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Statue of the last Byzantine Emperor is unveiled in Piraeus



Yesterday a statue of the last Emperor of the Byzantine Empire, often called the Eastern Roman Empire, was unveiled in Athens.

In the square of the Holy Metropolis Church of Piraeus (Athens), a statue of Emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos, was unveiled.
Emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos is not only remembered for being the last Byzantine Emperor who put up a brave last stand against the Ottomans, but also for his last speech to his officers and allies before the Fall of Constantinople on May 29, 1453 by Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II.

Constantinople was the largest and wealthiest city in Christendom during the Middle Ages, the seat of the Byzantine emperor and the centre of a predominately Christian empire, steeped in Greek cultural and artistic influences, yet founded and maintained by a Roman legal and administrative system. Despite the amalgamation of Greek and Roman influences, its language and culture was Greek.

Although the Turkish state presents the Fall of Constantinople as an epic achievement, their narrative often omits that the Byzantine Empire was in a state

of decline since the 1204 Catholic Fourth Crusade that destroyed the city. Nor does the narrative mention that it took 53 days for the Ottoman army of 100,000 to defeat the 10,000 Byzantine defenders.

When Constantinople's walls were finally breached, Constantine XI knew there would be no mercy, as seen by the three day of mass murder, rape and pillage the Ottoman's committed after the capture of the city. However, the last emperor of the more than 1,000 year old empire did not flee with the Genoese generals and many civilians to Italy, he instead died fighting in the streets of Constantinople – but not before giving one last epic speech, which can be read here.

Today, Emperor Constantine XI is considered a national hero in Greece.
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