ASIA MINOR (Part One)

The appropriate way to read this article is print it out, then take it in hand and relax in your favorite reading chair with your feet up on the settee. Most important, be sure you have a glass of your favorite fermented beverage at hand.

Now, if you *really* want to do this right, make it a glass of Midas Touch Golden Elixir produced by the Dogfish Head Brewery in Milton, Delaware. You'll be drinking history while you read it.

You remember from Greek mythology the legend of King Midas, to whom the god Dionysius mischievously granted his wish that everything he touched turn to gold? Well, he really lived. His tomb has been discovered, his bones excavated, together with the residues of the funerary feast held by his mourners.

It turns out they drank a lot of booze. The residue was enough for molecular archaeologist Patrick McGovern (author of Ancient Wine) to figure out the formula, a combination of honey mead, wine, and beer. After a bottle of Golden Elixir, you'll agree. 2,700 years ago, they knew how to make really good stuff.

I'm enjoying a glass of it as I write this, and I can assure you that's true. Let me warn you, though - at 9%, it packs a marvelous wallop.

Midas was King of Phrygia, venerated as the founder of the city of Ankyra (Greek for *anchor*) in 700 BC. But the place was already old by his time, for the Bronze Age Hittites in 1400 BC knew it as Ankuwash. Today, it's called Ankara - the capital of Turkey.

The three great inventions that created civilization - for without them, folks would never have collected and stayed put in cities - booze, agriculture, and domesticated animals, all originated in what is now southeastern Turkey.

It looks like *all three* were invented in the *same small village* of a few hundred souls some 8 to 10,000 years ago called Çayönü. It's near the source of the Tigris river at the foot of the Karacadag mountains 30 miles northwest of the city of Diyarbakir.

The folks there were the first to domesticate wild grains, starting with Einkorn wheat around 8,000 BC and possibly earlier. It wasn't before long that they had figured how to make beer out of it, then to cultivate grapes and make wine. About 7,000 BC they became the first folks to domesticate an animal for food - pigs. Then came goats and sheep.

(The first domesticated animal - dogs bred from wolves 15,000 years ago in East Asia - were not for food but as a warning system from attack: wolves don't bark, dogs were bred to.)

Who were these people of Çayönü to whom we owe so much? We don't know for sure, but for sure we know who they were not - the Turks. These guys showed up mucho millennia later. We'll go through these millennia quickly as these latecomers shall be the focus of our story - but we need to remember the inventive people of Çayönü, because most likely they were the aboriginal inhabitants of southeastern Turkey, whom we know as the Kurds.

After all, the capital of Turkish Kurdistan today is Diyarbakir.

The Kurds, however, weren't the only Neolithic people in this bigger-than-Texas giant peninsula between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean (300,000 sq. mi.; Texas is 269,000) that the Greeks called *Anatolia*, East-land, or *Mikra Asia*, Asia Minor. Like the people of Troy.

Look at the map again and you'll see in the upper left the Dardanelles, more widely known as the Hellespont, the strait of water where the Black Sea flows into the Med. Just where the arrow is pointing is the site of the Trojan War - for there really was one.

The legends were that Troy was founded by a Greek pioneer named Dardanus (hence the Dardanelles) and named after his grandson Tros - although it was alternatively known as Ilium (hence *The Iliad*) after Tros's son Ilios. Wherever they came from and whoever they were, the Trojans had a flourishing city by 3000 BC controlling trade between the Black Sea and the Med, and kept it going for almost 2,000 years.

Then a war destroyed it. The archaeologists date it around 1190 BC, calling the excavated layer Troy VIIa. The historians of Ancient Greece calculated the date of the Trojan War as 1183 BC. There's a lot of good history in Homer. You might consider re-reading the founding literature of Western Civilization, The Iliad. Or you could cop out and get the DVD of Brad Pitt playing Achilles (Troy - actually a pretty good movie).

It's a funny coincidence that at just the same time Troy was destroyed, so was the capital of a thousand year-old empire in central Anatolia, that of the Hittites. Nobody knows who wiped out their capital of Hattusa in 1180 BC, afterwhich their empire broke apart into a batch of smaller kingdoms like Lydia and Phrygia.

Meanwhile, Greeks calling themselves Ionians began establishing a thriving civilization along Anatolia's west coast with an alliance of a dozen cities called the Ionian League. It was in these cities that Western Civilization was born. *Homer* (d. ca. 750 BC) came from one of them, Chios. History's first philosopher and scientist, *Thales* (624-546 BC) came from Miletus.

Any university course on the history of Western Philosophy begins with Thales, the first to try and explain things in the world naturally without reference to the supernatural or mythology.

Yet just as the Western enterprise was getting going, a great threat to it was emerging far to the east. Centuries before (sometime before 1000 BC), tribes from Central Asia had begun settling in a large plateau beyond Mesopotamia. They called themselves Farsis, which the Greeks pronounced as Persis - the Persians.

The founder of the Persian Empire was *Cyrus the Great* (590-530 BC). He unified the Persian tribes, conquered Babylon and all Mesopotamia, and in 546, seized much of Anatolia by defeating the King of Lydia, Croesus, and taking his capital of Sardis. (See Democrats at Delphi).

Now tiny Greece and mighty Persia stood facing each other and the Greeks refused to submit, defeating the gigantic Persian forces first at Marathon in 490 BC, then at Salamis ten years later.

So mainland Greece remained free, but Ionia on the Anatolian coast was swallowed into the enormity of the Persian Empire:

In revenge, and to put an end to the Persian threat to Greece once and for all, it was all conquered by *Alexander the Great* (356-323 BC). Upon Alexander's sudden death at age 32, his conquests were divided up by his three primary generals. Ptolemy got Egypt, Lysimachus got Greece, and Seleucus got the lion's share - Persia all the way to the Indus, Mesopotamia and the Middle East, and he split Anatolia in half with Lysimachus.

So Anatolia had Greek rulers for the next two centuries until it was enveloped by the empire being created by the Romans. Under Roman rule, Anatolia became a refuge for the founders of Christianity and their followers. *St. Paul* (10-67, all dates now in AD unless noted) was from Tarsus, and established Christian communities in Ephesus, Gallatia, Konya, and numerous other Anatolian locales.

Thus when *Constantine I* (280-337), the first Christian Emperor of Rome, proclaimed the ancient city of Byzantium to be the capital of a New Rome, Christianity had sunk deep roots throughout all Asia Minor.

Founded by Greek colonists led by their king, Byzantus, in 667 BC, at the strategic location on the Bosphorus, the narrow entrance channel to the Black Sea, it was one of the world's great trading cities when Constantine changed its name to Constantinople in 324 - a name it would keep until 1930, when it became Istanbul.

As the Roman Empire in the West disintegrated into the Dark Ages, the Roman Empire in the East - known to modern historians as the Byzantine Empire although it inhabitants never called it that (for them, it was *Basileia Romaion*, Imperial Rome) - saw the melding of all Asia Minor, the Middle

East, Egypt, Greece, and southeastern Europe into the Christian superpower of the Middle Ages.

All of Egypt, the Levant, and Asia Minor was once Christian:

To immortalize its status, *Emperor Justinian* (482-565) built the world's largest church, the magnificent Hagia Sophia in the 530s as the center of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. But little more than a century later, a mortal threat arose to this Christian Empire - a horde of nomad barbarians sweeping out of the sands of Arabia like human locusts.

Later they would call themselves "Moslems" (those who submit) and invent a religious justification for their conquest called "Islam" (submission)(See The Myth of Mecca). But at the time (650s), they were another barbarian pestilence like the Slavs and the Bulgars who were advancing into the Balkans.

By 720, the empire had lost the Balkans, Egypt, and the Middle East, but retained its Anatolian core:

It enjoyed a Byzantine Renaissance in wealth and culture during 800s and 900s. The Arabs faded as a threat. But in the 1000s (the 11th century), another threat took their place.

They came from the Black Steppes, the remotest wasteland of Central Asia, to settle in the oasis region of the Kwarezm (see Chaos in Kwarezm) north of Afghanistan. There, in the middle of the 900s, they adopted Islam. They were the Seljuk Turks.

They decided they were better Moslems than the Arabs, taking such a dislike to them that the Seljuks took over the entire Arab Empire, all of Persia and the Middle East, making the Arabs' capital, Baghdad, their capital by 1055.

Hearing of the immensely wealthy cities of Anatolia, they set their greedy eyes upon them. Led by their sultan, *Alp Arslan* (1029-1072), the Seljuk forces launched their invasion in 1068. They were beaten back at first. The fateful day came on August 26, 1071, where the army of Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes was destroyed by the Seljuk cavalry at the Battle of Manzikert.

The Seljuks swept triumphantly across Anatolia, and suddenly - by 1080 - the great Christian empire was virtually gone from Asia:

Yet under the leadership of two remarkable emperors, *John II Komnenos* (the "Byzantine Marcus Aurelius" 1087-1143) and his son *Manuel I Komnenos* (1118-1180), within 100 years after Manzikert, the empire had regained western Anatolia and more for Christianity.

Again, Eastern Christendom enjoyed another flourish of Renaissance prosperity. And again, disaster followed - but not from Moslems from the East, but from fellow Christians from the West: the catastrophe culminating in the hideous sack of Constantinople known as the *Fourth Crusade*.

It's hard to believe, but the Fourth Crusade of 1204 had nothing to do with Jerusalem or the Holy Land. It was a revenge raid by Roman Catholics to pillage the capital of their wealthy Christian rivals. (See The Real Crusaders.)

Worse, the Crusaders didn't go away, and proclaimed a Latin Empire had now replaced the Byzantine. Their leader, the Roman Catholic Baldwin IX, Count of Flanders (Flanders is now mostly western Belgium), declared himself Emperor.

The Crusader rulers proceeded to tear their new empire apart. Luckily, the Seljuks were doing the same to themselves. The Byzantines were finally able to eject the Crusader Catholics from Constantinople and reconstitute their empire by 1261 - just in time to ward off a human tsunami.

The Mongols of *Genghis Khan* (1162-1227) had overrun Central Asia in the 1220s. Under his grandson Hulagu, the Mongols overran Persia, Mesopotamia, and Seljuk (Eastern) Anatolia in the 1250s. Constantinople lay in their sights when Hulagu got word in 1260 that his brother Mongke,

then the Great Khan, had died. Hulagu had to return to Mongolia and the Mongol tsunami receded.

The Byzantine rulers - a Greek Orthodox family originally from Macedonia named Palaiologos - rebuilt Constantinople from the Crusader wreckage and were on their way to reestablishing control over Anatolia. But in the same year the Mongols sacked Baghdad in 1258, a boy was born in far eastern Anatolia who would seal their fate.

Osman (1258-1326), starting out at age 23 as the chief of a small village of a Turkish tribe called the Oghuz, began piecing together the remnants of the Seljuk domain shattered by the Mongols. It was a race across Anatolia, with the Palaiologos rulers starting from the west, and Osman from the east. Osman and his successors won.

By the time of *Manuel II Palaiologos* (1350-1425), the end of the Eastern Roman Empire was near. Here is it's extent in 1400:

You may recall that Manuel II was the Byzantine Emperor quoted by Pope Benedict XVI as saying:

"Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and

inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." (See Allah Is Dead .)

The followers of Osman called themselves *Osmanli*, as did Turks for the next six centuries. History calls the empire he began after him, the *Ottoman Empire*.

When a 21 year-old boy as Ottoman Sultan *Mehmed II* (1432-1481) conquered Constantinople in 1453, ending forever Christian rule over what is now Turkey, it seemed almost anticlimactic. The Hagia Sophia, the greatest church in all Christendom, became a mosque

We naturally focus on the monumental face-offs between the Ottomans and the West. But throughout most of their history, the Ottomans saw their primary rival and enemy not Europe but Persia.

We see the Ottomans as Moslems bent on subduing Christian lands. They were more concerned with subduing other Moslem lands, incorporating them into their empire.

Nonetheless, Mehmed II spent the next quarter century trying to establish control over former Byzantine lands in Greece and the Balkans. And when he landed a fleet of warships at Otranto on the tip of Italy's heel in 1480, announcing his intention to march on Rome, that was enough for the Pope.

For he was the first Renaissance Pope and as Machiavellian as they come, *Sixtus IV*, *Francesco della Rovere* (b. 1414, papacy 1471-1484). The Sistine Chapel in the Vatican is named after him.

Sixtus organized a crusade to save Italy, which kicked the Turks out of Otranto. Then he sent his most trusted secret agents to Constantinople to get even with the man who killed Eastern Christendom.

Mehmed II had made the great Christian city his capital and built the Ottoman Imperial Palace of Topkapi. Among team of the Sultan's physicians at Topkapi was a doctor known as Jacoub Pasha. His real name was *Maesto Jakopo* from an old Byzantine Jewish family.

Dr. Jakopo hated the Moslem conquerors as much as Sixtus. Arrangements were made. On May 3, 1481 at age 49, Sultan Mehmed II was poisoned to death. Jakopo escaped to Venice.

Mehmed's grandson *Selim I* (1465-1520) turned his attention to the south, attacking and destroying a fellow Moslem kingdom called the Mamluk Sultanate. By 1510, all of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and the west coast of Arabia known as the Hejaz with the Holy Moslem Cities of Mecca and Medina were absorbed into the Ottoman Empire

Selim declared himself *Caliph*, Guardian of the Faithful, rightful spiritual ruler of all Moslems - the

Moslem Pope. Trouble was, he had a rival. Worse, Shah Ismail I of Persia not only claimed he was the real Caliph, but his version of Islam - *Shiat Ali* - the party of Ali (son-in-law of Mohammed), was the true religion, as opposed to orthodox *Sunni* (the path).

Thus began centuries of wars between the Ottomans and the Persians, starting with Selim crushing Ismail at the Battle of Chaldiran (west of Tabriz near the present Turkey-Iran border) in 1514, leaving all of Asia Minor in firm Ottoman grip.

It was under the rule of Selim's son, whom history knows as *Suleiman the Magnificent* (1494-1566), that the Ottomans had their Golden Age. He was Sultan for 46 years (1520-1566), and he started by going after Christian Europe.

In 1521, Belgrade fell to him, and in 1526 after the Battle of Mohacs, all of Hungary. Then he went after Vienna - and suffered his first defeat. The Austrians hired a 70 year-old leader of a German mercenaries called the Landsknechts, *Count Niklas Graf Salm* (1459-1530), who organized a defense of the city.

The Siege of Vienna in 1529 (not the Battle of Vienna, that was in 1683) failed thanks to this septuagenarian Count Salm, and Suleiman had to retreat through heavy snows of a terrible winter back to Constantinople.

Suleiman, like Selim, focused his attention again on Persia. He captured Baghdad in 1534 and chased Shah Tahmasp from one end of Persia to the other, but that was fine with Tahmasp as he never got defeated that way. Suleiman finally had to be satisfied with Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), leaving most of what is now modern Iran to the Shah.

Suleiman consoled himself with conquering North Africa, what is now Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. He also consoled himself with one of history's most intriguing women.

She was a Ukrainian girl captured in a slave raid by Crimean Tatars. Suleiman, on one of his periodic visits to the Constantinople slave market, was entranced with her beauty and added her to his harem. Daughter of an Orthodox priest and thus a Christian, her name was *Anastasia Lisovska* (1500-1558).

There were hundreds of the most alluring women in the empire in Suleiman's harem, yet she became his favorite. So much so that he fell totally in love with her and, breaking centuries of tradition, shocking all Constantinople, he married her in a formal ceremony. The Christian Ukrainian slave girl was now the Sultana.

Suleiman wrote passionate love poems to her, which he had published under the pen-name of Muhibbi. He called her *Roxolana*, his "Cheerful One." She loved to laugh. She bore him five children, one of whom inherited the empire as Selim II. He loved her for 40 years. When she died,

Suleiman grieved for her until he followed eight year later.

As her legend grew, she became known as the Empress of the East. Plays, novels, operas, ballets, and Haydn's Symphony 63 were written about her. There is a statue of her in her birthplace of Rohatyn in southwestern Ukraine. Hers is one of history's great love stories. Here is what she looked like.

Selim II (1524-1574) was a dissolute butcher. In 1570, his forces invaded Cyprus, put 20,000 inhabitants of Nicosia to the sword, flayed alive the Cypriot leader Mercantonio Bragadino, and sent his skin stuffed with straw back to Constantinople paraded as a trophy.

Pope Pius V organized a Holy League to defend Christendom against the Turks, with an armada from Spain, Venice, Genoa, and the Italian Papal States commanded by *Don Juan of Austria*

(1547-1578), the illegitimate son of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. On October 7, 1571, the 213-ship armada sailed into the Gulf of Corinth (Greece) and was met, off the port city of Lepanto, the Turkish armada of 282 ships.

As Venetian artillery decimated the Turks, Don Juan ordered his flagship, *Real*, steered directly for that of the Ottoman admiral Ali Pasha. His Spanish soldiers boarded the Turkish galley led by a Capuchin monk waving a crucifix and shouting *Viva Cristo!* The ship was taken and Ali Pasha's severed head hoisted aloft on the flagstaff. The morale of the Turks collapsed.

210 Ottoman ships were destroyed or captured, over 8,000 Ottomans killed, 10,000 taken prisoner, 12,000 Christian slaves rowing the Ottoman galleys freed (vs. 30 Christian ships lost, 3,000 killed). The Battle of Lepanto is considered by historians to be the most important naval battle anywhere in the world since the Battle of Actium in 31 BC, when Octavian (later Caesar Augustus) defeated Antony and Cleopatra.

Ironically, Actium lies just a few dozen miles up the west coast of Greece from Lepanto.

Selim II died shortly thereafter, and his successors primarily occupied themselves with capturing, losing, recapturing, re-losing territory from and to Persia. Baghdad kept exchanging hands. The Sultans became more deranged. Mohammed III (r. 1595-1603) murdered 19 of his brothers. A 12 year-old boy initiated a reign of terror as Murad IV (r. 1623-1640).

He ordered the execution of over 100,000 people. When he invaded Persia in 1638, he challenged the Persians to send their best warrior against him in single combat to decide the war. He won, captured Baghdad permanently from the Persians, returned to Constantinople a hero, and died of drunkenness and gout at age 28.

All the while, the Sultans continued to be repeatedly annoyed by the Hapsburg kings of Austria who kept launching attempts to capture or destabilize Ottoman holdings in Hungary and Eastern Europe.

Finally in 1682, Sultan *Mehmet IV* (1642-1693) ordered his Grand Vizier Mustafa Pasha to lead an army of overwhelming force to destroy Vienna and get rid of the Hapsburgs at last. By July 1683, 140,000 Ottoman soldiers were at the gates of Vienna. Intimidated by Vienna's fortifications, Mustafa settled in for a siege. By September the Viennese were starving.

But the Hapsburg king Leopold I (1640-1705) knew help was on the way - for he had made an alliance with the man the Turks feared the most, *Jan Sobieski* (1629-1696), King of Poland, who had made a career of inflicting terrible defeats upon them.

Sobieski arrived with 3,000 cavalry and 23,000 infantry in early September, to be joined a few days later by 18,000 soldiers from German states organized by Pope Innocent XI. Sobieski

ordered an immediate attack.

At dawn on September 12, 1683, the Christian forces fell upon the Ottomans, surprising them in their trenches. At the end of the day, 15,000 Turks lay dead (vs. 3,000 Christians), and when dawn broke the following morning, Sobieski gazed upon an empty battlefield. The great Turkish Ottoman army had fled in the night.

It was the beginning of the long slow death of Ottoman power and the Turkish Moslem threat to Europe.

END OF PART ONE

[Note: Breaking this Asia Minor Nutshell in two gives you time to locate your nearest distributor of Midas Touch Golden Elixir, so you will have a sufficient supply at the ready for Part Two next week.]