



## BASIL'S COURT

### BYZANTIUM 867

The Byzantine empire in 867 is much reduced from its Mediterranean-spanning height under Justinian. It had first suffered from centuries of warfare with the Sassanid empire—who made it to the very gates of Constantinople—then soon after Hadrian lost large swathes of territory including Egypt and most of North Africa to the Arab-Muslim Caliphate. To add insult to injury, the Iconoclast position of the Emperors of the 8<sup>th</sup> and early 9<sup>th</sup> century resulted in the loss of most of their Italian holdings. After centuries of this decline, the new, smaller empire is far more defensible. Simultaneously, the Caliphate is weakening. The Empress Theodora ends the iconoclast controversy. The Amorian dynasty begins to have some limited success against the Arabs, and begins to convert the Bulgarians to Christianity. A fragile resurgence is beginning.

It is against this backdrop that the dramas of court play out. Basil I, by birth a peasant, became emperor through an entirely improbable sequence of events. He first became the groom to a member of the royal family, then came to the attention of the current Emperor (Michael III, known as the Drunkard) due to his skills in wrestling and horse-handling. As the emperor's bodyguard, he convinced Michael to let him kill Michael's uncle Bardas and replace him as Kaiser. He soon became co-emperor. A year later, he murdered Michael and became sole emperor. It is at this point that our committee begins.

It is your job, delegates, to help secure this regicide's control over power, and Byzantium its rightful place on the world stage. If you succeed, you will spark a new period of expansion and a cultural renaissance, and Basil's descendants may still be on the throne two centuries hence. If you fail, you doom the empire to an early and ignominious disintegration.

#### BACKGROUND GUIDE



**JOE FUES**  
CHAIR

Joe Fues is a third year student studying Statistics here in Chicago. He has never participated in competitive Model UN, but this is his second year staffing ChoMUN and his first time as a committee executive. Last year, he served as an assistant chair on the "NATO 1950" committee, and is excited to be chairing "Byzantium, AD 867" this year. Joe is a member of the Gamma Sigma Chapter of Alpha Phi Omega National Service Fraternity on campus in addition to participating in ChoMUN. He has lived in the Chicagoland area his entire life, and can likely be found checking the score of the Cubs game every time he is not in the committee room.



**AARON STOCKEL**  
CRISIS DIRECTOR

Aaron Stockel was proudly born and raised in Los Angeles, California, and is just as weirded out by this third person perspective as you are (but orders from the USG are orders, so...). He is a swimmer, jazz and swing saxophonist, actor, singer, and a history major at the University of Chicago, as well as an avid reader and an even more avid (bordering on fanatical) Lord of the Rings fan. He enjoys hiking, swimming, sleeping, drawing, writing, movies, sleeping, ultimate frisbee, stargazing, skiing, swing dancing, sleeping, studying history, running, singing, traveling (especially in Europe), and sleeping.

Though his area of concentration is undecided as of yet, he is very passionate about, and interested in the Late Antique and Byzantine Periods (partially because Byzantium served as the inspiration of Gondor). He is very excited to be running a Byzantine committee and serving as its CD. He cannot wait to see what direction his delegates go, be it to restore the Empire to glory, or cause its untimely demise 600 years early (if we're being honest, it's almost certainly going to be the latter).



**JACOB BISHOP**  
CRISIS DIRECTOR

This is Jacob Bishop's second year doing ChoMUN: last year he staffed "What Have the Romans Ever Done for Us: The Judeo-Roman War," where the delegates' attempts to backstab each other came scarily close to mirroring the historical factionalism of the Jewish forces.

He is currently a third year Economics major and carrying on a love-hate relationship with the Math major. A proud native of Berkeley, California, he's been told that it's unjust for "an entire city [to] get a pass from acceptable behavior." On the rare occasion where he isn't busy committing unspeakable acts to mathematical notation, he can be found curled up in a café with a cup of coffee and a fantasy novel.

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