Liquid Fire or Greek Fire: How this Incendiary Weapon Prevented the Fall of Constantinople During the 7th Century AD

Speaker: Dr. Paris Svoronos  
Professor Emeritus  
Queensborough Community College

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Abstract

The emerging Arab califate during the 7th century AD aimed at extending its conquest of Europe via two routes. The first one was defeating the Byzantine Empire by overcoming Constantinople around 672 AD. The second one involved taking over Northern Africa, crossing Gibraltar, overcoming Spain and moving towards the Italian peninsula. Their first route failed due to the devastating effect the liquid (Greek) fire had on the superior fleet of the Arabs. The exact composition of this incendiary weapon is still not exactly known although many suggestions have been postulated. These many proposals and the reactions involved will be discussed.

Biography

Dr. Paris Svoronos, a native of Greece, earned his doctorate at Georgetown University (1979) and worked at Queensborough Community College-CUNY for 40 years (1981-2021). He has been a firm believer of the community college concept in the US where, as he says, “nobody cares where you come from; instead everybody wants to see what you achieve”. He is the first ever chemist to be chosen as the Outstanding Community College Professor of the Year Award by the CASE/ Carnegie Endowment Foundation (2003), and the first ever community college faculty to be selected as the 2020 James Flack Norris Award by the ACS-Northeastern section since its 1951 inception. Dr. Svoronos received the ACS Stanley C. Israel Regional Award for Advancing Diversity in the Chemical Sciences (2018). His services to the ACS-NY section have been recognized by his election as its chair (2015) as well as the bestowing of its Volunteer Service Award (2016) and the Professor of the Year among Two-year Colleges honor (2019). He is a National ACS fellow, the chair of History of Chemistry (ACS-Long Island section) and co-chair of the Microwave topical group (ACS-NY section).