

Towards the Origin of “Empire”

A Perspective on the Study of the Byzantine State*

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Thus he said, the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. (Daniel 7, 23—27, Old Testament, King James.)

What historical philosophers make their object of contemplation is the past as something opposite to the way we have developed in the present, and the past as being the previous stage of us in the present. What I, on the contrary, make the object of contemplation is what is repeated, unchanging, and typical; and that is what we can sympathize with and comprehend. (Jacob Burckhardt)

I. In the rhythm of history

Ready to be born anew

On the first of May of 2004, I happened to be in Paris for research. That day coincided

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with the welcoming of ten new member states to the EU, and Paris was engulfed in a colorful atmosphere. The various media were spinning the expansion of the EU to 25 states as an historical “reunification”: the final destruction of the Cold War boundary that had split the European World into East and West.

The addition of 75 million people to the EU would enlarge the total population of Member States to 450 million. Media commentators all pointed to the fact that in terms of both political and economic power, the influence of the EU would rival that of the US, China, and Japan. On the 29th of April, French President Jacques Chirac had told reporters in front of the Elysee Palace that, “The inclusion of peoples who have suffered under the division of East and West will strengthen the roots of European peace,” and expressed a strong feeling of hope in the birth of a “decisive, capable and strong Europe.” The New Member states were the “Eastern European” nations of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia of the former Yugoslavia, the three Baltic nations of former Soviet territory Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and the small Mediterranean island nations of Cyprus and Malta. Cyprus, divided because it was unable to reach an agreement with Northern Cyprus, whose citizens are primarily ethnic Turks, entered the EU as the Republic of Cyprus, whose population comprises mostly ethnic Greeks.

The media also mentioned on that day the numerous internal problems the EU would have to face, and that solving those problems would only be possible with structural reforms enabling the enlarged EU to act effectively, and to that purpose the swift establishment of an EU constitution would be a matter of extreme urgency. The 18th of June, the following month, did bring the adoption of a new constitution, left only to be ratified by the member states. The preamble declared that the nations of Europe, which had overcome a history of division and rivalry to become “united in diversity”, would march forward on the path to peace and prosperity. Despite lobbying efforts up to the final stages of negotiation by Roman Catholic countries such as Italy and Poland to have Europe’s ties with Christianity stressed, there was no mention of it in the preamble. The “New Europe” announced its birth as a community with very secular expressions of — and in that sense “modern” — ideals of democracy, freedom, friendship, and peace.

Humans are bound by the times in which they live. The road to the European unification of today opened only when the countries of Europe realized the folly of two World Wars and the fruitlessness of petty economic nationalism. The extension of the economic nationalism that began in the 19th century led to expansionist policies and the scramble for more colonies; and only when those policies came to a bitter end did European nations reexamine their past and begin to search for paths to friendship and harmony. That search, however, was hindered by the power struggle of the two new superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union. Until the 1980’s, movements toward European unification had to proceed between lines drawn by the Cold War and under the enormous weight of the past. Though the Europe of the 21st century had succeeded in opening a new chapter, the future of Europe depended on liberation from its

past. I could not but feel that Chirac, and everyone else watching, felt the same.

Framework of Historical Research

The scars from the turmoil (the rivalries of nationalism and two World Wars) that Europe has experienced since the 19th century, such as the minority issues that Hannah Arendt so impressively took up in *Origins of Totalitarianism*, are still apparent. When a national referendum was held in Cyprus over entry into the EU, in stark contrast to the widespread approval in Northern Cyprus by ethnic Turks, the ethnic Greeks on the island (who held the political initiative) rejected the proposal, a telling sign that despite the bright hopes of an enlarged EU, there were still people who were willing to wager their pride on the side of nationalism.

The power of the state is a necessary evil (*un mal necessaire*).” That is how a French friend once put it as he shrugged his shoulders. When a French citizen speaks of civilization, he or she is very aware of the problems that must be kept from occurring, such as the straining of relationships and even armed conflict among individuals or groups that each has their own cultural heritage. The state as a mechanism for the prevention of war, or security, was undoubtedly necessary. This does not mean, however, that the power of the state had to become a mechanism used for the oppression of peoples. The hatred directed towards the arrogance of both Cold War superpowers, whose intervention trickled down deeply into everyday lives, manifested itself as pluralism. The very real problem of whether the deployment of troops to Iraq, to which aversion was felt by even Shi’a Muslims (whose mission is supposed to be liberation), would be able to bring the three factions of Iraqis together to run the country was a source of worry. Should Europe, freed from the shackles of its past, aim to become, as Chirac said, a “strong Europe” that can exert control of the world? Rather, it seemed to me that, as a desirable historical step, it should aim to be a “rich Europe”, based on a republican or federal system that brings that richness to the lives of its citizens. The people of the new Member States, who have experienced innumerable hardships in the past, must certainly feel the same.

The mission of the modern nation, which has stressed economic development as its major goal, has been to foster internal industry and nurture its laboring citizens in a healthy manner. The turning point of history is where the owl of Minerva takes flight. But standing in the middle of the festive mood of Paris, I could not but think that being *bound* by history is not the only reality of history. It is quite obvious that, on the stages of the “nation state” and the “industrial society” since the 19th century, the social sciences have played key roles in the analysis and formation of policies. The development of industrial societies since the 19th century has invited the appearance of large masses of laborers. As a result, the 20th century saw serious labor problems, leading to the age of the social welfare state. Along with the spread of socialist ideas spurred on by the presence of large numbers of laborers, the actual birth of socialist countries had, of course, an enormous influence on the act of taking the facts of

history and theorizing from them.

The progress of democratic industrialization under bourgeoisie leadership was to produce masses of laboring “citizens” to be absorbed by their industries, and the managing of the state, ever leaning towards imperial expansionist policies, meant being hand-in-hand with its own capitalist industrial development. And the external forays that each country took created a world structure consisting of, as Wallerstein put it, “core” and “peripheral” regions, and broke the stalemate of multiple “national empires” to create international relations. On the other hand, the tendencies of states until the middle of the 20th century toward general mobilization had the effect of hiding internal social problems. In addition, it is a matter of common knowledge that the proletariat of the “core” states quite enjoyed their national riches, gained from colonial economies, and there were more than a few cases where they were comfortable with the system. The activities of each country that developed within the frameworks of “nation states” and “economic zones” also provided us with the theoretical frameworks, both in the social sciences and history, for their analysis. This and the fact that theories of economic development and social change, with their underlying themes of the process of “democratization”, “liberalization”, “industrialization”, (i.e. transition from agricultural economies) of individual states, have become a kind of “evaluation standard” in the realms of both historical awareness and policy issues are almost matters common knowledge¹. These processes were also transplanted to colonized regions in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, and with advent of European style education systems, were to lead to the awakening of various nationalist movements.

“Empire” as an alternative

As democratic activities became ensured as people became free, increases in the movement of people, the mobility of employment, and the natural expansion of business activities beyond borders were inevitable consequences. As a result, the current economic activities of developed countries, whether it is corporate activities or the transfer of capital, have already far surpassed such things as national borders, and have expanded to a global scale. Borderless economic activities do not rest even for a moment, and the national frameworks of the past are becoming nothing more than anachronistic shackles.

¹ Mazower, Mark, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*. London, 1999. It should be noted that the Meiji government in Japan, which had until the 1880s relied on Great Britain as a political model, began around 1884 to look to the German Empire for its example. That Germany, also a country with a late start in capitalist development, was selected over the most advanced state, Great Britain, would also leave the deep impressions of the German historical school of economics in the study of history and economic policy in Japan. Koichiro Muramatsu's thesis on the theory of economic development in stages at the heart of the German school is still quite evocative in terms of historiography and economic historical studies as a work that accurately captures the significance of that theory in European intellectual history (“Keizai-hatten-dankai-ron”, in *Keizai to Bunka*, (=Wirtschaftliche Entwicklungsstufen theorie. *Wirtschaft and Kultur*). Tokyo, Toyo Keizai Shinpo-sha, 1980).

While the problem of minority groups, as a bitter legacy of nationalism, continues to symbolize the world’s political “borderful” situation, in the current era, in which the restrictions previously imposed by the Cold War order have relaxed with its end, it is an undeniable fact that the establishment of “free markets” which guaranty the circulation of capital and goods is now the overwhelming trend in the world. If political power is responsible for guarantying the free movement of people (labor), things (goods), capital and information, then as long a forum for such activities is to exist globally, the political order to support that forum, as a singular international hegemony, will necessarily be called for. So what exactly is this international hegemony that actually functions in the political and economic spheres? The plethora of discourse that tries to explore its true identity might also be a product of the times.

There are probably few objections to looking to America (and the “virtual capital” concentrated in it) to find the *de facto* leading actor on this stage of hegemony. Of course, the current situation is of an entirely different nature from the preceding era of national empires in which nations aimed for capitalist expansion and struggled with each other, so under the current global situation it would be misleading to simply call this hegemony the “American Empire”. It might be more correct to say that the role of a relatively abstract “world imperial hegemony” has been by chance relegated to one country, and this is the reason that analyses of the mechanisms of control by a hegemonic power are being so actively conducted.

In this era where the states of Europe have overcome nationalist forces to the degree that the EU is actively promoted, in order to create a political body anew, it is only natural that interest has deepened in typological analyses in sociopolitical fields. Efforts are being made on one hand to comprehend the true nature of the current “empire”, but on the other hand interest is growing in efforts to unearth and understand the characteristics of the “empires” from the past, which have been laid to rest as a result of the capitalist expansion of nation states. The empires of the past that disappeared with the end of the Great War took different forms from the “national empires” that were to replace them as new forces. The cultures of Great Britain and Germany, who attempted to colonize the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, had clearly different undertones from the multiculturalism and religious diversity of the civilized “world empire” that the Ottoman Empire embodied.

Yuzo Yamamoto, Shinichi Yamamuro and Masayuki Yamauchi have pointed out very concisely that there are significant differences between “national empires” and “world empires”². As they define it, in the modern world, the fundamental conception of the Westphalia system, which adopted the system of sovereign statehood, was created out of the mutual relationships among sovereign nation states, and in the course of states developing their own capitalist

² Yuzo Yamamoto, “Teikoku to ha nani ka”, and Shin-ichi Yamamuro, “‘Kokumin-teikoku-ron’ no shatei” On the perceptivity of National Empire theory, in “*Teikoku no kenkyuu: genri, ruikei, kankei*” (=A Study of Empire), Yuzo Yamamoto (ed.), University of Nagoya Press, 2003. Masayuki Yamauchi, *Teikoku to Kokumin* (=Empire and Nation). Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten Publishers, 2004.

markets, as an ideology, they had to rely on principles that differed from the imperial order. They also point out that “insofar as modern empires had the characteristic of being ‘empires at the stage of nation states’, they brought with them into existence a two-fold phenomenon, i.e. imperial rule with the nation state at its core.” Though “world empires”, on the other hand, “contained within them a diverse range of conflicting heterogeneous and individual elements, [they aimed to] integrate those elements by having some characteristic that transcended them,” and “the nation states that defined borders, territories, and domains of sovereignty were [completely different] from the political systems that integrated their members, with individual or common characteristics, in an equal manner.”

II. The imperialism of the Byzantine state

The Christian Roman Empire

As for the concept of “empire”, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt have, in a book of that name, provided us with a fascinating definition³. The issue that they raise is not, needless to say, the “national empire”, but the supposition of an “empire” that is more universal, a body whose function is to command the entire world. According to Negri and Hardt, the Empire that is beginning to now take shape is far from conventional imperialism, because modern imperialism was just the extension outward of the sovereignty of the nation states of Europe, and did not build true empires. The Empire of Negri and Hardt is an invisible, virtual-capitalist “power” that transcends the boundaries of nations. At the core of this Empire are the dramatic progress in information-communication methods, and the limitless flow of virtual capital (information) that goes hand-in-hand with those methods⁴.

Concerning the concept of “empire”, we already have the conceptual research of Duverger⁵. Based on historical examples, Duverger defines two types of empires: the Roman model and the Chinese model. In these terms, the Empire that Negri and Hardt take up is of course the former. The agent that ushered in the current world order was Modern Europe, with America as a peripheral state, for the “European World” was born from a womb that had the Roman Empire, especially the Christianized Roman Empire, at its cultural and institutional foundation.

There are some interesting aspects of Negri and Hardt’s concept of Empire that should

³ Negri, Antonio and Hardt, Michael, *Empire*. Harvard U.P., 2000. (Jpn. tr. Kazunori Mizushima, et al., Tokyo, 2003).

⁴ Negri and Hardt’s approach to “empire” is clearly different from that of Alain Joxe, who concretely places America in the position of the functioning body of this international mechanism and analyzes the “empire” as a mechanism of controlling and monopolizing violence. See Alain Joxe, *L’empire du chaos*, Éd. la Découverte, Paris, 2002. Joxe ultimately thinks of the oppressive power mechanisms as realistic tools for violence. In an informative postscript to his translation of Joxe’s work, Tatsu Hemmi concisely points out the differences in visions of “empire” between the authors (translated as *Teikoku to Kyouwakoku*, Seidosha, 2003).

⁵ Maurice Duverger, *Le concept d’empire*, Paris, PUF, 1980.

not be overlooked, the first of which is its spatial totality. There are no national borders in their Empire. The Empire rules the entirety of civilized human society on earth, and it is not possible to limit or restrict the control of the Empire with territorial boundaries. The second aspect is temporal totality. The rule of the Empire is not rule at a particular point in history, but rule until the end — and rule of the end — of history. In the sense that the Empire tries to transcend history and make the existing order a permanent fixture, it has no temporal boundaries. The third aspect is that it also has a social totality, and according to Negri and Hardt, the Empire will not only rule territory and its inhabitants, but it will create the world in which people live. It will not only control the interactions with human behavior; it will rule all aspects of the social order of society to the finest detail, and even try to control humanity itself. The purpose of this control is the eternal survival of the life of society, and therefore the Empire will become a model “biopolitical” power. Such an empire, if one follows their logic, would naturally seek control of the entire earth. In real terms, this would mean that the world would go through a series of bloody political conflicts, yet still seek a universal and immutable “internal peace”.

One particularly notable feature of the Empire that Negri and Hardt imagine is that it has much in common with the discourse of the Christianized Roman Empire. The Christian Roman Empire was built upon the foundations of the ideology of a world empire, based on the eschatology of the Old Testament, and particularly Chapter Seven of the Book of Daniel. This rhetoric of a “world empire” was espoused by Origen of Alexandria, and was refined in the fourth century into an Imperial ideology by a second-generation disciple of Origen, Eusebios of Caesarea. It is said that during the reign of the first emperor Augustus, the Roman Empire met with Christ as part of God’s plan of salvation, and was by the will of God entrusted with the task of completing the world before the Second Coming of Christ⁶. The Roman Empire, nothing more than an accident of history, was to be the inevitable agent of God’s grand soteriological plan. This political theology, laying out the fate of history based on this eschatology, at the same time proscribed the inevitable role of the leader of the Empire: the Emperor. In the Christianized Roman Empire, which was to be the last on this earth, the Emperor, as the representative of Christ, was the one omnipotent emperor of this earth (*autocrator*), counterpart to the one omnipotent God in Heaven (*pantocrator*), and was to control all earthly affairs. And under the rule of this law, and under the protection of the rule by Imperial officials who patterned their roles after the order of the Saints in Heaven, people enjoyed a peace and culture guaranteed by the legal and political order of the empire. The peoples outside of the order of the Empire were barbarians, yet they too, in God’s plan for redemption, were destined to be absorbed as members of the civilized world through the Emperor’s calling. They too, accordingly, were subjects of the Emperor who reigns over the

⁶ Kin-ichi Watanabe, *Chuusei Roma Teikoku (=Medieval Roman Empire)*, Iwanami Shinsho, 1980, chapter one.

“world empire”. The Emperor would certainly, based on his right of rule and with his political mission to encompass the world as a whole under his rule and with his religious mission to spiritually “civilize” the world through the Christian faith, persistently pressure them.

The Byzantine Empire, which I shall take up here, is none other than the source of the Christian Roman Empire that embodied this political theology. It has long since been pointed out in political and philosophical studies that the Christian Roman Empire was lavishly decorated with literary expressions steeped in the above motifs⁷. The way in which discourse of the Prophet Daniel’s vision, making its way through Byzantine territory, was to govern the behavior of people who would have an enormous influence on the later Christian world is also a theme that has gained renewed attention⁸. Pursuit of that is a matter of the intellectual history of politics with a purpose somewhat separate from this work, yet when one ponders the image of the monistic, liberal and global “empire” that has resurfaced in recent years, it is hard not to be fascinated by the striking similarities that can be seen between these modern ideologies and those of this medieval empire.

Negli and Hardt’s argument attempts to extract and conceptualize the phenomenon of “empire” that lies beneath the current transitional liberal society. They avoid confronting directly the international mechanism that has as its practical agent America and the legal violence that stems from that mechanism. That, however, is because they put emphasis on the “multitudes”, and this does not constitute a fundamental flaw in their work. On the contrary, it has the effect of bringing out the intriguingly analogous characteristics between the Empire they illustrate, and Byzantine society as the Christian Roman Empire.

Byzantine research as a study of national economic history

Upon surveying past studies of the Byzantine Empire, one is surprised at the relative paucity of research conducted from the standpoint of examining the imperial nature of that state. One cannot help but notice that even on this field (which at first glance might seem immune) is projected the social reality that the 19th and 20th centuries were under the leadership of Europe.

George Ostrogorsky’s general survey, a standard work which has only recently been translated into Japanese, is an essential read for anyone attempting to take up the Byzantine state⁹.

⁷ Kin-ichi Watanabe has translated and published a collection Beck’s articles (*Byzance Sekai no Shikou-kouzou*, Iwanami Shoten Publishers, 1977). For a picture Byzantine political theology through an analysis of the writings of Basil of Caesarea, see Sansterre, M., Eusèbe de Césarée et la naissance de la théorie “césaropapiste”. *Byzantion* 42 (1972) p.131-195, 532-594. See also Geanakoplos, D.J., Church and State in the Byzantine Empire: A Reconsideration of the Problem of Caesaropapismus. *Church History* 34 (1965) p.381-403. Cf. also Dagron, Gilbert, *Emperor and Priest. The Imperial Office in Byzantium*. tr. Jean Birrell. Cambridge, 2003; Runciman, Steven, *The Byzantine Theocracy*. Cambridge, 1977.

⁸ Hannes Möring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit*. Stuttgart, 2001.

⁹ Ostrogorsky, Georg. *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates*. (Japanese translation of 3rd German edition [1963] by Hiroshi Wada available)

Its thorough insight and refined style make it a monument in Byzantine scholarship that has yet to be surpassed. In this brilliant survey, Ostrogorsky frames the history of the Byzantine state as a history of development in which the state goes through three stages of structural transition. Since humanity does not exist for the sole purpose of being categorized by its heirs, the act of applying stages itself, be they three or four or however many, must be called an act of intellectual arrogance on the part of “modern man”. But leaving aside for the moment problems such as the propriety of division into periods, it is necessary to remember that this theory of development in phases itself drew heavily on the influence of the study of national economics.

As historian Kinichi Watanabe points out, Ostrogorsky fled St. Petersburg with his parents during the Soviet Revolution in the wake of the First World War¹⁰. Ostrogorsky’s encounter in his youth at the University of Heidelberg with national economics (*Nationalökonomie*), then at its height, was to deeply influence him, and this would be a decisive event in his career. Inspired in his studies by Edgar Salin, what Ostrogorsky chose was an analysis of Byzantine society as the cradle of Russia. Ostrogorsky, inheriting the solid tradition of the study of agricultural society in Imperial Russia, aimed for an analysis of the Byzantine state within the framework of national economics. That is, he depicted the Byzantine state as having one sovereign power and as a territorial state comprising a physically limited area, based on an analyses of agricultural economics (which was the major of economic activity in this national society) and of the land system at its foundation. Nearly all of the monographs he penned before authoring the survey mentioned above dealt with Byzantine socioeconomics. In his attempts to clarify the mechanisms of the economic and social development (and decline) of the Byzantine state, which played out while subsuming various contradictions within its territory, Ostrogorsky came to envisage a course of history in which there was a gradual transition from the centralized state authority of Imperial Rome to a system of feudal states based on the growth of major landowners and “medieval” human bonds.

With his three-stage development thesis steeped in the German historical school of economics, an economic view that used as an index the growth of productivity, and a theory of self-sustaining national economics, Ostrogorsky’s academic framework was worthy of occupying one of the most significant niches in national economics since the late 19th century. The fact that Ostrogorsky, after he moved to Belgrade, used valid Marxist concepts to take up problems such as the power relationships between the ruled peasant farmers and the ruling landlords, and political strife over landownership between the state authority and the landed gentry, shows just how well his work answered the needs of the 20th century.

During the post-war process of democratization of the 1950’s and 1960’s, there were heated debates in the field of Byzantine studies as well. The debate over the Byzantine

¹⁰ See Kin-ichi Watanabe’s book review on Ostrogorsky’s *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates* and its translation into Japanese, in *Hitotsubashi Ronsou*, No. 127-3, March 2002, pp.1-17.

feudalism between Marxist history and “bourgeois history” yet again revolved around the consequences of the controlling power in an agricultural society¹¹. At the 12th International Congress of Byzantine Studies, held in 1961 in Ohrid, Macedonia, the theme set for the main table was “City and Village”, which was supposed to build upon previous debates. Under the chairmanship of the eminent German Byzantinist Franz Dolger, main and supplementary reports were drafted by four Soviet scholars and French scholar Paul Lemerle, respectively. Records of the proceedings were even translated into Japanese, as *Byzance Teikoku no Toshi to Nouson* (“*Cities and Villages of the Byzantine Empire*”), Pigulevskaia, N.V. and others (tr. by Kinichi Watanabe, Soubunsha). This series of problems, as the “Byzantine version” of the major issues in post-war socioeconomic history and historiography, gathered the attention of researchers around the world. One might go so far as to say that this was Byzantine studies as the developmental history of national economics (nation states) with productivity as a lever. These debates, however, all but disappeared in the 1970’s. This was no doubt the result of the realization that attempts to analyze the phenomenon of the Byzantine state and society with analogous paradigms from modern nations, or perhaps the attempts to apply some “fundamental law of history” were, irrespective of the differing views of the participants, simply inappropriate. In Byzantine studies, the self-destruction of an academic field based on faith in the “laws of history” occurred quite earlier than the collapse of the East-West Cold War order.

The characteristics of the formation of the problems in the “feudalism debate” can be examined from multiple angles. Here, though, it should suffice to point out that they heavily concentrated on issues of land ownership, deduced from arguments on means of production, and the appropriation of wealth, rooted in class system arguments. It was mainly from these two points of interest that various events and phenomena were listed, analyzed, organized, and were also subject to counterarguments. Ostrogorsky’s survey is none other than one product of the academic current of the 20th century. Aided by his meticulous account, his frameworks of division by era and social analysis, on a plane separate from is detailed description, will no doubt continue to entrap the intellectual activities of analysts of the Byzantine Empire for years to come. It has diverted attention from another aspect of reality in imperial society.

The tolerance of empire

The Byzantine Empire, like its territorial inheritor, the Ottoman Empire, was a multiethnic and multicultural “world empire”¹². With fluency in Greek as the lingua franca, reputation

¹¹ Watanabe, Kin-ichi “Byzance Houken-sei no Sho-mondai: Ronsou to Tenbou”, introductory article of *Byzance Shakai Keizai-shi Kenkyuu*. (=A Study on the Byzantine Socio-Economic History)

¹² See Kin-ichi Watanabe, *Chuusei Roma Teikoku* (=Medieval Roman Empire), Iwanami Shinsho, 1980, and *Constantinople Sennen* (=Thousand Years of Constantinople), 1985. See also Kouichi Inoue, *Byzance Teikoku* (=Medieval Roman Empire), Iwanami Shoten, 1982, and *Byzance Kouhi-retsuden* (=Portraits of Byzantine Empress), Chikuma Shobo, 1996, etc.

in Imperial or military officials, honor in scholarship, and success in business were all realized. And authority in the Empire was not limited to people from “Hellenic” areas such as Macedonia or Thrace; Emperors, military commanders, and administrators of state were from areas spread throughout the East, such as Armenia, Georgia, Syria and Isauria. People of “mixed ancestry”, in the modern sense, born out of marriages between different ethnic groups, were quite normal, and it was far from rare that around the person to be crowned emperor there appeared a crowded assortment of the emblems of the diverse ethnic groups from which his parents drew ancestry. And like the cats of Lake Van in Eastern Anatolia, there were even cases of people whose left and right eyes were of different color. The horrifically violent power struggles in the region were also based on the irrational ties of immediate blood and land, and there were scarcely any conflicts between religious or ethnic groups. While there were power struggles over the throne, there were no challenges to Imperial authority itself. Ideas of revolution in its modern sense were simply not present. Accession to the Imperial throne meant not merely base handouts for favors done; nearly all figures in the history of the Imperial throne undertook large scale good deeds (*philanthropia*) for the benefit of Imperial subjects¹³. It is the continuity of the rulership and in the continued “good conduct” (*euergon/ euergetein*) expected of the Emperor that can be seen one notable characteristic of the Byzantine Empire.

One outstanding feature of “traditional” Byzantine studies — and this may be said of the majority of studies of “empire” as well — is the stance that focuses on the “controlling” aspect of empire. “Empire” is interpreted as a power to control and oppress, or as an oppressive state mechanism with real and violent devices, and ideological or systemic analyses of that mechanism are conducted. In light of historical reality, that stance is correct and commendable, and this author does not mean to imply any fault in such efforts. However, when one thinks of “empire”, it is also necessary to consider the aspect of integration, or the integration of people based on a more universal ideology that transcends ethnicity or place of birth. In addition, it is essential that we understand the transfer of wealth dispersed from the ruler to areas inside and outside the empire. History and the social sciences have solidified the statuses of theories of empire and state through emphasis on the pillaging of wealth by imperial power and other, non-economic constraint mechanisms, trying to ascertain the characteristics of “empire” by “modalities” of power. The mode of wealth transfer, however, is not one that can be defined in terms of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. In the case of the Byzantine Empire, along with the mechanisms of the financial appropriation of wealth by Imperial authority, it is also necessary direct attention to the various forms of reinvestment of wealth from the centrality of the Empire symbolized by the Emperor. The “world empire”, as a mechanism that transcended races and appropriated wealth over a wide geographical area, was on the other

¹³ There are many panegyrics left that tell of the philanthropy of the Emperors. Hunger, Herbert von, *Philanthropia*. Wien, 1963.

hand a giant mechanism for redistributing wealth. After considering both of these aspects, we must not overlook the reality that the “empire” was, as a mechanism of power, sanctioned by all levels of society.

Mere illiterate peasants traveled to the capital, gained favor with and became members of the ruling elite (Justinian, who reigned from 527-565; Basil, who reigned from 867-886). It was a society where the leverage of loyalty could catapult one to public office, and even eventually to the post of Emperor. The Byzantine Empire, where such cases were not exceptional, was not just a society with a high level of social mobility. The circulation of wealth and human resources and the circuits to redistribute wealth appropriated by the state, which supported the empire, created not only a flow towards a centrality symbolized by Constantinople, but also a variegated system of channels that flowed from that center. Such recirculation of wealth reached the people around this Byzantine “world empire” as well¹⁴.

Evelyne Patlagean has carried out a study of late antiquity from the novel analytical angle of the origins of the common view of economic “poverty”¹⁵. According to Patlagean’s research, the economic society that took shape at the formation of the Christianized Roman Empire was in step with a tremendous change in the way that the “poor” were dealt with in society. Specifically, when the poor, who were until that time subsumed in the various city-states, flowed into the larger world and were isolated, the Christian Empire functioned as the “world’s” relief system. She describes this as the transition from the condition of social poverty (which until then had been taken care of within each *polis*) to an “economic (material) poverty” (or the condition where an individual is sent into the world isolated and without wealth). According to Patlagean, the system that supported the impoverished, from the time of the ancient city states, was based on a combination of the unconditional charity of the wealthy citizenry, the taxes, levies, and other unreasonable “non-economic restraints”. In Patlagean’s model, it is easy to see that this was the coalescence of the traditionally exercised appropriation of wealth by the Roman Empire and the *prima facie* contradictory function of redistribution. Patlagean asserts that “among the modes of transfer of wealth, the historical basis for electing to combine these very two was present in the political tradition of the Emperor as the supreme authority who was equipped with a centralized administrative organization and fiscal power, and also in the cultural tradition of philanthropy of the empowered citizens.”

In this work, I assert that the spread of Christianity added a new function to a newly

¹⁴ From the fourth century an annual pension (*annona*) was granted by the Armenian king. In the middle of the 10th century, Liudprand, as an emissary of the Italian king Berengarius, was invited to the capital by Emperor Constantine VII, and returned home to Pavia bearing extravagant gifts (Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, 6,5). Liudprand’s *De administrando imperio* on Constantine VII is a valuable source of information on Italy of the time. In the *Alexiad*, the history of her father, Anna Comnena describes vividly how crusader Robert Guiscard was given immense grants. Anna Comnène, *Alexiade*, Tome X, XI, 1-6. ed. B.Leib, P.Gantier (Paris, 1935-36) t. II, p. 230-233.

¹⁵ Patlagean, Evelyne, *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance, 4e-7e siècles*, Paris, 1977.

formed state channel. This was not merely a change in system whereby the Church gained a foothold in the mechanism of empire and was able to enjoy its financial privileges. In the deeper levels of society, in an eschatological ideology where all the citizens of Rome headed toward the end of this earth, each began to face God, which brought a change in lifestyle patterns, and this accordingly also meant that the range of the socioeconomic activities of people would join with conventional custom to form a new mode of the transfer of wealth. This system created in the Byzantine Empire created the model of the Christian empire, and would have a tremendous impact on later history. In Byzantine society, the monk eagerly seeking to communicate spiritually with the God, a historically typical genre of human life which had emerged from the third century onward, was greatly venerated by the people. The places where monks and hermits resided became “holy ground” where people would gather. That this became something that the Emperor could not ignore is evidenced by numerous individual case studies¹⁶. In them one can catch unvarnished glimpses of the value systems and behavior patterns of the people who lived in the empire, and at the same time see the appearance of the real problems of the multi-faceted relationships between the Imperial mechanism and the Church and its monasteries.

III. The aim and structure of my work

This essay is intended to describe the characteristics of my study. It should be said that the main point of my work is to analyze the Byzantine Empire as a “world empire” from a perspective that takes into account both appropriation and redistribution functions.

For that purpose, I shall focus on the period from the fourth to the sixth century, when the Roman Empire was Christianized, and proceed with an examination of legal textual evidence concerning the state’s finances and assets of the Church. One of the striking features of the Byzantine state is how it systematically incorporated the Christian faith and the entirety of the Church organization (made up of churches, monasteries, and charitable facilities) into the state structure within the continuity of the mechanisms of the Roman Empire. The transition to Christianity in Imperial society did not stop with merely a change in the everyday practices of belief of Imperial citizens; it was a mammoth undertaking with structural and financial dimensions. By analyzing regulations promulgated in the Codes of both Theodosius and Justinian, which are fundamental sources for Byzantine research, this work shall first attempt to verify various matters concerning what position this newly installed organization gained

¹⁶ See, for example, Michel Kaplan, L’ESPACE ET LE SACRE A BYZANCE D’APRES LES SOURCES HAGIOGRAPHIQUES. *Cristianita d’Occidente e Cristianita d’Oriente (secoli VI-XI)* 24-30 aprile 2003. *Settimane di Studio della Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, LI*. Spoleto, 2004. pp.1053-1115. (translated into Japanese by me in *Orient* No46-2, pp.225-244), which illustrates the political and social significance of the “sacred” as well as textual development as an instrument for creation of the “sacred”.

in the Imperial financial system. Through this examination in the first section it will become clear that the activities of the churches, monasteries, and charitable facilities were maintained with special attention from the Emperor, and that those activities were actually monitored by state administrative mechanisms, even leading to intervention as needed. Since the period concerned was also one in which the entire Imperial fiscal structure was radically reformed and reorganized, the position of Church mechanisms were solidified in the process of forming the Empire's financial administration, and would become recognized as a coherent political model in the following eras as well.

In the latter part of the first section I will try to sketch a more concrete picture of the true nature of the "Christian Empire" known through records of early Imperial edicts. Though the financial system of the Empire was transformed once again in the beginning of the ninth century (Nicephorus I, c. 810), the importance of charity was not sacrificed. Rather, the majority of sources we have concerning individual cases from the 10th century on leaves one with the impression that the social and economic role of the monasteries expanded after this period. In the second section, by introducing some of these individual cases, I shall examine the influence that the Christian faith exerted on the lives of Imperial citizens and their manner of disposing of wealth, in addition to how the Emperor and the Imperial government, in turn, systematically responded to its subjects. Based on textual evidence not seen in the fourth to sixth centuries, the relationships between individuals who of their own free will made donations, and Imperial mechanisms, churches and monasteries will become the subject of discussion. In the third section attention will be shifted to the wealth of the churches and monasteries, which became the "assets of God", and we shall get an overview of how Imperial power managed the finances of its entire territory. The concurrent healthy management of an empire and special consideration paid to the churches and monasteries, which were integral parts of people's lives, sometimes resulted in contradictory demands, which posed problems for the Emperor. What is healthy management of an empire? For state officials, in the course of actually collecting taxes, they were burdened with the duty to maintain the Imperial treasury on one hand, and the necessity to economically revitalize Imperial society and show thorough consideration to the "assets of God". From Imperial directives it is possible to catch glimpses of the numerous real-world problems that the Empire faced.

What kind of statehood was the Byzantine state? If the liberal and monistic "empire" that is said to be trampling the earth is a phenomenon born from European/American society and civilization, then it might be prudent to comprehend the true nature of the "Christian Empire" as the womb of the European/American world. The first time that human beings stood before God as "individuals", were free, equal, and were the recipients of Christian brotherly love (*philadelphia*) was in the Byzantine Empire. Under the consideration (grace) of the God that reigns over the "world" and the Emperor as his representative, people's lives were ordered and a variety of state systems took shape in the quest for the realization of *oikonomia*, or the earthly law of salvation.