Matschke, p. 73.
58. On this monastery, see Janin, La géographie ecclésiastique, III, 314-19; and idem., Constantinople byzantine, p. 274.
59. Miklosich-Müller, II (528), 304-12; Matschke, p. 86.
60. Miklosich-Müller, II (566), 377-79; Matschke, p. 86.
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63. Miklosich-Müller, II (568), 380-82; (646) 492-94; Matschke, pp. 88, 89.
64. Miklosich-Müller, II (564), 374-75; (646), 492-94; Matschke, pp. 88, 89.
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66. Miklosich-Müller, II (656), 511-12.
cut off access to this energy source and, consequently, some of the residents began to demolish an unknown number of large houses, whose roof and ceiling beams could be used for more practical purposes. Perhaps, this is what Constantine Pogonitis wanted to do when he began demolishing his paternal home over his mother’s objections. Acting on her desperate plea, the patriarchal court intervened and put an end to the demolition in May, 1400. One may also suppose that the same goal was behind the purchase for 160 hyperpera by the priest Michael Sgouropoluos of the estate (οικώματα) of the impoverished sons of Lambadinos. As soon as he took possession he began the demolition, perhaps, first to sell the wood and second to exploit the rent of the plot.

During the siege, the population of the Byzantine capital suffered also from plague outbreaks, which were now a regular part of the general misery. The very high mortality which marked its debut in the 1340s was followed by a long period during which the plague became endemic. The pattern was broken from time to time by violent outbursts which were as murderous as the great epidemic of the 1340s.

For Constantinople, we learn from the sources that in 1391 a major epidemic confronted the population, already suffering from lack of food and the continuous presence of the Turks outside the city. It continued for another year causing great suffering. The plague is again mentioned in the sources for 1397-98, when it was brought by sailors to Genoa, Venice and all the maritime cities of Romania. While famine exhausted the population, the miserable sanitary conditions of the besieged capital were a prime breeding ground for the pestilence. In the streets of Constantinople one could see the dead, victims of the epidemic.

When the blockade was finally lifted in the early summer of 1402, the Byzantine capital lay exhausted. The numerous sufferings caused by the prolonged siege shattered the Constantinopolitan feeling of security and it became soon clear that the city survived because of the Mongol intervention. Until

1453, the city remained on a war footing, lacking substantial hinterland and enclosing behind its walls an impoverished and scared population.

Until the new grave hostilities against the Turks in 1422, the two-decade interval was broken only by a violent and brief clash with Musha. After his death, Mehmet I (1413-21) pursued policies of peace and reconciliation, giving the Byzantine state a period of tranquility. Despite this pause, it was too late for the state to escape its ultimate fate. The events of 1394-1402 demonstrate its weaknesses and, most of all, its dependence on the West, not only for military and financial support, but also for food supplies. The urban population was terrorized to such a point by the siege and its consequences, especially the famine and the belief that the capital could no longer provide protection, that during the later conflicts with the Turks repeatedly the populace fled the city in panic. The security identified with the Constantinople of old was destroyed by the tragedy of 1394-1402.

Moreover, the lessons learned by the Byzantines and the Turks from this siege were not forgotten and were employed during the subsequent attacks. Thus, as soon as hostilities were renewed, the Turks pressed on with massive attacks. What occurred thereafter were short-lived military operations both on land and sea, characterized by violent clashes. The Byzantines, having bitterly experienced the misery and fear associated with the siege, tried to avoid prolonged military operations around their capital and the establishment of a blockade by disrupting enemy plans. To this end, they employed both diplomacy, supporting suitable pretenders to the Ottoman throne, and violent military action against the attackers. This tactic, having worked well in 1411 against the politically unstable Musha, was barely successful in 1422 during the conflict with Murad II (1421-51), and failed completely in 1453.

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68. Doukas, XIII. 14-17: p. 50.
69. Miklosich-Müller, II (571), 386-87.
70. Ibid., II (554), 355-58.
72. Loevertz, Cyclones, II, ltr. 431, p. 386.
73. Massa, p. 356, l. II.