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HYMNS AND LAMENTS FOR THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (1453)

Alack and Alas!

A song from Pontos near the Black Sea Coast. Until the 20th century, Christians of Asia Minor, conscious of being heirs of the Roman Empire, referred to their land as Romania, and themselves as Romios.

Alack and alas! The Turks have taken Constantinople,
They've taken the King's throne, the rulers are changed.
Churches mourn, monasteries cry,
and St. John Chrysostom weeps and laments.
"Don't cry, St. John, and don't lament, Romania* is taken.
But, though gone, Romania will blossom again."

Constantine

The title of this song from Epiros refers to the tragic fate of the last of the Byzantine Emperors, Constantine Dragazis Paleologos, who died on the city walls defending Constantinople against the Turks.

Constantine, young Constantine,
walked three years to find a good wife.
To find one who would be tall, slender and
with a good arched brow.
He found a tall and slender girl, one that he liked,
It took three years to list her dowry, another
three years her other belongings, and there was
no end to the things her mother had put aside for her.

A bird came and perched on Constantine's knee;
it didn't sing like a bird, but had a human voice.
"Constantine, don't marry, don't spend your money,
for today you'll marry and tomorrow you'll die."

Three Cretan Monks

Three Cretan monks and three from Mt. Athos
Are rigging out a ship, equipping it well.
In the stern they put the Cross, in the middle the Patriarch
And they chant the "Cherubic" and "Axion Esti."
A voice was heard from heaven, from the archangel's mouth:
Let the "Cherubic" and the "Axion Esti" stop,
The Turks have taken St. Sophia, the great monastery,
Which has three-hundred semandra and sixty-two bells,
And Constantinople, the City of the Greeks.

Verses in Memory of the Martyrs of the Fall of Constantinople

First plagal mode

Come, brothers, let us praise the phalanx of martyrs
Who bravely strove against many barbarians,
With Constantine first among them,
A most valiant army, a most sacred regiment,
An unbroken and invincible rank,
The proud boasts of the Faith and of our Race,
Martyrs of the Fall, company of the godly,
The Church's powerful envoys supplicating
Christ to send down upon His people peace and great mercy.

Hail, strong gathering and holy,
Victorious company, towers of piety,
Steadfast soldiers of Christ, unconquered warriors,
Most vigorous in mind and most valiant in soul,
Truly holy and most dear to God,
Sacred choir, and divinely-inspired body,
Martyrs of the Fall, with Constantine
In the Queen of Cities, who will receive crowns of glory,
Implore Christ that great mercy be given to His people.

Hail, trophy-bearing throng,
Who valorously acquitted yourselves in wars,
Stars who have passed through many torments
And astonished the whole world,
You who have made earth heaven and illuminated all things,
In Abraham's bosom now cherished
And dancing with ranks of angels,
Martyrs of the Fall, flowers breathing
An aroma of certain hope in the resurrection of our Race,
Implore Christ that great mercy be given to His people. ✣