

**‘THE GLORY OF RULING MAKES ALL THINGS PERMISSIBLE’:
POWER AND USURPATION IN BYZANTIUM:
SOME ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION, LEGITIMACY, AND
MORAL AUTHORITY**

By

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ABSTRACT

In Byzantium, usurpation was made possible by the conflict between hereditary-dynastic and meritocratic-republican theories of rulership. Legitimacy was founded upon subjective notions of idealized moral-behavioural norms drawn from the imperial virtues and Christian ideology. Authority could be challenged when it was perceived to deviate from these norms.

Investitures transformed a usurper from a private individual to an emperor on the basis of ratification by popular consent. The historic ritual of reluctance allowed emperors to present themselves as ‘moral ideals’ at the moment of proclamation, ridding them of blame for a usurpation.

Guilt and sin were inevitable byproducts of usurpation, but imperial repentance facilitated an expiation and legitimized imperial authority in relation to moral ideals. On occasion a usurper’s successors would perform repentance on his behalf, freeing the dynasty from the sins of its foundation.

The treatment of defeated usurpers could take a variety of forms: reconciliations enabled a peaceful ‘healing’ of the community. Political mutilations transformed the victim’s appearance and rendered him ‘other’ in an attempt to demonstrate his immorality and illegitimacy. Degradation parades inverted recognised investiture rites in order to permanently alter a victim’s identity and reveal him to be a tyrant, acting against the interests of the people.

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A Note on Transliteration

As the present work must frequently refer to technical terms as well as the names of people, places, and institutions that were not originally written with the Latin alphabet in mind, a few words on transliteration are required. No single system of transliteration is universally acceptable for a work that covers more than a thousand years of 'Byzantine' Roman history. When transliterating Greek names and terms I have, in general, attempted to render them as literally as possible and without Latinisation (e.g. *vestiarios* and *Komnenos* rather than *bestiarius* and *Comnenus*). Some exceptions have been made in the interest of textual clarity or where the substitution of names and terms would become particularly awkward. An attempt has also been made to reflect the historical use of both Greek and Latin as administrative languages of the empire. To this end, names and terms will generally take their Latin form for the period before the accession of Herakleios, and the Greek form thereafter (e.g. *Leo II*, but *Leon III*). An exception to this rule is the name *Constantine*, that of the first Christian emperor, which held a certain prestige in Byzantine historical thought and evoked ideas of imperial renewal. For Arabic, Slavic, and other non-Greek and non-Latin names and terms, transliteration follows that of the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* wherever possible.

Quotations in the main text are generally provided in translation. Extended quotations in Greek or Latin are restricted to footnotes. Some contradictions and inconsistencies inevitably remain.

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I. INTRODUCTION

*The glory of ruling makes all things permissible.
If Andronikos, perhaps, swore an oath to his Alexios,
Still he took the sceptre himself from his murdered nephew.
As heir to the kingdom, he did not scruple to violate the honour of his oath,
That old man who was a fugitive under Manuel.*¹

Pietro da Eboli employed these lines as a moral denigration of the Sicilian usurper Tancred de Lecce (r.1189-1194), an illegitimate grandson of Roger II. They were well-chosen since the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Andronikos I (1183-1185) was then notorious as an exercise in oppression, terminated by his popular overthrow.² Pietro's choice of Tancred's prototype suggests a derisive view of Byzantine political culture: Andronikos had broken oaths and murdered his nephew to seize the throne, but was still permitted to rule. In Byzantium, Pietro implies, wrongdoers like Tancred-Andronikos exploited an immoral and autocratic political system which lacked clear rules of succession. The attainment of real power, 'the glory of ruling,' justified and permitted any wrongdoing. Rather than accepting the inferred orderly successional procedures of the west, Tancred embraced Byzantine practice, to his family's ruination.³ An eighth-century Chinese visitor to Byzantium had similarly criticised the political system,⁴ and even the relatively modern association of 'Byzantine' with 'political intrigue' perpetuates the appraisal.⁵

¹ *Gloria regnandi cuncta licere facit. / Andronicus si forte suo iuravit Alexi, / Ipse cruentato sceptrum nepote tulit. / Heredem regni fidei maculare pudorem / Non puduit profugum sub Manuele senem.* Pietro da Eboli, *Liber ad honorem Augusti*, 104-105.

² For the image and reception of Andronikos' reign in western medieval historiography, see Neocleous 2012; Pontani 2003.

³ For a summation of the events surrounding Tancred's usurpation, and the political situation in Sicily in this period, see Houben 2002: 172-175.

⁴ 'Their emperors are not men who last. They choose the most capable and put him on the throne; but if a misfortune or something out of the ordinary happens... they all at once depose the emperor and put another in his place.' *Xin T'ang shu* quoted in Hirth 1985: 55.

⁵ The historiography of Byzantine studies, and the reception of Byzantium during and after the enlightenment, have proven popular subjects in recent decades. Disavowals and refutations of Edward Gibbon's reductive view that Byzantine history was a 'tedious and uniform tale of weakness and misery', Hegel's summation that 'The realm was in a condition of perpetual insecurity... a disgusting picture of imbecility...', and other derisory

The present work seeks to examine some of the perceived moral and legitimising implications associated with usurpation and imperial authority. Did ‘the glory of ruling’ make all things permissible? Why was usurpation accepted in Byzantium? And how was imperial authority communicated, challenged, or reinforced by reigning emperors and usurpers in the context of its contestation? Through close reading of the literary-rhetorical and ritual evidence of the Byzantine narrative histories it will explore the normative behaviours and ideologies of rulership that influenced these contests.

The study is divided into seven chapters relating to discrete stages in the process of usurpation. It considers events from the instigation of a conspiracy to the moment of coronation from several perspectives. The mechanisms and ideologies that permitted usurpation, and the rhetorical justifications that were employed to legitimise a usurper’s actions via appeals to dominant socio-political and ideals of moral rulership are discussed. It then explores the significance of ritual and symbolic investitures and their perceived ‘transformative’ value for a usurper as emphasised in the narrative histories. The ideological model of the ‘reluctant emperor’ is adduced as evidence of how ritual investitures and imperial ideals were combined to render a usurper a paragon of ‘moral rulership’. Ultimately, this allows us to explore Byzantine conceptions of imperial authority in the context of civil wars, from the perspective of contemporary propaganda, ritual, and the narrative tradition. The meritocratic notions of popular *consensus* and election, stemming from the empire’s republican past, it will be argued, remained essential to the imperial office, allowing usurpation to be justified in spite of autocratic and hereditary-dynastic propensities. The study then addresses Byzantine reactions to usurpation in terms of the perceived moral consequences. It examines the sources of guilt and the methods adopted by successful

views, represent something of a *topos* in the prooimia of modern scholarly works. On the reception of Byzantium, see Haarer 2010, including a discussion of the views of Gibbon and his contemporaries. See also, the recent volume edited by Marciniak and Smythe 2016.

usurpers to communicate their repentance for the misdeeds committed in coming to power. It argues that socio-ideological developments in the ninth and tenth centuries rendered imperial atonement a normative feature of admittedly violent usurpations, and a necessary political consideration for subsequent ‘new dynasties’, including a usurper’s successors. Finally, this study considers the treatment of defeated opponents in terms of the range of punitive methods recorded in the histories. It shows that these were adapted to contemporary circumstances and sensibilities but consistently communicated to observers the legitimacy of the reigning emperor and the moral inferiority of the victim. The role of *consensus* politics in rituals of degradation is also discussed.

Initial considerations

An immediate concern for any study regarding ‘usurpation’ is the term itself. Since Byzantium lacked a codified constitution, the fundamental question ‘What constitutes an Emperor?’ is fraught with uncertainty.⁶ After the implementation of Constantinopolitan-based inauguration rituals can we include any person proclaimed in the field? Or only those who received a coronation? Do we consider emperors temporarily dispossessed of the capital by a rival who was recognised by the senate to remain emperors, or be reclassified as usurpers? In the aftermath of the loss of Constantinople in 1204 who among the numerous claimants should be considered the ‘legitimate’ emperor? Furthermore, can we be certain that what we consider today as usurpation had the same semantic value in then contemporary thought?⁷

Modern definitions of usurpation are inherently pejorative since they imply that an

⁶ Lilie 2008: esp. 212, considers some of the difficulties of answering this question.

⁷ On this question, see Schwedler and Tounta 2010: 351; Tounta 2010: 448.

individual had no right to do or be something.⁸ Byzantine vocabulary lacked a direct equivalent but possessed approximations. For the Ancient Greeks, the term ‘τύραννος’ delineated a leader who acted in a politically or socially immoral fashion, but it held no connotations of a lack of legitimation. By Late Antiquity it was employed to describe challengers of imperial authority who failed to overthrow a reigning emperor; thus connecting it with legitimacy via success/failure. Both uses were retained throughout the Byzantine period.⁹ Other expressions existed: ἀνταπαιτητής, a ‘counter-claimant’; ἀποστάτης, a ‘rebel’ against the legal authority; σφετεριστής, an ‘appropriator’; νεώτερος, ‘innovators’ or ‘revolutionaries’; and αὐθέντης, independent rulers or ‘separatists’.¹⁰ The Byzantine terminology of usurpation thus held legitimist connotations, and even accounts favourable to a usurper might employ these terms until real power had been assumed.¹¹ Furthermore, this terminology was not restricted to internal political disputes: proto-national, separatist, and ethnic rebellions were described in the same terms. Essentially every conceivable uprising was covered.

The present study limits itself to internal political conflicts and seeks to avoid excessive prejudicial and legitimist biases.¹² Consequently, a usurper is hereafter to be understood as a person who had not been authorised to claim the imperial title with the express permission of the preceding emperor; or, when an emperor had already died, claimed the title without the authorisation of the empress or senatorial election. It does not suggest that a particular person had ‘no right’ to claim *basileia*, merely that their claim had not been recognised by the preceding administration. An emperor is one whose authority was

⁸ Thus, ‘the term “usurper” describes the potentate who has come to power by violating existing concepts of legitimacy.’ Schwedler 2010: 360. See also, Schwedler and Tounta 2010: 351-352.

⁹ Schwedler 2010: 365; Szidat 2010: 47.

¹⁰ On these terms, see Schwedler and Tounta 2010: 351-352; Penna and Morrisson 2013: 21-22.

¹¹ Anna Komnene twice calls her father an ‘*apostates*’ in the course of her narrative of his rebellion against Nikephoros III: Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 62, 69 (trans. Frankopan 56, 62). On the legitimist connotations of the terms, see Cheynet 1990: 178.

¹² Local, ethnic, and (proto-)national revolts are thus considered only indirectly.

accepted by the bureaucratic institutions of state, via appointment at Constantinople (after the fourth century) or due to promotion by a predecessor.¹³ These definitions allow us to view the phenomenon of usurpation from the perspective of the imperial office itself, but they present some apparent peculiarities. For example, the Macedonian Empress Theodora is now considered a usurper of Michael V's throne, and Alexios III, from whom Theodoros I claimed authority, is subsequently deemed an attempted usurper of Theodoros' throne.¹⁴

As we are investigating imperial representation, the diffusion of imperial ideology within the empire, the term 'propaganda' will be used repeatedly. Its modern associations with totalitarian regimes are to be abandoned; instead it should be understood as 'the systematic propagation of information or ideas by an interested party, esp. in a tendentious way in order to encourage or instil a particular attitude or response.'¹⁵ Propaganda opened a dialogue with a target audience in an attempt to promote a particular understanding of an ideology. Since ideology is a dynamic concept, this dialogue was ongoing and varied between socio-political groups.¹⁶ To an extent, ideology was constructed through this dialogue: this does not mean that all persons were 'consulted', but that emperors were attuned (not least for reasons of self-preservation) to the varied expectations of their subjects.¹⁷ This will inform our discussion throughout.

This study explores political thought and ritual behaviours primarily through the lens

¹³ Thus, before Constantinople became a factor for rulership, rival emperors who received a proclamation are considered usurpers in this study until they successfully deposed the existing regime. Consequently, the promotion of Julian, in the fourth century, is considered a usurpation until his accession was recognised by Constantius II, an appointed successor of Constantine I (Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum*, 20.5-8; Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 50-52); and after 1204, we deem Theodoros I to be the 'legitimate' emperor from the perspective of the imperial office itself, since his authority was derived from his appointment as *despotes* (then essentially heir-apparent) by his father-in-law, Alexios III – who did not cease to claim the imperial title until his capture and blinding in 1211, but who had been captured by the Latins in 1205 (see, below, page 116, footnote 570). This categorisation is not wholly satisfactory given the subjective nature of usurpation but provides structure for our analysis of the imperial office.

¹⁴ We also deem Constantine VII to be a usurper against the Lekapenoi under this formulation.

¹⁵ Manders 2007: 279, also commenting on the relative applicability of the term to ancient and medieval contexts, with references to recent discussions in the secondary literature.

¹⁶ Manders 2007: 277-278.

¹⁷ Manders 2007: esp. 278-279.

of the narrative histories. It allows these narratives to determine those elements that were considered more, or less, important at each stage of usurpation. The justificatory, ritual, and ideological elements their authors deem most important, and choose to elucidate, form the basis of our discussion. Instead of looking to rhetorical works addressed to emperors in order to understand how the imperial position, ideology, and usurpation were intended to be understood, and therefore simply repeating political ideas espoused by the regime itself, we try to move as far from the regime as possible by examining sources that were not (in most cases) directly addressed to emperors, and which were relatively free to provide critical assessments of, and ideological reactions to, historic events whilst still providing a record of an emperor's propagandist efforts. In this way we can seek to assess the relative pervasiveness and persuasiveness of imperial ideology and propaganda upon certain sections of society or particular authors (representatives of certain sections of society). The personal, political, and cultural biases and concerns of these authors, and the textual traditions of their narratives must also be taken into account. But these demonstrate the potential plurality of political thought. Naturally, material culture, legal codes, *chrysobulls* and *prostagma*, rhetorical sources, and other literary works, will be used to support or challenge the arguments arising from the narrative histories.

Due to the disparate survival of source materials, and the details preserved within, certain periods receive greater coverage than others. The tenth to thirteenth centuries are especially well-documented, coincide with an increase in the incidence of political conspiracies, and therefore receive particular attention in this study. Developments in ideology and normative behaviours are a recurrent theme of this work, and the Roman past will also be adduced, but given this historical scope there is a danger of minimising subtle changes over time or seemingly perpetuating notions of wholly unchanging practices and ideologies. This is not intentional but is sometimes unavoidable.

II. USURPATION: MECHANISMS AND JUSTIFICATIONS

Although coup-d'états were not uncommon in the late antique or medieval worlds, Byzantium was unique in terms of the number of emperors deposed and the frequency with which power was challenged. In the period 306-1453 approximately one third of senior emperors acceded through force or intrigue, one third through influential socio-political supporters, and one third through dynastic succession or election.¹⁸ In the eastern empire, forty-four usurpations were successful in promoting an emperor whose authority was recognised by the institutions of state.¹⁹ Only fifteen established a succession upon death, by no means ensuring 'dynastic' longevity.²⁰

A precise count of conspiracies targeting emperors is necessarily provisional; frustrated by insufficient source coverage and ambiguities concerning the particular objectives of an intrigue.²¹ However, we may include hundreds of nascent conspiracies and attempted usurpations.²² Although each was unique, these attempts may be categorised in three ways: 'military interventions', comprising the intrusion of an armed force from outside the capital; 'uprisings' on the streets of Constantinople, involving some section(s) of the

¹⁸ Lilie 2008: 212-213, provides the first quantitative discussion of Byzantine successional practices. The present study qualifies usurpation in slightly different terms to Lilie but is roughly in agreement about the statistical evidence.

¹⁹ These were: Constantine I (306), Julian (361), Basiliscus (475), Phocas (602), Herakleios (610), Konstans II (641), Leontios (695), Tiberios III (698), Justinian II (705), Philippikos-Bardanes (711), Artemios-Anastasios II (713), Theodosios III (716), Leon III (717), Artabasdos (741), Eirene Sarantapechaina (797), Nikephoros I (802), Michael I (811), Leon V (813), Michael II (820), Basileios I (867), Romanos I (919), Constantine VII (944/945), Nikephoros II (963), Ioannes I (969), Michael IV (1034), Theodora and Zoe (1042), Theodora (1055), Isaakios I (1057), Constantine X (1059), Michael VII (1071), Nikephoros III (1078), Alexios I (1081), Andronikos I (1183), Isaakios II (1185), Alexios III (1195), Alexios IV and Isaakios II (1203), Alexios V (1204), Theodoros I (1205), Michael VIII (1259/1261), Andronikos III (1328), Ioannes VI (1347), Andronikos IV (1376), Ioannes V and Manuel II (1379), Ioannes VII (1390); and see Table 1.

²⁰ These were: Constantine I, Herakleios, Konstans II, Leon III, Nikephoros I, Michael II, Basileios I, Michael IV, Zoe and Theodora, Constantine X, Alexios I, Theodoros I, Michael VIII, Andronikos III, and Ioannes V and Manuel II. On the practical difficulties and statistical unlikelihood of establishing and maintaining a dynasty, see Lilie 2008; Dagron 2003: 13-35.

²¹ On these problems, see Wright 2017: esp. 287.

²² For a provisional list of conspiracies and rebellions that intended to promote a new emperor, see Table 1.

population; and ‘palace coups’, originating within, and usually confined to, court circles. The viability of these typologies and the particular mechanisms employed for each were adapted to contemporary political circumstances, meaning that different patterns of usurpation emerge in different periods.

From the third century, military interventions were the most common method of assuming power.²³ Constantine I, who had come to power through civil war, provided a ready precedent as the emperor *par excellence* in Byzantine thought, and numerous emperors claimed to be restoring political order in the guise of a ‘New Constantine’.²⁴ Twenty-three usurpers were successfully installed by the military between 306 and 1453.²⁵ However, between Constantine’s death and the violent usurpation of the soldier-emperor Phocas (602), only Julian and Basiliscus were able to oust a senior emperor; both were imperial family members.²⁶ After Phocas, military involvement in successful usurpations predominated for the next hundred-and-forty years: nine of the sixteen emperors in this period were installed by military intervention.²⁷ Thereafter, due to changing social and administrative structures,

²³ For a comprehensive list of Byzantine civil wars (followed by the current author), see Treadgold 2006: 230-233.

²⁴ Magdalino 1994.

²⁵ These were: Constantine I (306-337), Julian (361-363), Phocas (602-610), Herakleios (610-641), Konstans II (641-668), Tiberios-Apsimaros (698-705), Justinian II (705-711) [second reign], Philippikos (711-713), Theodosios III (716-717), Leon III (717-741), Artabasdos (741/2-743), Leon V (813-820), Romanos I (920-944), Nikephoros II (963-969), Isaakios I (1057-1059), Nikephoros III (1078-1081), Alexios I (1081-1118), Andronikos I (1183-1185), Andronikos III (1328-1341), Ioannes VI (1347-1354), Andronikos IV (1376-1379), Ioannes V and Manuel II (1379-1390, and 1390-1425), and Ioannes VII (1390).

²⁶ Constantius II had promoted Julian to replace Gallus as *Caesar* in November 355. Helena, Constantius’ sister, married Julian to solidify the promotion. In February 360 he was proclaimed *Augustus* by the troops in Gaul and went to war with Constantius: Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum*, 20.5-8; Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 50-52. Basiliscus was the brother of the empress-dowager Verina. He successfully assumed the throne in Constantinople (475-476) after winning the support of the Ostrogoth troops under Theodoric Strabo, and the Isaurians under Illus. Basiliscus and Verina, with the support of the *magister officiorum* Patricius, and the *magister militum per Thracias*, convinced Zeno that he would be assassinated if he did not flee Constantinople. Zeno’s supporters in Constantinople were then slaughtered by Basiliscus’ allies. Basiliscus was crowned emperor, and Strabo and Illus were sent after Zeno. Zeno soon realised the treachery and rallied his Isaurian loyalists in effort to retake the throne. Basiliscus’ overthrow was achieved when Strabo and Illus realised they had more to gain from Zeno than Basiliscus and switched allegiances. Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Parmentier 100-108 (trans. Whitby 132-142); Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn 301-303 (trans. Jeffreys 209-210). On the circumstances of the usurpation, see Heather 1991: 272-273.

²⁷ Between 610 and 743 military intervention resulted in the accessions to sole rule of Herakleios, Konstans II, Tiberios-Apsimaros, Justinian II [second reign], Philippikos, Theodosios III, Leon III, Artabasdos, and Constantine V [restoration]. There was also one palace coup (Anastasios II), and one uprising on the streets of

most usurpers were members of the aristocracy. They were normally high-ranking military officers able to exploit loyalties amongst the soldiery to instigate rebellion.²⁸ Civil war led to the accession of soldier-emperors in each of the remaining centuries of the empire's existence, except the fifteenth when territorial, economic, and military constraints rendered that eventuality futile.²⁹ Of particular note in relation to many of these accessions were the periods of military reverses that preceded them: often making them a response to territorial losses.³⁰ From the thirteenth century, the involvement of foreign troops in internal disputes became a characteristic of civil wars, where previously it was an occasional occurrence.³¹

The mood of the Constantinopolitan populace helped to determine the outcome of a siege, and conspiracies were more common in Constantinople when regimes faced an approaching army.³² The need to secure the populace's support was essential, since Constantinople's defences were only breached on one occasion by Byzantine troops without inside help.³³ Propagandist efforts were made by both sides during campaigns and sieges and included the circulation of 'prophecies', promises of lenience, and appeals to political rhetoric. In 1047, Leon Tornikios' troops outlined to Constantinople's citizen defenders Constantine IX's misdeeds, the reasons for their revolt, and impressed upon them Tornikios'

Constantinople (Leontios). On the prominent role of the military in promoting emperors in this period, see Kaegi 1981: esp. 306.

²⁸ Cheynet 1990: 303-313; Tounta 2010: 454.

²⁹ Wright 2017: 282.

³⁰ For example: Leon III usurped the throne in the context of the Umayyad threat, and immediately faced a siege at Constantinople; Leon V forced Michael I's abdication after the defeat of the Byzantine forces at the battle of Versinikia; Romanos I came to power after a series of Byzantine defeats to Symeon of Bulgaria; Isaakios I exploited disapprobation over the military situation on the eastern frontier to raise a rebellion; Nikephoros III did likewise; and Andronikos III exploited Turkish advances in Thrace and Asia Minor to win support away from his grandfather. Treadgold 2006: esp.223, shows that rebellions were in fact most likely to occur after significant military defeats at a time when the empire's defences could least sustain them. On military unrest in reaction to territorial losses in the early period, see Kaegi 1981. On the situation in the late-tenth to early-thirteenth centuries, see Cheynet 1990. On the role of territorial losses provoking usurpations under the Palaiologan emperors, see Wright 2017: esp. 272-273.

³¹ Wright 2017.

³² On conspiracies being more common when the city faced the prospect of a siege, see Wright 2017: 273, noting that the threat of a besieging force prompted conspiracies within the capital that led to the accessions of Phocas, Konstans II, Nikephoros I, Isaakios I, Nikephoros III, and Andronikos I.

³³ Wright 2017: 274. Only Constantine V was able to traverse the land walls of the city without aid from within the city. Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos* ed. Mango 136-137; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 419 (trans. Mango and Scott 580-581).

‘philanthropeia’ and ability to bring future successes against the ‘barbarians’ threatening the empire.³⁴ Outside the capital it was common practice for emperors to dispatch *chrysobulls* to rebellious cities to attempt to restore loyalty.³⁵ And Andronikos I reportedly affixed messages to arrows encouraging rebellious populations to surrender, promising amnesty, and defaming the usurpers they supported.³⁶

These efforts to encourage ‘political activism’ by the populace belie the statement of Cheynet that passivity towards the rulers was the permanent attitude of the public.³⁷ In fact, uprisings on the streets always remained an intermittent possibility but required substantial popular support if they were to prove successful.³⁸ Kaldellis has sought to refocus attention to the ‘republican’ dynamic of rebellion and Byzantine politics more generally. He considers numerous examples up to 1204 of the Constantinopolitans lending their support decisively to emperors and usurpers, finding ‘popularity’ to be a determinative factor in the outcome of a coup.³⁹ In fact, Justinian I’s suppression of the Nika rioters was the only case of an emperor overcoming a ‘determined’ populace.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, only three usurpers successfully assumed the throne through popular action alone. In 695, Leontios incited the crowds to join him and depose Justinian II. The crowd coerced Patriarch Kallinikos to

³⁴ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 44-61; ed. Renauld II, 19-26 (trans. Sewter 210-215); Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 440 (trans. Wortley 414-415); Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 628.

³⁵ ‘[Assuming that the emperor would be] sending imperial missives to all of the cities. For this reason I remained unperturbed, as I also trusted in the loyalty of the citizens of Rhaidestos, that the town would remain firm in its loyalty to the rulers out of gratitude.’ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martín 244 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 446-447).

³⁶ During the sieges of Nikaia and Prousa. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 287 (trans. Magoulias 159).

³⁷ Cheynet 1990: 190.

³⁸ On the role of the Constantinopolitan (and other metropolitan) populaces in the political sphere, see Garland 1992; Charanis 1978; Kaldellis 2013; Kaldellis 2015.

³⁹ Kaldellis 2015: 125-150; Kaldellis 2013.

⁴⁰ Kaldellis 2015: 90-91. See also, Wright 2017: 174, n.15, confirming Justinian as the only emperor to suppress a determined populace, but adding that emperors often suppressed minor revolts on the streets of the capital. Unfortunately, neither proposes a rationale for distinguishing between uprisings that may be considered ‘significant/determined’ and those that may be considered ‘minor’, nor considers the possible source problems when making such a determination.

support the movement, and Justinian was overthrown.⁴¹ When Michael V ousted Zoe in 1042, the populace were roused to action against him. Psellos writes that ‘Zoe was universally popular’, ‘heir to the throne’, and ‘had won everyone’s heart through her generous gifts.’ Michael had courted the ‘elite, commoners, and craftsmen’, by granting freedoms and mistakenly believed that the people would support him.⁴² Instead they elevated Theodora, Zoe’s sister, and were not pacified by Michael’s explanation of his actions (Zoe had conspired against him) or Zoe’s return to the palace.⁴³ Patriarch Alexios was convinced to support the uprising, and Michael was deposed.⁴⁴ Finally, in 1185 Isaakios II roused the crowds and coerced Patriarch Kamateros to support his revolt against Andronikos I.⁴⁵ Although large-scale uprisings in the capital are then unknown after 1204, the citizenry’s political activism did not cease under the Palaiologoi. Outbreaks of unrest are documented in relation to usurpations in this period and Constantinopolitan quiescence appears incompatible with metropolitan strife seen elsewhere.⁴⁶ In fact, Palaiologan emperors appear to have resorted to inclusive ‘consultative’ measures involving influential mercantile groups in an attempt to avert unrest.⁴⁷ The citizenry may not have independently promoted an emperor, but they still lent support to their favoured candidates.

⁴¹ Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 94-99; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 368-369 (trans. Mango and Scott 514-515).

⁴² Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 200-203; ed. Renauld I, 95 (trans. Sewter 130-131); Kaldellis 2013: 50-51.

⁴³ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 142-145; ed. Renauld I, 67 (trans. Sewter 100). On Psellos account of the episode, see Kaldellis 2013: 50. See also, Cheynet 2008: esp. 65-66, discussing the significance of Michael’s oath to Zoe and the accusations that he levelled against her.

⁴⁴ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 14 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 20-21); Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 418 (trans. Wortley 393-394). On Alexios’ loyalties and involvement in events, see Cheynet 2013a: 2-6.

⁴⁵ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 349-353 (trans. Magoulias 192-194).

⁴⁶ Wright 2017: esp. 285-286, noting that the anti-Kantakouzenoi uprisings in the towns of Thrace and Macedonia, and the emergence of the Zealot regime at Thessalonike in the 1340’s are hardly evidence for the populace becoming passive observers of political events. On the Zealot regime/revolt, see Barker 2003: 16-21, 29-33.

⁴⁷ On emperors’ recourse to consultative decision making, see Kiousopoulou 2011: 111-127; Wright 2017: 286; Kyritses 2013: esp. 63-69; Frankopan 2007; Charanis 1978: 74-78. Magdalino 2011: 131-144, proposes a different view. He argues that Palaiologan emperors substantially disengaged from communicative politics involving the Constantinopolitan populace and restricted themselves to the Blachernai Palace and its environs; Macrides 2011, challenges the historical reality and significance of this ‘disengagement’, arguing that the idea of ‘disengagement’ owes more to misconceptions about the source material than genuine long-term processes.

Emperors could only contest uprisings if they had the backing of a significant section of the populace, or a military force within Constantinople.⁴⁸ Consequently, the loyalties of Constantinopolitan-based guard units were important considerations. Between 574 and 610, three successions involved promotion of the *comes excubitorum*, rendering the commander *de facto* heir-apparent.⁴⁹ In 913 the *Hetaireiai* quashed the revolt of Constantine Doukas,⁵⁰ and were personally commanded by Romanos I when he assumed real power in 919.⁵¹ In the next century, the Varangians aided Theodora's succession (1055), and they refused to acclaim Romanos IV until Michael VII had given his consent.⁵² In the decades before 1204 the Varangians' political activism became increasingly apparent: Andronikos I handed the deposed *protosebastos* Alexios into Varangian custody (1182); they were conspicuously absent during Andronikos' overthrow (1185); quashed Ioannes Komnenos(-Axouchos') revolt (1200); were responsible for Isaakios II's restoration (1203); and were instrumental in promoting Alexios V, and Constantine Laskaris (1204).⁵³ If the interests of the palace guard were better served by a rival candidate, they would support him. They represented yet another faction that emperors had to monitor and secure, and their periods of political

⁴⁸ See, for example, the failed usurpation of Ioannes Komnenos-Axouchos in 1200: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 527-528 (trans. Magoulias 289); Mesarites, *Die Palastrevolution des Johannes Komnenos*, ed. Heisenberg.

⁴⁹ Tiberius II, Maurice, and Priscus (Maurice's son-in-law, and probable heir), each held the post. This was a practice particular to the Justinianic dynasty, reflecting Justin I's election to *basileia* from the post of *comes excubitorum*. Priscus' conspiracy on behalf of Herakleios, which enabled the latter's troops to gain access to Constantinople when the unit deserted, ended this sequence of successions: Treadgold 1997: 241.

⁵⁰ *The Life of Saint Basil the Younger*, ed. Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath 98-99.

⁵¹ Christophoros Lekapenos subsequently replaced Romanos, ensuring that the fledgling Lekapenoi regime could monitor the unit. *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 394; Symeon Logothetes, *Chronicon*, ed. Wahlgren 310; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 209 (trans. Wortley 202).

⁵² For Theodora's accession: Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 152-153; ed. Renauld II, 71 (trans. Sewter 260). For the refusal of Romanos IV: *Skylitzes Continuatus*, ed. Tsolakos 123-124. The Varangians were also instrumental in securing the throne for Michael VII in the aftermath of Manzikert: Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 122-123.

⁵³ For the treatment of the *protosebastos*: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 249 (trans. Magoulias 147-148). For Andronikos' overthrow: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 343-346 (trans. Magoulias 189-191). For Isaakios' restoration: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 536-541 (trans. Magoulias 294-297); Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 6 (trans. Macrides 109-110). For Ioannes Komnenos-Axouchos: see above page 12, footnote 48. For the promotions of Alexios V, and Constantine Laskaris, see Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 563, 572 (trans. Magoulias 308, 314). On the political influence of the Varangians in this period, see Angold 2015: 126-127; Angold 2005: 62, 64.

influence highlight the absence of effective imperial authority in Constantinople at that moment.

Palace coups involved a member of the imperial family or a prominent official, and were responsible for twenty accessions. The prospect of military intervention was an additional factor in six cases.⁵⁴ Seven coups involved palace assassinations.⁵⁵ Five others imposed blinding in order to disqualify an emperor.⁵⁶ And the remaining eight minimised or removed opponents by other means.⁵⁷ Notably, the successive Amorian and Macedonian dynasties were established by assassination, an indication of the preponderance of court intrigues in that period.⁵⁸ Empresses and minority-emperors were also particularly at risk, since the empire was deemed to need ‘strong’ and ‘active’ male leadership instead of a ‘feminized’ (ἐκθηλυθήναι) authority.⁵⁹ The changed distribution of power and privileges meant that after 1261 palace coups became much less common, were never successful, and

⁵⁴ These were: Basiliscus, who had aid from Ostrogoth and Isaurian troops, alongside the empress-dowager Verina; Romanos I, who was supported by his naval forces, and who claimed to have support from Constantine VII’s tutor inside the palace; Andronikos I, who marched on Constantinople with Byzantine and Turkish troops, but had been entreated to help the *kaisarissa* Maria protect Alexios II; Alexios III, who was proclaimed by the military as part of his coup, and was a member of the imperial family; Alexios V, who was supported by the Varangians and had affinal ties to the Angeloi emperors; and Michael VIII, who was commander of the Latin mercenaries responsible for the assassination of Georgios Mouzalon, and was a member of the extended imperial family.

⁵⁵ These were: Michael II, who assassinated Leon V (820), Basileios I, who assassinated Michael III (867), Ioannes I, who assassinated Nikephoros II (969), Michael IV, who was proclaimed after the assassination of Romanos III (1034), Andronikos I, who assassinated Alexios II (1183), and Alexios V, who deposed and then assassinated Alexios IV and Isaakios II (1204). In addition, Konstans II was assassinated in the palace in Sicily by the usurper Mizizios, but the latter’s authority was never commonly accepted: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 351 (trans. Mango and Scott 490–491).

⁵⁶ These were: Artemios-Anastasios, who blinded Philippikos (713), Eirene Sarantapechaina, who blinded her son, Constantine VI (797), Michael VII, who tonsured his mother, and subsequently blinded Romanos IV (1071); Alexios III, who blinded his brother, Isaakios II (1195), and Michael VIII, who blinded Ioannes IV (1261).

⁵⁷ These were: Zeno, who exiled Basiliscus – who later died of exposure (475); Constantine VI, who removed Eirene (790); Nikephoros I, who tonsured Eirene (802); Michael I, who succeeded the seriously injured Staurakios (811); Romanos I, who permitted Constantine VII to remain co-emperor but gradually removed him from precedence (919/920); Constantine VII, Constantine Lekapenos, and Stephanos Lekapenos, who tonsured Romanos I (944); Constantine VII, who tonsured Constantine and Stephanos Lekapenos (945); and Constantine X, who permitted Isaakios I to undergo the tonsure (1059).

⁵⁸ See Table 1.

⁵⁹ On the increased risk to regencies and imperial women, see Lilie 2008; Cheynet 1990: 187. On the need for stereotypically male leadership, see Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 254–257; ed. Renauld I, 121–122 (trans. Sewter 159), regarding the deficiencies of Zoe and Theodora’s style of rulership.

civil wars between members of the dynasty predominated.⁶⁰

Success in claiming *basileia* was determined by the dynamic balance of power: the relative *consensus* between any combination of the groups involved (the military, senate, and people) and their preferred candidate(s) at any given time.⁶¹ Beck, followed by Kaldellis, explained the recurrent instability of the imperial office by outlining normative ‘republican’ theories of rulership drawn from the political behaviour of the empire, its ceremonies, and literature.⁶² He concluded that elevations through force or intrigue, integral to Roman history, remained an acceptable mode of accession.⁶³ Lemerle’s analysis of the emperor-usurper relationship outlined its inherent parallelism on the basis of contrasting notions of power, and concluded that usurpation was less an illegal act than the first stage in the process of legitimation for a new ruler. When a usurper failed to take power, hereditary-dynastic principles prevailed and were strengthened; when he succeeded he might integrate himself into the dynasty or choose to found a new dynasty and acquire legitimacy independently.⁶⁴ This system was described by Mommsen as ‘an autocracy tempered by the legal right of revolution’, and by Kaldellis as something ‘closer to a monarchical republic than a monarchy by divine right... [in which] the people were sovereign and the emperors exercised authority that was delegated from below.’⁶⁵ Turning against an emperor signified his loss of legitimacy and demonstrated that authority was predicated upon consent.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Wright 2017: 286-288.

⁶¹ Flaig 1997: esp. 16-18.

⁶² Beck 1966; Beck 1970; Beck 1978; Kaldellis 2013; Kaldellis 2015.

⁶³ For these methods of usurpation in Late Antiquity and earlier Roman history, see Wardman 1984: 220-237.

⁶⁴ ‘L’usurpation... a un sens et presque une fonction politique. Elle est moins un acte illégal que le premier acte d’un processus de légitimation, dont le schéma théorique est constant. Entre le basileus et l’usurpateur, il y a un parallélisme plutôt qu’opposition. D’où l’existence de deux notions différentes de la légitimité, l’une ‘dynastique’, l’autre qu’on pourrait dire (au sens romain) ‘républicaine’, qui ne sont pas vraiment en conflit, mais plutôt se renforcent l’une l’autre: la seconde, quand l’usurpateur échoue, renforce de ce fait la première, et quand il réussit, la recrée, soit que l’usurpateur se rattache à la dynastie, soit qu’il fonde une dynastie.’ Lemerle quoted in Karlin-Hayter 1991: 85.

⁶⁵ Mommsen quoted in Bury 1910: 9; Kaldellis 2013: 54; and see now Kaldellis 2015.

⁶⁶ Beck 1966: 41-47; Kaldellis 2013: esp. 53; Kaldellis 2015. See also, Cheynet 2008b: 69-70, considering the role of consent in the decision of the Constantinopolitans to abandon Alexios IV and Isaakios II and proclaim Nikolaos Kannavos in 1204.

The existence of multiple routes of succession was well understood: Isaakios I's supporters, for example, objected to being told that his military-proclamation was invalid (because he should have been adopted by Michael VI), by claiming that this criticism was itself invalid since it referred to a particular kind of promotion.⁶⁷ However, after the ninth century, successful usurpers increasingly espoused 'dynastic' links to the previous regime. Eventually, the 'usurper-regent' (or 'co-emperor') typology came to predominate accessions by those outside the dynasty-proper.⁶⁸ Of the twenty-four successful usurpations after 920, eight involved a usurper-regent, twelve involved imperial family members, two were members of the extended family, and two remained 'outsiders'.⁶⁹ Usurper-regents assumed power alongside minority emperors and created familial connections.⁷⁰ For example: Nikephoros II was crowned emperor alongside the *basileis* (of whom it was rumoured that he was godfather) and then solidified his connection to the dynasty by marriage to the empress-regent Theophano.⁷¹ Nikephoros' early *nomismata* depict him as emperor alongside

⁶⁷ (*Psellos*:) ...καὶ τῶν βασιλευσάντων οἱ πλείους τε καὶ καλλίους ἐκ τῆς τοῦ καίσαρος τάξεως εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν ἀνήχθησαν... (*Isaakios' partisans' response*): Ὡς δὲ μοι ἐνιοὶ πρὸς τὸν λόγον ἀπένησαν, ὡς ἰδιωτικὴ ἢ ἀνάβασις αὐτῆ, οὗτος δὲ ἤδη βασιλεύειν εἰλήχει... Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 212-213; ed. Renault II, 99-100 (trans. Sewter 291-292).

⁶⁸ See Zuckerman 2010: esp. 884-890, on the office of *basileus*, and on the modern idiomatic use of the term "co-emperor" ("Mitkaiser"), a title which had no direct equivalent in Byzantine imperial protocol.

⁶⁹ The eight usurper-regents were: Romanos I (920), Nikephoros II (963), Ioannes I (969), Nikephoros III (1078), Alexios I (1081), Andronikos I (1181/1183), Michael VIII (1259), and Ioannes VI (1347). The twelve usurpations by imperial family members were, Stephanos and Constantine Lekapenos with Constantine VII (944), Constantine VII (945), Michael IV (1034), Zoe and Theodora [against Michael V] (1042), Michael VII (1071), Alexios III (1195), Isaakios II and Alexios IV (1203), Theodoros I (1205/1208), Andronikos III (1328), Andronikos IV (1376), Manuel II and Ioannes V (1379), and Ioannes VII (1390). The two extended family members were: Isaakios II (1185) - who could claim, and promoted, descent from the Komnenoi but was not considered part of ruling Komnenian family itself (as evidenced, for example, by the persistence of his name 'Angelos', and his brother's decision to adopt the name 'Komnenos'); and Alexios V (1204) - who subsequently married Alexios III's daughter, Eudokia, who had been left behind in Constantinople when her father fled in 1203. On Isaakios II's exploitation of his Komnenian familial connections, see Simpson 2015: esp. 185-186. The two 'outsiders' were: Isaakios I (1057), and Constantine X (1059). It should be noted that Constantine X claimed that his accession had been authorised by Isaakios I, although this was almost certainly not the case; see below, page 110.

⁷⁰ Romanos I, Nikephoros II, Andronikos I, Michael VIII, and Ioannes VI exploited regencies. Ioannes I, and Alexios I exploited rumoured changes to the succession. Nikephoros III simply married into the dynasty and claimed that he would respect Constantine's rights as heir.

⁷¹ For the marriage and Nikephoros' rumoured status as godfather to Basileios and Constantine, see Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 50 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 100); Morris 1994: 203. Nikephoros' supposed status as godfather raised questions about the validity of his marriage to Theophano. Patriarch Polyeuktos' objections were reportedly overcome when it was suggested that Nikephoros' father, Bardas, had been their real baptismal sponsor.

Basileios II who holds the sceptre with him. When Basileios was subsequently removed from Nikephoros' coinage, Ioannes I exploited this as a sign that the *basileis* were threatened.⁷² Nikephoros was assassinated, Ioannes proclaimed himself emperor with the *basileis*, and married Theodora (their paternal aunt) when a marriage to Theophano proved politically impossible.⁷³ The wedding coincided with Bardas Phokas' revolt (970), providing much-needed support when the Phokades were challenging Ioannes' authority.⁷⁴

In each case of a usurper-regent assuming power, the minority emperor remained a prominent figurehead until political control had been secured. Romanos I arranged the marriage of his daughter to Constantine VII and then gradually removed Constantine from precedence by promoting each of his sons, associating *basileia* overwhelmingly with the Lekapenoi.⁷⁵ Ioannes VI arranged Ioannes V's marriage to his daughter, and later promoted Matthew Kantakouzenos.⁷⁶ Notably, patriarchal protections of a minority emperor's successional rights were never upheld.⁷⁷ Despite their role as figureheads for populist

⁷² On these types, see Morrisson 2013: 75. The circumstances of Ioannes I's coup are discussed in greater detail below, page 184.

⁷³ Ioannes would have been open to potential accusations of *trigamy* had he wed Theophano (her third marriage): Morris 1994: 208-209; Laiou 1992.

⁷⁴ Sinclair 2009: 51-52. Leon Diakonos records that the marriage had been engineered to create a positive public reaction: Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 127 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 174).

⁷⁵ The promotion of Christophoros Lekapenos occurred on 20 May 921, Pentecost: *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 398; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 213 (trans. Wortley 206). Stephanos and Constantine Lekapenos were promoted on 25 December 924: *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 409-410; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 221 (trans. Wortley 213). Christophoros replaced Constantine VII in precedence in the ritual acclamations from the time of Maria Lekapena's marriage to Peter of Bulgaria in 927: *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 414; Shepard 1995: 132-133. Constantine's exclusion was reversed after the death of Romanos' intended successor, his son Christophoros in August 931: *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 420. Romanos then appears to have had a change of heart and concerned himself with the salvation of his soul: see below, page 179.

⁷⁶ The marriage of Ioannes V to Helena Kantakouzene was the very first act undertaken by Ioannes VI after concluding a power sharing arrangement with the regency. The marriage vows were taken the same day (8 February 1347), but the marriage was solemnised on 12 February, at the Church of the Virgin's Spring, outside Constantinople: Kantakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen III, 8-12; Nicol 1968: 64. Matthew Kantakouzenos was not made co-emperor until April 1353: Kantakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen III, 269-270; Nicol 1968: 113.

⁷⁷ Constantine VII was under the protection of Patriarch Nikolaos, who had been appointed to the regency by Alexandros: Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 196, 207 (trans. Wortley 190, 201). Basileios II and Constantine VIII had received an oath from Patriarch Polyeuktos, sworn before Romanos II, to protect their dynastic rights: Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 31 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 83). Alexios II's rights had been confirmed in an oath sworn by Patriarch Theodosios who, according to Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 38-39, was termed *basileiopator*. Ioannes IV was subject to an oath from Michael VIII that he would never conspire against the boy, and this oath was guaranteed by Patriarch

rebellions, patriarchs were only as politically effective in regard to successions as an emperor/usurper allowed them to be, and were generally replaced with loyalists of the new regime.⁷⁸ If the typology intended to mask usurpation by suggesting dynastic continuity it had limited success, since, except in the cases of Alexios I and Michael VIII (who were opposed by loyalists of the preceding emperors), every usurper-regent was overthrown.⁷⁹

In other cases, when direct blood-relations were not available other forms of integration were used. The Justinianic dynasty had relied upon adoption exclusively, and the eleventh century witnessed a minor revival of succession by adoption or marriage.⁸⁰ Between 1028 and 1081 four of twelve reigning emperors were promoted by marriage, and three others (usurpers) claimed ties to imperial women.⁸¹ Furthermore, the proposed adoptions and promotions to the rank of *kaisar* (heir-apparent) of the usurpers Isaakios I and Nikephoros Bryennios would have ended their respective revolts, forestalled the overthrow of reigning emperors, and provided heirs to those emperors.⁸² In the next centuries, Andronikos I married Alexios II's wife Anna/Agnes of France after killing the boy, and

Arsenios: see below, page 232. And Patriarch Kalekas openly declared himself regent for Ioannes V: Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen II, 605-612.

⁷⁸ On the balance of power within the emperor-patriarch relationship, see von Falkenhausen 1997: esp. 191; Dagron 2003. On the replacement of patriarchs with loyal figures, see Cheynet 2013a. Of course, patriarchs were occasionally involved in political disputes: notably, the involvement of Patriarch Keroularios in the usurpation of Isaakios I, brought a swift cessation to hostilities with Michael VI, and swung the senate and Constantinopolitan elites to Isaakios' side. But this was a unique instance of a patriarch voluntarily intervening in a dispute that lacked any overtly ecclesiastical concerns. On Keroularios' intervention: Dagron 2003: 235-240; Cheynet 2013a: esp. 6-9; Angold 2008b: 603.

⁷⁹ Alexios I and Michael VIII (and their successors) were able to promote the ideas of continuity and integration of their new regime with the preceding dynasty. For Alexios' propaganda, see below, page 112. For Michael's propaganda, see below, page 232.

⁸⁰ The Justinianic succession: Justin I adopted Justinian I (his nephew); Justinian I adopted Justin II (his nephew); Justin II adopted Tiberius II (the *comes excubitorum*); Tiberius II adopted Maurice (his son-in-law, the *comes excubitorum*); and Phocas appears to have intended his son-in-law, Priscus (the *comes excubitorum*) to succeed him, and may have adopted Priscus if Herakleios had not acceded.

⁸¹ The four promotions by marriage were, Romanos III, Michael IV, Constantine IX, and Romanos IV. The usurpers claiming associations with imperial women were, Michael V (adoption), Nikephoros III (marriage), and Alexios I (adoption, and a proposed marriage). On marriage as an accepted method of accession, see Laiou 1992: esp. 148; Angelova 2004: esp. 7; Herrin 2013: 174-177; Maes 2004.

⁸² Macrides 1990: 117, noting that the late Roman procedure of appointing a *Caesar* who would then accede to the throne was revived in a fashion that was never subsequently repeated.

Alexios V and Theodoros I claimed affinal ties to Alexios III.⁸³

The dynastic principle had been understood since Roman times as a method of ensuring political stability through the promotion of a worthy successor whose virtue was (theoretically) ‘guaranteed’ by appointment by his predecessor.⁸⁴ Emperors who failed to make adequate preparations for the succession were routinely criticised.⁸⁵ The increased propensity for dynastic integration demonstrates the eventual necessity of client connections and lineage (εὐγένεια) in order to succeed. Eventually only connected persons were able to mount an effective opposition.⁸⁶ It might be tempting to see this as evidence that hereditary-dynastic theories of rulership became fully established,⁸⁷ but that does not seem to have been the case. As Dagron elaborated, hereditary succession was only ever weakly accepted in Byzantium. Primogeniture was never ‘legally’ established and could be challenged by younger siblings.⁸⁸ Recourse to ideologies of sacral kingship sought to protect the imperial family, and the notions of ‘divine unction’ and ‘birth in the purple’ were introduced alongside other measures to help strengthen ideologically the dynastic principle. Ceremonies creating symbolic kinship ties between heirs and prominent figures in society were employed in childhood and adolescence to foster networks of support for the dynasty and to help ensure the succession of its heirs.⁸⁹ In fact, attempts at integration suggest that the illusion of dynastic continuity was exploited in order to preserve existing power structures. The gradual

⁸³ For Andronikos’ marriage to Anna/Agnes: Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 52-53. For Alexios V and Theodoros I: see below, page 115, footnote 567.

⁸⁴ Börm 2016: 6.

⁸⁵ Psellos critiqued Basileios II, and Empress Theodora, for failing to make provisions for the transfer of power, and Choniates rebuked Manuel I for the same reason. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 60-63; II, 168-171; ed. Renaud I, 27-28; II, 79 (trans. Sewter 55-56, 268-269); Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 220 (trans. Magoulias 124).

⁸⁶ In his statistical analysis of dynasties, Lillie 2008: esp. 230-231, confirms that those emperors without kin relations or links to the preceding regime were most at risk of being swiftly overthrown. Cheynet 1990: 157-158, considers that ‘good-stock’ was the essential qualification required by a usurper.

⁸⁷ As Guillard 1943: 234, appears to suggest.

⁸⁸ Just as Anna Komnene and her husband Nikephoros Bryennios (the Younger) challenged Ioannes II’s accession in 1118, and Manuel I challenged the succession of his oldest surviving brother Isaakios in 1143: Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 26-30 (trans. Brand 29-32); Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 5-7, 41-48, 219 (trans. Magoulias 5-6, 24-29, 124).

⁸⁹ Dagron 2003: esp. 24-35.

takeover of power was intended to lessen the risk of a reactionary backlash and permit access to the dynasty's networks.⁹⁰ Since administrative and social changes meant that power became increasingly restricted to the ruling family and a growing number of 'client families' (especially under the Komnenoi and Palaiologoi), it was natural for rivals to emerge from 'within' and for support to be canvassed/required from these networks.⁹¹ The resulting hazard would make sense of Basileios I's choice to promote three sons to co-imperial status, make the fourth Patriarch, but keep his daughters unmarried,⁹² and Basileios II's refusal to allow Zoe or Theodora to marry while he was alive. Both emperors knew first-hand the risks associated with male 'in-laws'.

Justifying revolution

But what were the rhetorical legitimations that permitted a usurper to challenge a reigning emperor or seek integration into a dynasty? According to modern theories, legitimacy exists where there is a belief in a government's right to govern.⁹³ When contested, it is not usually the system of governance itself (i.e. monarchy) that is brought into question, but the way in which that system exercises authority.⁹⁴ Support for or resistance to a government's 'legitimacy' is expressed in terms of the 'character' of that government.⁹⁵ Illegitimacy arises when the state attempts 'to do things or act in a manner which individuals or groups... regard as wrong, absurd, or oppressive.'⁹⁶ These conceptions are subjective because the state uses

⁹⁰ For examples of dynastic continuity being espoused in order to preserve power networks, see below, page 112, and VICARIOUS REDEMPTION.

⁹¹ See below, pages 256 and 267.

⁹² Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 134 (trans. Wortley 132-133); Macrides 1992: 272; Dagron 2003: 33.

⁹³ In modern conceptions political legitimacy 'defines one's right to wield authority, giving one the legal right to use force. Acceptance denotes the approval that certain people or social groups grant to someone so that he may rule in future, when he acquires the necessary legitimacy. Both notions rely on the idea of consent.' Tounta 2010: 448; Barker 1990: 27.

⁹⁴ Barker 1990: 196.

⁹⁵ Barker 1990: 28-29.

⁹⁶ Barker 1990: 167. On the Byzantine conception of 'state' and '*politeia*', see Kaldellis 2015: esp. 33-61.

different methods of governance for different persons, and these relationships thus engender different interpretations and intensities of legitimacy.⁹⁷

This theoretical framework is applicable to Byzantium where *basileia* implied the duality of legitimate or tyrannical rule. The ‘exercise of authority’ was legitimised through the imperial idea which stated that the emperor, being subject only to God, was ‘living law’. The artifice of the *Kaiseridee*, promulgated through imperial ceremonial, encomia, and solemn preambles, projected this persistent image rooted in sacral rulership and divine virtues.⁹⁸ Since no man or law could compel him, the emperor was advised to voluntarily submit himself to the law and imitate God.⁹⁹ As Dagron revealed, this formulation provided an ideological pathway for unrestrained ‘real power’ to be legitimised through respect for vaguely defined ‘legal’ norms. A moral conversion from the use of force (tyranny) to the rule of law (*basileia*) was implied.¹⁰⁰ In the words of Gregoras:

For the demagogue, who is led and guided by the advice of his presumptuous judgment, and who rules under delusion, does not notice that he is himself the first victim of the tyranny of the archetypes of evil. However, the Emperor who justly submits the reins of government to the prevailing laws... becomes a clear symbol of rulership.¹⁰¹

A tyrant exercised authority in a violent, oppressive, or harmful manner. Therefore, when an emperor exhibited behaviours deemed ‘illegal’ or ‘immoral’, or a rebel broke into revolt, it could be said that he had slipped into tyranny and lawful order had been suspended.¹⁰² This state of suspension could only be ended by the restoration of lawful order, either through the emperor’s moral conversion, the usurper’s defeat, or the emperor’s deposition by a more

⁹⁷ Barker 1990: 113-117, 124-125, 196.

⁹⁸ On the core of the *Kaiseridee*, the rhetorical ideology of imperial rulership, the fundamental studies are those of Treitinger 1938 and Hunger 1964.

⁹⁹ Agapetos Diakonos, ed. Riedinger §27, §36-37 (trans. Bell 109, 111-112); *Michel Italikos: Lettres et discours*, ed. Gautier 294; Blemmydes, *Basilikos Andrias*, ed. Hunger and Ševčenko 46-48, 122-123. On the concept of ‘living law’, see Simon 1984; Beck 1970: 31-33; Dmitriev 2015: 11-13, 16; Dagron 2003: 19-21, 229-235; Dagron 1994; Hunger 1964: 117-122.

¹⁰⁰ Dagron 1994: 27-52; Dagron 2003: 19-35. See also, Dmitriev 2015.

¹⁰¹ Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen II, 575. For comparable recitations of this idea over the centuries, see Dmitriev 2015: 14-15, with references.

¹⁰² Cheynet 1990: 177-190, esp. 177-179; Kaldellis 2015: 163-164.

worthy candidate. It was in the absence of a moral conversion that ‘legitimate authority’ could be contested.

Kekaumenos’ eleventh-century *Strategikon*,¹⁰³ addressing the emperor, advised him that:

Whenever people say that the emperor is not subject to the law, but is law, I too say the same. [But] only, as long as whatever he does and legislates, he does well, we obey it... Know from this that the emperor, being a man, is subject to the laws of piety... so let your deeds and actions be full of understanding and truth, and justice be in your heart.¹⁰⁴

Numerous authors expressed comparable ideas,¹⁰⁵ and we see that the formulation amounts to a theory of consensual, limited monarchy, qualifying absolutist rhetoric: the people obey only as long as the emperor rules in accordance with legal norms and moral ideals. Consequently, the possibility of opposing an emperor when he ceased to act lawfully remained an option:¹⁰⁶ Nikolaos Mystikos, in a letter to the pope, stated that ‘If the emperor, inspired by the Devil, gives an order contrary to divine law... we shall not obey these infamous edicts, but rather choose to lose our life.’¹⁰⁷

As Cheynet outlined, imperial power was established on the virtues of philanthropy, clemency, justice, and care for the common good, and an emperor’s conversion to legitimate

¹⁰³ Kekaumenos’ *Strategikon* forms a unique collection of moral advice, military maxims, and cautionary tales in the vein of so-called ‘wisdom literature’. Presumably composed in the mid-late 1070’s, by a former military commander, it offers unambiguous warnings on the dangers of court, acquaintances, and unrestrained ambition. The author’s ideals have been described as lying outside those of the urban intelligentsia, although it is apparent that Kekaumenos was also familiar with the fundamentals of rhetoric. The audience for his work was certainly larger than the author’s declared ‘sons’ and their ‘brothers’ (perhaps a metaphorical reference to his intellectual family – his readers). For useful introductions, with bibliographies, see Roueché 2003: 23-37; Bernard 2014: 159-160.

¹⁰⁴ Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij p.93 (trans. Roueché).

¹⁰⁵ For example: the sixth-century *Dialogue on Political Science* acknowledges ‘differing opinions’ on the imperial position, and advocates legal, ethical, and behavioural limitations to imperial power. It asserts that imperial authority is predicated upon divine favour, which is expressed in the offering of *basileia* to the emperor by the people. Legitimacy, it infers, is predicated upon respect for, and adherence to, the law. Emperors are held responsible to God and to the people in enacting the law, and the possibility of their deposition was implicit: *Dialogue on Political Science*, ed. Mazzuchi 5.7, 5.13, 5.17, 5.21, 5.46, 5.47 (trans. Bell 146-150, 155).

¹⁰⁶ Cheynet 1990: 179.

¹⁰⁷ Nikolaos Mystikos, *Letters*, ed. Jenkins and Westerink 232-233. Translation adapted.

rule was assessed and accepted on the basis of his behaviour.¹⁰⁸ If the usurper could prove that the emperor had acted unlawfully or immorally (in contravention of ‘divine law’) then rebellion might be deemed legitimate. Thus Leon Tornikios’ supporters supposedly ‘lacked a sufficient pretext (προφάσεως) to rise, but continued to hold the desire for rebellion in their souls.’¹⁰⁹ And when faced with the conspiracy of Nikephoros Diogenes, Alexios I urged his advisors to ‘Leave him [Diogenes] alone’, because ‘We must not afford him a pretext against me. He alone must be responsible, before God and man, for the evil he plans.’¹¹⁰ The perception of imperial wrongdoing signified immorality and justified rebellion.

Four cases, those of Romanos I, Isaakios I, Alexios I, and Andronikos I, will allow us to examine some of the justifications that were espoused by usurpers who successfully deposed one regime in favour of their own and sought to legitimise their actions.

Romanos I

The accession of Romanos I (919-920) was achieved through a combination of military force and palace intrigue that exploited the historic instability of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos’ regency council. Porphyrogenetos’ care had been entrusted to Leon VI’s brother Alexandros after the emperor’s death. Yet Alexandros reigned for only thirteen months. He was alleged to have considered castrating the boy, but upon his death (June 913) he appointed a regency of seven figures, headed by Patriarch Nikolaos.¹¹¹ Pointedly,

¹⁰⁸ Cheynet 1990: 177-184; Cheynet 2008b. See also, Tounta 2010: 455; Schwedler and Tounta 2010: 352. For a detailed catalogue of these virtues in relation to the *Kaiseridee*, see Hunger 1964. On the central importance of *philanthropia* to the imperial image, see Hunger 1963; Gregory 1975.

¹⁰⁹ νῦν δὲ μὴ εὐποροῦντες εἰς ἀποστασίαν ἀρκούσης προφάσεως, ὑποβρύχιον ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς τὴν γνώμην τῆς τυραννίδος ἐφύλαττον. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 36-37; ed. Renauld II, 14 (trans. Sewter 205). Author’s translation.

¹¹⁰ «ἔα», φησίν, «οὐ χρὴ πρόφασιν τοῦτον ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐσχηκέναι... ἔστω τῆς καθ’ ἡμῶν μελέτης αὐτὸς ὁ αἴτιος πρὸς τε Θεὸν καὶ ἀνθρώπους.» Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 268 (trans. Frankopan 246).

¹¹¹ Alongside Nikolaos were: the *magistroi* Stephanos and Ioannes Eladas, the *raiktor* Ioannes, and Alexandros’ favourites Gabrilopoulos and Basilitzes. Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 286; *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 379; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 194-196 (trans. Wortley 189-190).

Empress Zoe, the controversial fourth wife of Leon, was excluded and ousted to a convent where she was tonsured at Nikolaos' behest.¹¹² The regency was tested almost immediately by the revolt of the *domestikos ton scholon* Constantine Doukas, who it was later rumoured had been entreated to act by Nikolaos. Doukas attempted to gain access to the Great Palace with an armed force, but was felled in combat with the guardsmen.¹¹³ Then, in August, Symeon of Bulgaria marched on Constantinople with an army. A siege was only prevented when the regency negotiated a future marriage between Symeon's daughter and Porphyrogenetos, and recognised Symeon's status as 'Emperor of the Bulgarians'.¹¹⁴ This humiliating settlement proved Nikolaos' undoing and in February 914 Zoe was returned to the palace in a coup supported by the regent Ioannes Eladas and the influential *parakoimomenos*, Constantine. The marriage alliance was called off and Symeon's imperial title repudiated. Alexandros' favourites, the regents Basilizes and Gabrilopoulos were removed from the council, and Nikolaos was excluded from political influence.¹¹⁵ Therefore, from the start, Porphyrogenetos' minority was beset by conspiracy, and policy reversals.

By 917 the regency was once again in trouble. After some successes c.914-916, including the recovery of Adrianople and a peace treaty with the Arabs, the council's military campaign against Symeon faced a severe reverse.¹¹⁶ The Byzantine forces led by the *megas domestikos* Leon Phokas were routed at Anchialos (August 917). Romanos Lekapenos, the *droungarios* whose fleet was supposed to support the land units, reportedly deserted after a dispute with another of the expedition's commanders, precipitating the disaster. He returned

¹¹² *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter p.131-133. On the 'Tetragamy' of Leon VI, see below, page 174.

¹¹³ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 383; *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter p.131-133; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 197-199 (trans. Wortley 191-194).

¹¹⁴ Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 292; *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 385; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 200 (trans. Wortley 194).

¹¹⁵ Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 292; *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 386; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 201 (trans. Wortley 195). Zoe attempted to restore Euthymios to the patriarchate but was frustrated in her efforts. Nikolaos remained in place but appears to have been neutralised: Garland 1999: 120.

¹¹⁶ Whittow 1996: 289.

to Constantinople in contravention of his orders.¹¹⁷ A second defeat soon followed when Symeon surprised the troops rallied by Phokas to defend Constantinople.¹¹⁸ The *Letters* of Patriarch Nikolaos detail the sense of panic in the capital at that time, and reveal that denunciations were directed against the regency, ‘those who were badly administering his [Porphyrogennetos’] affairs’.¹¹⁹

It is in this context that Romanos acted. To begin, the defeats represented a major embarrassment to the regency and an inquest was held into Romanos’ actions. We read that he was tried, found ‘guilty’ of desertion, and condemned to be blinded. The penalty was dismissed through the intervention of one of the original regency members, the *magistros* Stephanos, but it would have established Romanos in opposition to Zoe.¹²⁰ Next, we are informed that Phokas was openly claiming to have pretensions for the throne. He was a relative by marriage of the *parakoimomenos* Constantine and apparently expected to accede with his help.¹²¹ Skylitzes writes that ‘[Phokas] thought that by putting a great deal of confidence in him [the *parakoimomenos*] it would be easy to seize the throne’, and imagined himself to be a ‘lawful successor’.¹²² As Runciman surmises, it is possible that Zoe had considered marriage to Phokas once her regency was politically endangered by the military reverses.¹²³ Since blame for the defeats had been directed against the regency’s poor administration, and against Romanos through his trial, Phokas could have brought her much needed support from the eastern military aristocracy who continued to back him.¹²⁴

¹¹⁷ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 387-389; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 201-203 (trans. Wortley 196-197).

¹¹⁸ Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 295-296; *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 389-391; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 203-204 (trans. Wortley 197-198).

¹¹⁹ Nikolaos Mystikos, *Letters*, ed. Jenkins and Westerink 98-99.

¹²⁰ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 390; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 204 (trans. Wortley 199).

¹²¹ Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 296; *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 390.

¹²² ...καὶ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ πλεῖστα θαρρῶν ῥαδίως ᾤετο τό τῆς βασιλείας καθέξειν κράτος. ; ...ὡς εἰς νόμιμον διαδοχὴν ἐφαντάζετο. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 205-206 (trans. Wortley 199).

¹²³ Runciman 1929: 57-58. Followed by Garland 1999: 122, who also notes that accusations that an empress-regent was seeking a marriage were not particularly rare throughout Byzantine history.

¹²⁴ The apparent ease with which Leon was able to find troops to support his rebellion against Romanos in late 919 would point to him remaining a popular figure amongst the army, in spite of his defeats by Symeon. On

Alternatively, Phokas' claims could have been a later invention of Romanos', justifying his subsequent intervention in political affairs. Certainly, this reading would make sense of developments inside the palace where another coup was underway (early 919). Porphyrogenetos' tutor, Theodoros, supposedly convinced him to send a message to Romanos, 'written in his own hand', entreating him to do all that he could 'to put an end to the designs of Constantine the *parakoimomenos* and his relatives'.¹²⁵ The *parakoimomenos*, as the chief political figure and Zoe's principal ally, had taken substantial criticism for the regency's failings. The histories assert that he was attempting to gather the government into his own hands, and even Porphyrogenetos' *De Administrando* is hostile to his policies and promotions.¹²⁶ Consequently, when Romanos followed Porphyrogenetos' orders by sailing into Constantinople and taking the *parakoimomenos* prisoner, the regency's attempts to negotiate his release were rebuffed by people throwing stones at their representatives.¹²⁷ The histories record that Porphyrogenetos ordered Zoe's removal from authority, and the restoration of Patriarch Nikolaos and the *magistros* Stephanos (who had spared Romanos' sight). Phokas was dismissed as *domestikos ton scholon*.¹²⁸ Theodoros allegedly explained the coup to Zoe by saying that 'Leon Phokas has destroyed the army, while Constantine the *parakoimomenos* has destroyed the palace'.¹²⁹ The conspirators' justificatory propaganda

the Phokades' position within the eastern military aristocracy, see Cheynet 1986: esp. 480-483, 495 (on Leon Phokas); Whittow 1996: 341.

¹²⁵ Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 297; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 206 (trans. Wortley 200): γραμματίων οὖν ὁ βασιλεὺς Κωνσταντῖνος διαχαράξας γραφῆ καὶ ὑπογραφῆ διασφαλίσάμενος ἀπέστειλεν αὐτῷ, ὅπερ αὐτὸς ἐπὶ χειρᾶς λαβὼν ὑπέσχετο τὴν κατὰ τοῦ παρακοιμώμενου Κωνσταντῖνου καὶ τῶν συγγενῶν αὐτοῦ ἐπιθεσιν, ὡς δεοί ποιήσασθαι.

¹²⁶ Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 296; *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 390-391; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 201 (trans. Wortley 195); *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. Moravcsik and Jenkins 252-255.

¹²⁷ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 392: τούτων οὖν διαπερασάντων, λίθοις ὁ λαὸς αὐτοὺς ἐξήλασαν βάλλοντες. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 207 (trans. Wortley 201), ascribes this to certain of Romanos' 'undisciplined sailors': ὁ τῶν πλωϊμῶν διαναστὰς ἀκόλαστος ὄχλος λίθοις αὐτοὺς ἐξήλασαν.

¹²⁸ Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 298; *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 290-292; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 207-208 (trans. Wortley 201).

¹²⁹ διὰ τὸ ἀπολέσαι Λέοντα τὸν Φωκᾶν τοὺς Ῥωμαίους καὶ Κωνσταντῖνον παρακοιμώμενον τὸ παλάτιον ταῦτα γεγόνασιν: Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 298; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 207 (trans. Wortley 201): διὰ τὸ ἀπολέσαι, ὃ δέσποινα, Λέοντα μὲν τὸν Φωκᾶν τὰ στρατόπεδα, Κωνσταντῖνον δὲ τὸν παρακοιμώμενον τὸ παλάτιον, ἢ τοιαύτη γέγονε κίνησις.

thus exploited the dire military situation and disaffection with the government in order to replace the regency once again. They were presented as acting to protect the state, with the support of the people, and in accordance with Porphyrogennetos' wishes. Moreover, in suggesting that the *parakoimomenos* had held ambitions for power, they revealed themselves as defenders of Porphyrogennetos' rights. Romanos had merely followed instructions.

The histories provide a distorted version of events immediately following this, however, it appears that Phokas protested his dismissal by Nikolaos and a compromise was reached that promoted his relatives.¹³⁰ Nikolaos swore an oath not to discharge them, and then broke it. In turn, Phokas appealed to Romanos for assistance in toppling Nikolaos' regency. Romanos' troops were still in the capital and he had been used as a pawn by Nikolaos and Theodoros. The pair arranged a marriage alliance to seal their agreement, but Romanos betrayed Phokas. He informed Nikolaos of the plot and requested that his troops be allowed to secure the palace.¹³¹ When this request was refused he sailed into the Boukoleon harbour (24 March 919) and removed Nikolaos and Stephanos from office: avowing that Theodoros, and therefore Porphyrogennetos, had called on him to act.¹³² The story of Theodoros' second request was evidently a later invention since, before he was allowed into the palace, Romanos was made to swear an oath (over the True Cross) not to harm the emperor.

The pretext that Romanos was acting in defence of Porphyrogennetos' rights was then communicated through ritual. He appeared with Porphyrogennetos at the Church of the Pharos, a historic site of Macedonian patronage,¹³³ where he performed *proskynesis*,

¹³⁰ Symeon and Theodoros Zouphinezer (Leon's brother-in-law and nephew respectively) were promoted to command the *Hetaireiai*: Runciman 1929: 59.

¹³¹ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 393; Symeon Magister, ed. Wahlgren 310; Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 299; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 208 (trans. Wortley 201-202); Runciman 1929: 59.

¹³² Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 299-300; *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 393-394; Symeon Logothetes, ed. Wahlgren 306-310; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 206-208 (trans. Wortley 201-202).

¹³³ On the importance of the Pharos to the Macedonian emperors in this period, see below, page 228.

received assurances, and was promoted *megas hetaireiarches*.¹³⁴ The sequence simultaneously ensured his hold over the government, suggested deference to the dynasty, and implied that he was acting with imperial authorisation. *Proskynesis* and an exchange of assurances at a Macedonian foundation were evidently the strongest initial gestures of deference that Romanos could make to the dynasty in light of his obvious military coup.

This pattern of deference allowed Romanos' integration and characterised the final stages of his ascent through gradual promotions prompted by concern for Porphyrogennetos and the empire. In April 919 Helena, Romanos' daughter, was married to the emperor and Romanos was appointed as *basileiopator* ('father of the emperor').¹³⁵ In response, with the support of Zoe's loyalists Phokas entered into revolt, claiming to be defending Porphyrogennetos.¹³⁶ Alongside missives offering promotions and financial rewards for commanders who abandoned Phokas, a *chrysobull* was issued explaining that Romanos had been appointed as 'protector' and that Phokas was a 'tyrant' and 'apostate' who was intent on claiming the throne for himself. Phokas' troops deserted and he was captured, blinded, and paraded.¹³⁷ Theodoros and Zoe were then independently accused of intrigues and removed from the palace, and Romanos was crowned co-emperor in December.¹³⁸ We read that his ascent to imperial precedence was justified on the basis of preventing conspiracies: that of the *sakellarios* Anastasios had been uncovered shortly beforehand.¹³⁹ Political

¹³⁴ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 394; Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 300; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. 208-209 (trans. Wortley 202).

¹³⁵ April 27, the anniversary of the Wedding at Cana. *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 394; Symeon Magister, ed. Wahlgren 310; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 209-210 (trans. Wortley 202). On the history of the title and functions of the *basile(i)opator*, which have been subject to substantial debate, see Gkoutzioukostas 2014; Tougher 1997: 89, 94, 99-104; Kazhdan et al 1991: 263-264; Karlin-Hayter and Leroy-Molinghen 1968: 278-281; Schminck 1989: 108-109.

¹³⁶ Phokas was supported by Constantine the *parakoimomenos*, the *patrikioi* Constantine and Anastasios Gongyles, and the *protoasekritis* Constantine of Malelia: *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 395-396; Symeon Magister, ed. Wahlgren 310-311; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 209 (trans. Wortley 203).

¹³⁷ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 396.

¹³⁸ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 397-398; Symeon Magister, ed. Wahlgren 313; Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 302; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 211-212 (trans. Wortley 204-205). For this coronation (17 December), see below, page 85.

¹³⁹ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 400; Symeon Logothetes, ed. Wahlgren 311; Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 306; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 214 (trans. Wortley 208).

infighting and military reverses had allowed Romanos to present himself as a concerned military figure intervening to protect Constantine's throne. It was believed that his seniority, and integration into the dynasty, would allow him to act effectively on the boy's behalf, and bring an end to the paralysis in the capital.

Isaakios I

Isaakios I's military revolt and usurpation (1057) owed much to the unanimously poor reputation of Michael VI. The histories of Psellos, Skylitzes, and Attaleiates are in agreement about the essential details and justifications. We learn that, on the occasion of the *roga* ceremony (at Easter), the eastern commanders Isaakios Komnenos and Katakalon Kekaumenos approached the emperor and requested their promotion to the rank of *proedros*. Michael refused them and, according to Psellos, levelled charges against them.¹⁴⁰ Isaakios was accused of nearly losing Antioch, corrupting the army, lacking leadership, and misappropriating public funds to serve his own 'greed'.¹⁴¹ When Isaakios' comrades, Michael Bourtzes, Constantine and Ioannes Doukas, attempted to intercede on his behalf they were reportedly instructed to be silent and then all were dismissed. We learn that the commanders then approached the *protosynkellos* Leon Paraspondylos (Strabospondylos) to repeat their request and ask him to intercede on their behalf. However, Paraspondylos dismissed them a second time, even going so far as to insult them for having asked.¹⁴² It was at this point that a conspiracy was formed: Isaakios and his comrades met at Hagia Sophia

¹⁴⁰ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 180-181; ed. Renauld II, 84 (trans. Sewter 276-277); Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 53 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 94-97). Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 483-484 (trans. Wortley 451-452), who also utilised a work favourable to Katakalon Kekaumenos for this period, claims that Michael praised the generals but refused their requests for promotion. On Skylitzes' pro-Kekaumenos source, see Shepard 1992.

¹⁴¹ ὕβρεσι μυρίασι κατέπλυνεν ὡς ἀπολωλεκότα μικροῦ δεῖν τὴν Ἀντιόχου καὶ τὰς δυνάμεις καταλελυκότα, καὶ γενναῖον μὲν ἢ στρατηγικὸν οὐδὲν ἐπιδείξαντα, τὰ δὲ τῶν πολλῶν συλλέξαντα χρήματα, καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐσχηκότα οὐκ εὐκλείας, ἀλλ' ἀπληστίας ὑπόθεσιν... Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 180-181; ed. Renauld II, 84 (trans. Sewter 276-277).

¹⁴² Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 182-183; ed. Renauld II, 84-85 (trans. Sewter 277); Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 486 (trans. Wortley 454).

to swear an oath sealing their cause, and then returned to their estates to prepare.¹⁴³ They gathered to proclaim Isaakios in June, and then marched against Constantinople.¹⁴⁴ Michael was deposed after the imperial troops were defeated at Nikaia and a conspiracy involving Patriarch Keroularios had proclaimed Isaakios in Constantinople.¹⁴⁵

Consequently, the conspiracy involved elements of the military who were disaffected and had suffered under the recent governments. Cheynet notes that each of Isaakios' co-conspirators had suffered confiscations, demotion, or dismissal, due to reformist policies introduced by Empress Theodora and Paraspondylos.¹⁴⁶ The disaffection caused by these policies, and Michael's refusal to reverse them, was central to Isaakios' justifications. Psellos, in discussing the events of his embassy to Isaakios (on behalf of Michael), indicates that the commanders' demotions were espoused as the rebellion's *casus belli*. He relates that the rebels held Michael responsible for their misfortunes, and he attempted to redirect blame from the emperor. Addressing Isaakios, he claimed: '...you have not even suffered indignity, except that you have not obtained that which you had previously desired. As for the terrible sufferings you speak of, those were caused by other men, not by the current emperor.'¹⁴⁷ Later, in a private conversation after Michael had offered Isaakios the dignity of *kaisar* in an attempt to save his rule, Isaakios reportedly told Psellos that he would accept as long as his men would not be deprived of the privileges that he had granted to them, and that he would be given control of the honours system.¹⁴⁸ Once Michael had agreed to these terms

¹⁴³ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 487 (trans. Wortley 454). See also, Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 182-183; ed. Renault II, 85 (trans. Sewter 277).

¹⁴⁴ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 456 (trans. Wortley 456).

¹⁴⁵ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 54-59 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 98-107); Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 495-500 (trans. Wortley 461-465).

¹⁴⁶ Kekaumenos had lost command of Antioch, and Michael Bourtzes, Romanos Skleros, Nikephoros Botaneiates, and the Argyroi, no longer commanded units and were thus free to join the rebellion. Bryennios, who was brought into the rebellion at a later date, had suffered confiscations under Constantine IX and Theodora that Michael had not repaid. Cheynet 1990: 354-356.

¹⁴⁷ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 212-215; ed. Renault II, 99-100 (trans. Sewter 292-293). Translation adapted.

¹⁴⁸ ...ὥς οὔτε ἐτέρω παραχωρήσει τοῦ κράτους ἐντεῦθεν ἀπιών, οὔτ' ἀφελεῖται τινα τῶν σθστρατευσαμένων ἐμοὶ ὧν ἐκάστῳ περιλοτῖμμαι· κοινωνήσει δέ μοι καὶ τινος ἐξουσίας βασιλικῆς, ἣν ἔχω, ἃν βούλωμαι, <τοὺς

Isaakios' supporters expressed their willingness to end the revolt.¹⁴⁹

The usurpation thus appears to have been little more than an expression of military discontent during a period of relative demobilisation. However, Isaakios' propaganda presented it as a reaction to serious maladministration and injustice perpetrated by Michael's government. In all three of the principal accounts Michael's denial of the commanders' request sharply contrasts with his generosity to others. Psellos introduces the reign by saying that although imperial authority rested on the people, senate, and army, only the first two were benefitting under Michael. He claimed that the emperor 'distributed honours more widely than was usual' and promoted people two or even three ranks higher than expected, concluding that this had resulted in a state of 'confusion/chaos' (σύγχυσις).¹⁵⁰ Attaleiates claimed that only Michael's favourites benefitted.¹⁵¹ And Skylitzes reports that the commanders had initially approached Michael after hearing of his generosity,¹⁵² and had then explained to Paraspondylos that it was 'unjust for citizens who have never manned the battlements nor contended in battle to attain imperial honours... [while they] should be passed over and be deprived of imperial largesse.'¹⁵³ We infer that Michael's government was prone to maltreating those outside his faction. The commanders had not been unfavourably dismissed the first time as a result of accident or misfortune, since Michael's representative had been given an opportunity to correct the initial error and had not. The story of the second request proved that the commanders were not acting precipitously or without cause. Instead, it revealed that order had been inverted: the unfair distribution of

μὲν> τοῖς ἐλάττωσι τῶν πολιτικῶν ἀξιομάτων τιμᾶν, τοὺς δὲ καὶ εἰς ἀρχὰς ἀνάγειν στρατηγίας. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 216-219; ed. Renauld II, 102 (trans. Sewter 294).

¹⁴⁹ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 220-223; ed. Renauld II, 104-105 (trans. Sewter 296).

¹⁵⁰ '... ἢ προσήκε τὰς τῶν ἀξιομάτων διανεμήσεις πεποῖτο.' Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 178-179; ed. Renauld II, 83 (trans. Sewter 275). Translation adapted.

¹⁵¹ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 53 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 94-97): stating that only those 'who were close in some way to the emperor were benefitting from this situation, regardless of whether they had done something good, something bad, or nothing at all, and no attention was paid to anyone else.'

¹⁵² Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 483 (trans. Wortley 451).

¹⁵³ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 486 (trans. Wortley 454).

honours not accidental, Michael simply did not care to be impartial. Isaakios' rebellion would restore order, by promoting those who were deserving and had served the interests of the empire rather than merely the emperor.

Isaakios' propagandists also enhanced Michael's negative image by depicting him as an emperor singularly incapable of exercising authority. In a panegyric of Psellos we read that Michael 'had placed power into the hands of others and in fact lived as a private person (ιδιώτης)'.¹⁵⁴ In the histories, Psellos and Skylitzes were both critical of his lethargic response to Isaakios' rebellion: he had no intention of sending an embassy to the rebels until this was suggested to him and even had to be convinced to raise the armies in response, believing that the rebellion would fragment on its own.¹⁵⁵ He was presented as an ineffective administrator: Skylitzes comments that Michael was at 'the age at which it is better to retire', and records how Isaakios' men endeavoured to win support by calling him 'an ancient thing, ruled by eunuchs'. Elsewhere, he asserts that, 'being an extremely aged man who could recall many antiquated things, he [Michael] undertook to revive several ancient customs which had fallen into disuse: not that these would profit the state or the people in any way.'¹⁵⁶ And Attaleiates introduced the reign by saying that Michael was 'worn down by old age and therefore would have to share *basileia*.'¹⁵⁷ These critiques suggested that Michael should never have been on the throne to begin with. He was too old to do anything of use, his reintroduction of outdated policies (not even 'innovative') proved fruitless, and he depended upon others to govern for him. Michael emerges from these accounts as an emperor in name only whose advisors were exercising real authority. The image of his reign is that of a

¹⁵⁴ *Mesaionike Bibliothek* IV, ed. Sathas 360.

¹⁵⁵ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 178-179; ed. Renauld II, 83 (trans. Sewter 275); Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 492 (trans. Wortley 458).

¹⁵⁶ ὡς ὦν δὲ κάρτα γέρων καὶ πολλῶν μεμνημένος ἀρχαίων, ἐπεβάλλετο καὶ πολλὰ τῶν παλαιῶν σχολάσαντα ἐθίμων ἐπανακτήσασθαι, μηδὲν πρὸς λυσιτέλειαν συντελοῦντα τῆς βασιλείας ἢ τοῦ κοινοῦ. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 480, 482, 494 (trans. Wortley 448, 450, 459). Translation adapted.

¹⁵⁷ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 52 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 94-95).

government without an emperor.

In connection with this image, Paraspondylos became a scapegoat. Alongside the story of him rudely dismissing the commanders, Isaakios' demanded his removal from office during Psellos' embassy, and was later pleased to hear that 'the man who looked after the imperial affairs' had been forced to resign.¹⁵⁸ He was similarly described by Skylitzes as the man who 'managed the affairs of the empire', thus supplanting Michael entirely.¹⁵⁹ His derisive sobriquets were derived from his relation to the Spondyles family and the verbs *παρασπονδέω* ('to break faith with') and *στρεφώ* ('to twist around/invert'), which may imply that he was reputed to have promised the commanders promotions and then reneged on those promises. Therefore, his dismissal was presented in such a way that Isaakios' could be seen intervening to help Michael restore control over a government corrupted and dominated by Paraspondylos' mismanagement.

Finally, it appears that Isaakios exploited the Seljuk threat as yet another justification for his promotion. Kekaumenos was reportedly able to win troops to Isaakios' cause after producing a forged imperial missive saying that he had been ordered to march against the Seljuk Emir Samouch.¹⁶⁰ During his reign, Isaakios' coinage provoked controversy for its militaristic representation of an emperor with his sword drawn, and his seals bore a similar image of him with his sword resting upon his shoulder. The iconography resembled that of military saints, and may have referenced the eastern saint Michael of Chonai, of whom Isaakios is conjectured to have been a devotee.¹⁶¹ Moreover, Skylitzes records that throughout the rebellion Isaakios' troops endeavoured to influence his opponents by praising

¹⁵⁸ ...τὸν τὰς βασιλείους φροντίδας μετακεχειρισμένον... Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 218-219; II, 222-223; ed. Renauld II, 102-103; II, 104 (trans. Sewter 295, 296).

¹⁵⁹ ...τὰ κοινὰ διοικοῦντι. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 486 (trans. Wortley 454).

¹⁶⁰ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 491 (trans. Wortley 457).

¹⁶¹ On the coins and seals, see Grierson 1982: 200; Cheynet and Morriison 1995: 17-18; Kaldellis 1999: 174; White 2013: 171. For the suggestion of Isaakios' devotion to the saint, see Morriison 2007: 219-220. The controversy caused by this type, which some believed to be an impious reference to Isaakios' accession through bloodshed, is recorded by Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 46 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 108-109).

his past victories and tactical genius.¹⁶² By contrast to his predecessors' demobilisations, the suggestion of renewed victories in the east would have won Isaakios substantial support amongst his colleagues and revealed him to be active in defence of the empire.

Alexios I

The *Alexias* of Anna Komnene provides invaluable insight into how the ruling family tried to present Alexios I's conquest of Constantinople and overthrow of Nikephoros III (1081).¹⁶³ Anna's narrative exploits multiple explanations in order to present Alexios' usurpation as necessary and beneficial. To begin, we learn that an atmosphere of factionalism and distrust had taken hold at Nikephoros' court. On one side stood the *protoproedros* Borilos and his colleague Germanos, favourites of Nikephoros. The pair were reportedly 'consumed by envy' (*phthonos*) at the thought of the favour being shown to the brothers Komnenoi, Alexios and Isaakios. This enmity only worsened after Nikephoros named Alexios *proedros* and *domestikos ton scholon* in the west, when Borilos and Germanos began publicly slandering the brothers, incited others to do likewise, and endeavoured to turn the emperor against them.¹⁶⁴

A second faction formed in opposition. Anna claims that the Komnenoi sought to align themselves with Empress Maria in order to seek protection from the insults and intrigues ranged against them. To that end, Isaakios, who was a relative by marriage of the empress, was reported to have persuaded the attendants of the palace's women's quarters to convince Maria to adopt Alexios.¹⁶⁵ The circumstances suggest the existence of a pro-

¹⁶² Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 494 (trans. Wortley 459).

¹⁶³ On Anna's perspective as an insider of the Komnenian court, see Magdalino 2000; Smythe 2006: esp. 125-126.

¹⁶⁴ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 55-56 (trans. Frankopan 51). See also Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 724; III, 727; Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 59-61.

¹⁶⁵ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 56 (trans. Frankopan 51); Macrides 1990: 117. Isaakios was married to Maria's cousin, Eirene: Varzos 1984: 67-68.

Komnenoi element within the wider palace administration, and the adoption subsequently allowed the Komnenoi easy access to the palace and empress. However, the adoption failed in preventing accusations from being levelled against the brothers. In fact, Anna claims that ‘envy flared up against them even more fiercely.’¹⁶⁶ They were (correctly) accused of planning a military revolt,¹⁶⁷ and Borilos and Germanos then began scheming to have the brothers blinded. Anna claims that this plot against the Komnenoi was revealed through one of Maria’s loyal countrymen, an Alanian within Nikephoros’ circle: insinuating that Nikephoros had foreknowledge but had not intervened.¹⁶⁸ She writes that it was this scheme which finally convinced Alexios and Isaakios to plan rebellion in order ‘to ensure their own safety’.¹⁶⁹ This first defence amounts to an accusation of injustice perpetrated by the emperor’s coterie. From the exposition it is clear that Alexios was not at fault, since powerful enemies at court had compelled him to act in order to save his life. An abbreviated version of the story can also be found in the history of Nikephoros Bryennios, Anna’s husband, and the contemporary *Epitome* of Ioannes Zonaras, which indicates the pervasiveness of Komnenian apologetic and the stifling of dissenting voices.¹⁷⁰

The charges against Nikephoros’ favourites were then extended to indict the emperor himself. Bryennios’ narrative states that ‘Truth and Justice’ were on Alexios’ side and that Botaneiates was searching for any pretext ‘to send the innocent to his ruin.’¹⁷¹ The *Alexias* equally accused Nikephoros of wrongdoing. After Alexios and Isaakios had fled Constantinople to raise an army, Anna Dalassena, Alexios’ mother who had remained behind with the Komnenian wives, is purported to have publicly rebuked Nikephoros. She claimed

¹⁶⁶ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 57 (trans. Frankopan 52).

¹⁶⁷ The army was mobilising near Constantinople in preparation to retake Kyzikos. The Komnenoi exploited this to approach commanders who might be favourable to their planned rebellion.

¹⁶⁸ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 61-63 (trans. Frankopan 56-57).

¹⁶⁹ Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 60-61; Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 57, 61-63 (trans. Frankopan 52, 56-57). Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 726, confirms that the Komnenoi were said to fear for their safety.

¹⁷⁰ Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 723-726.

¹⁷¹ Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 60-61.

that her sons were ‘faithful servants’ who had always been among the first to go into danger and fight bravely on behalf of the empire, but Nikephoros’ kindness had exposed them to the ‘envy’ of their enemies. Dalassena asserted that these enemies planned to harm them, so Alexios and Isaakios had fled in order to buy time to convince Nikephoros of their continued fidelity. Dalassena’s rebuke ends by saying that Nikephoros should have intervened to protect the Komnenoi, but he did not.¹⁷² The story, real or fictional, presented Nikephoros as a failing emperor because he was either unwilling or unable to defend his subjects from falsehoods and injustices committed by his own circle, or because he actively wished them harm. We infer that Nikephoros’ failings had forced the Komnenoi to act against him.

The histories also indicate that Komnenian propaganda exploited this theme extensively. All three accounts refer to the antagonists Borilos and Germanos as ‘slaves’, implying that this designation was also used in official rhetoric.¹⁷³ Anna’s recourse to the label is particularly suggestive. She invites a subtle comparison between Alexios and these rivals. Her account consistently refers to Borilos and Germanos as ‘the emperor’s slaves’ or simply ‘τῶν δούλων’ so that it quickly becomes a shorthand. By contrast, when we read that Alexios feared for his life on account of their plotting, he is reported to have decried that ‘it is not right to suffer like slaves’.¹⁷⁴ The comparison aligns an accusation of slavery and injustice with Botaneiates, Borilos, and Germanos, and suggests that Alexios was acting in order to preserve his freedom. Elsewhere, Anna describes Borilos and Germanos as ‘Slavonic barbarians’.¹⁷⁵ Consequently, the association of ‘the slaves’ with barbarism may indicate that Alexios’ propaganda portrayed him preventing an inversion of order that would have reduced him to the status of a slave and a barbarian. When we then read that Borilos

¹⁷² Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 67 (trans. Frankopan 61). Translation adapted.

¹⁷³ Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 60-61; Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 726.

¹⁷⁴ καὶ ὡς οὐ χρεὶ ὡς ἀνδράποδα παθεῖν... Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 63 (trans. Frankopan 57-58). Translation adapted.

¹⁷⁵ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 55 (trans. Frankopan 50).

and Germanos were aspiring to *basileia* it emerges that they represented a threat to the empire as a whole.¹⁷⁶ Nikephoros' rulership had provoked *ataxia*, and if Alexios had not acted slaves would have become the masters, Romans the slaves, and injustice would have taken hold of the imperial office.

Alexios' supposedly superior character served as another justification for his rule. Anna claims that her father had also been acting in defence of the successional rights of Constantine Doukas, Empress Maria's son. We are told that there were rumours (*ὑποψιθυριζομένων*) that Nikephoros intended to renege on his agreement to retain Constantine as his successor, and instead envisioned promoting his relative Synadenos. Anna says that had Nikephoros not planned this change, 'he would have ensured his own safety to the end.'¹⁷⁷ However, the Komnenoi approached Maria and offered to help ensure her son's succession; they swore an oath to that effect and asked for her help in avoiding conspiracies against them.¹⁷⁸ Thus, when Alexios restored Constantine's privileges at the start of his own reign he was revealed to be the true defender of the boy's rights.¹⁷⁹ He even considered a marriage to Maria, and later arranged the engagement of Constantine to his daughter Anna, solidifying his connection to the dynasty and suggesting his good intentions.¹⁸⁰ A contrast was invited between Alexios, who kept his oath and recognised Constantine as emperor, and Botaneiates, who did neither: one was trustworthy and loyal, the other was not.¹⁸¹

Superior military leadership and *philanthropeia* also constituted an element of Komnenian apologetic. Anna observes that the military commanders Gregoras Pakourianos

¹⁷⁶ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 62 (trans. Frankopan 57).

¹⁷⁷ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 57-58 (trans. Frankopan 52).

¹⁷⁸ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 57-58, 61 (trans. Frankopan 52-54, 56).

¹⁷⁹ Alexios I was crowned by Patriarch Kosmas, probably with Constantine Doukas in attendance, since Anna Komnene claims that Constantine was permitted to take part in processions and other rituals, Constantine's co-imperial status had been confirmed in a *chrysobull*: Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 92-93, 97 (trans. Frankopan 84, 88-89); Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Bekker III, 733, confirming Constantine's status and the *chrysobull*.

¹⁸⁰ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 88-89 (trans. Frankopan 80-81); Smythe 1997: 147.

¹⁸¹ On the presentation of Alexios as a loyal devotee of the Doukai, see below, page 112.

and Constantine Houmpertopoulos quickly sided with Alexios on account of his ‘exceptional courage and intelligence’, and because of his ‘hands unusually fond of dispensing gifts.’¹⁸² By contrast, Bryennios comments that Nikephoros was illiberal and had not rewarded Alexios for suppressing the revolts of Bryennios the Elder or Basilakes.¹⁸³ He suggests that the military had become disheartened and despised Nikephoros, thus choosing to align with Alexios’ leadership instead. Bryennios also comments repeatedly that Alexios was the ‘hope of the Romans’, the ‘Saviour of the Romans’, and that he brought to an end the ills of the empire, a reference to the ongoing civil wars and threats from the empire’s neighbours.¹⁸⁴ In line with this rhetoric, Anna describes how, despite disillusionment at court after the fall of Kyzikos, the Komnenoi were able to ‘comfort the emperor’s soul, troubled as it was by the ravaging of his towns, they raised his fallen spirits... assuring him that Kyzikos would soon be retaken.’¹⁸⁵ As Cheynet notes, at the end of the eleventh century there was substantial desire among the military aristocracy for more active campaigning.¹⁸⁶ The espousal of Alexios’ military pedigree in suppressing internal rebellions, and the favour with which he was viewed by his comrades, evidently exploited this. Alexios’ comments about Kyzikos revealed him to be an active figure taking steps to restore the empire, whereas Nikephoros had fallen into a self-pitying lethargy. Therefore, hopes of restoration lay with Alexios’ leadership rather than Nikephoros’.

Finally, it appears that this lethargic image of Nikephoros was widely exploited in official rhetoric. According to Bryennios, Nikephoros was ‘decrepit and worn with age... he had lost his energy and was not up to [the task of exercising] supreme power,’ he ruled

¹⁸² καὶ διότι ἀνδρεία καὶ συνέσει τῶν ἄλλων διέφερε· φιλοδωρότατόν τε ὄντα καὶ τὴν χεῖρα... Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 64 (trans. Frankopan 58).

¹⁸³ Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 282-283.

¹⁸⁴ For example, Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 63-65.

¹⁸⁵ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 58 (trans. Frankopan 55).

¹⁸⁶ Nikephoros III’s rebellion under Michael VII, probably initially with the support of Nikephoros Melissenos and Georgios Palaiologos, was an expression of this desire: Cheynet 1990: 351-352.

‘despite being on the threshold of old age’.¹⁸⁷ Anna equally opined that ‘Botaneiates’ spirit had been chilled by old age; however brave he had been in his youth, he only breathed freely now as long as the walls protected him...’. And when she recalls his offer to share power with Alexios, in the final hours of his rule, we are reminded that he was ‘a lonely old man’.¹⁸⁸ In depicting Nikephoros as fearful and inactive his military credentials were further undermined and the empire was revealed to be endangered. Furthermore, the unchallenged scheming of Borilos and Germanos could now be explained: the pair had abused and dominated an old man who was unable to control his court. Consequently, the rebellion of the Komnenoi was in the best interest of the empire, since they were the only ones willing to oppose Borilos and Germanos, protect Constantine’s rights, and actively campaign against enemies.

Andronikos I

The only Byzantine accounts of Andronikos I’s rise to the throne (1181-1183) are those of contemporaries Eustathios of Thessaloniki and Niketas Choniates. Both were writing under the influence of later Angeloi propaganda, and Choniates utilised Eustathios’ material for his own account.¹⁸⁹ Andronikos had been involved in a number of intrigues previously which another contemporary author, the *epitomator* Kinnamos, suggested were inspired by his being overlooked for promotion to the ranks of the *protosebastoi*.¹⁹⁰ Thereafter, Andronikos’ perpetual desire for power is a characteristic of every narrative in which he features, and

¹⁸⁷ Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 54-55, 252-253.

¹⁸⁸ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 78-79, 84 (trans. Frankopan 70-71, 76); see also Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 4-5 (trans. Brand 14), who explained that Alexios ‘revolted against Nikephoros who then ruled the empire, a man who had passed far beyond youth and was in the decline of life.’

¹⁸⁹ Choniates made substantial use of Eustathios’ account when writing the *Historia*. On this issue of intertextuality, see Simpson 2009: esp. 28-31; Simpson 2013: 214-294, esp. 224-229, with bibliography.

¹⁹⁰ Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 126 (trans. Brand 99). For Andronikos’ previous intrigues, see below, page 259.

underpins the accounts of his ascent.¹⁹¹ However, there are also traces of Andronikos' own justificatory and propagandist efforts preserved within these narratives and it is to these that we will now turn our attention.

When Manuel died in 1180, his son Alexios II had been proclaimed as co-emperor but was too young to rule alone.¹⁹² We read that Alexios had given himself over to hunting and racing, and that he had been taught to neglect his imperial duties.¹⁹³ Instead, Empress Maria served as his regent alongside (nominally) Patriarch Theodosios. Eustathios and Choniates emphasise that Maria was courted by many amongst the nobility, but that Alexios the *protosebastos*, a nephew of Manuel, won her affections.¹⁹⁴ Eustathios asserts that the *protosebastos* 'intended to enlarge his power' and thus provoked the 'envy' of others.¹⁹⁵ Choniates confirms this impression, claiming that the other members of the imperial family feared that a 'tyranny' was taking root and that the *protosebastos*, although having no murderous intentions towards Alexios, intended to remove them from power.¹⁹⁶ In reaction, a conspiracy was formed to depose or assassinate him, and centred on the *kaisarissa* Maria (Manuel's daughter from his first marriage), the *kaisar* Renier, Andronikos' sons, and a select group of officials.¹⁹⁷ In February 1181, the conspiracy was uncovered. Eustathios draws attention to the 'improper' way in which Empress Maria was permitted to preside over a summary trial of the *kaisarissa's* co-conspirators, and particularly criticises the judge Theodoros Pantechnes. We learn that guilty sentences were read out, the criminals subjected to 'excessive indignities', and imprisoned. Furthermore, the judges 'were planning without

¹⁹¹ This is a feature of Byzantine and non-Byzantine texts: Neocleous 2012.

¹⁹² For the proclamation: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 169 (trans. Magoulias 96).

¹⁹³ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 223 (trans. Magoulias 127).

¹⁹⁴ 'Υπερηκόντιζε δὲ τοὺς λοιποὺς Ἀλέξιος ὁ Κομνηνός. Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 18-19; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 224 (trans. Magoulias 127).

¹⁹⁵ Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 20-21, 26-27.

¹⁹⁶ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 224-225 (trans. Magoulias 130-131).

¹⁹⁷ The plot involved Andronikos' sons (Manuel and Ioannes), Alexios the *protostrator* (a nephew of Manuel), the *eparchos* Ioannes Kamateros, and unspecified others. Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 20-21; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 231 (trans. Magoulias 131).

concealment' to arrest the *kaisarissa* as well.¹⁹⁸ Eustathios' version of events indicates that the *kaisarissa*'s partisans were claiming that justice had been perverted by the regency and that judges no longer served the law, but conspired against the people. According to Choniates, the *kaisarissa* openly accused the regency of acting unlawfully and bringing Alexios' reign into disrepute.¹⁹⁹ In being perceived to have overstepped lawful authority Maria and the *protosebastos* demonstrated their illegitimacy, meanwhile Constantinople and the empire suffered.

The summary trials resulted in the *kaisarissa* claiming asylum at Hagia Sophia for two months, during which she recruited Latin mercenaries and claimed to be defending Alexios' rights. She called for the removal of the *protosebastos*, and received support from the Constantinopolitan crowds.²⁰⁰ In the course of this impasse, three priests entered the Forum and acclaimed Alexios whilst declaring anathema upon the Empress and *protosebastos*.²⁰¹ Then, in May, a one-day battle ensued between the *kaisarissa* and the regency before *apatheia* was granted and the *kaisarissa* was permitted to return to the palace.²⁰²

Andronikos exploited this chaos in the capital to return from retirement at Oinaion with an army. The *kaisarissa* had sent a message to him requesting his support, and we read that, in light of the political infighting, Andronikos appeared the most capable of restoring order by protecting Alexios and removing the *protosebastos*.²⁰³ Consequently, his concern for Alexios' rights featured heavily in his rhetoric. In late 1181 he had corresponded with

¹⁹⁸ Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 20-21. See also, Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 231-232 (trans. Magoulias 130-131), adapting Eustathios' account and making additions.

¹⁹⁹ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 232-233 (trans. Magoulias 131).

²⁰⁰ Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 22-23, 26-27; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 232 (trans. Magoulias 131).

²⁰¹ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 234-235 (trans. Magoulias 132).

²⁰² Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 22-23; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 236-240 (trans. Magoulias 133-135).

²⁰³ Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 26-29, states this explicitly.

Alexios, Theodosios, and his supporters in Constantinople, urging them that the *protosebastos* should be removed from office for Alexios' safety, and because of the rumours involving empress Maria.²⁰⁴ During his march on Constantinople (early 1182), he announced en-route that he was acting in defence of the emperor, and received oaths to himself and Alexios from cities along the way.²⁰⁵ He is even reported to have claimed that, under the terms of his oath to the emperors sworn in 1180, Manuel had appointed him to Alexios' regency, and that he was returning in order to fulfil his sworn duties.²⁰⁶ The pretext for Andronikos' rebellion was thus clearly established as the defence of Alexios through the removal of a regency that had provoked infighting and scandal. Andronikos was not rebelling in order to claim the throne himself but was attempting to restore political stability and dynastic unity. He appears to have enjoyed some success in promoting that message since Eustathios asserts that people were calling him a 'saviour, and a bulwark for the empire',²⁰⁷ and Choniates claims that Andronikos appeared 'more affectionate than a father' when he was appointed to protect the boy.²⁰⁸

When Andronikos finally arrived at Constantinople in March/April 1182 the regency surrendered and he made recourse to rituals in order to communicate his professed aim of dynastic unity. Andronikos first prostrated himself before Patriarch Theodosios, who had been instrumental in negotiating the settlement of the dispute between the regency and the *kaisarissa*, and who had been popularly restored to office after the *protosebastos* had

²⁰⁴ Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 30-31; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 228, 245 (trans. Magoulias 129, 138). Choniates even praised Andronikos' rhetorical skills, claiming that his letters were 'more devastating than the blows of siege engines and more powerful than a battering ram.'

²⁰⁵ For Andronikos' march on Constantinople: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 229, 243-244 (trans. Magoulias 130, 137).

²⁰⁶ For Andronikos' claims regarding his appointment to the regency: Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 30-31; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 253-254 (trans. Magoulias 142).

²⁰⁷ Καὶ ἐδόξαζον ἐκεῖνον σωτῆρα σφῶν ἐκάστου ἔσεσθαι καὶ ἔρμα τῆς βασιλείας... Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 28-29. See also, Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 350 (trans. Magoulias 193): '...he had worn the imperial diadem and had been hailed as a saviour'.

²⁰⁸ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 264 (trans. Magoulias 147).

attempted to remove him.²⁰⁹ He next met with Alexios and made obeisance to the emperor including performing the ritual *proskynesis*. This was coupled with a display of antipathy towards the unpopular Empress Maria, who was removed from authority.²¹⁰ By showing signs of respect to Alexios and Theodosios, Andronikos was able to conciliate allies in the church and senate and legitimise his intervention in political affairs.²¹¹ He also visited Manuel's tomb in order to pay his respects, a sign that old hostilities towards his cousin had been put aside in favour of dynastic loyalty.²¹² Finally, he was named Alexios' guardian/regent, and had the *protosebastos* ejected from the palace, blinded, and publicly paraded.²¹³ As Beihammer notes, the sequence was a strong ritual confirmation of Andronikos' good intentions, but it also firmly established his position as regent through the hostility shown towards his allegedly incompetent and immoral predecessors.²¹⁴

Andronikos' early propaganda also appears to have exploited disaffection over the perceived financial mismanagement of the regency. Choniates states that it was believed that only Empress Maria and the *protosebastos* were benefiting from state revenues, while even the impoverished were stripped of their wealth.²¹⁵ The massacre and looting of the Latin population of Constantinople, which coincided with Andronikos' entrance to the city, was partly an expression of this discontent, since it was believed that Maria had favoured the Latin merchants.²¹⁶ By contrast to the regency, Choniates claims that Andronikos provided

²⁰⁹ Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 38-39.

²¹⁰ Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 36-37; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 249 (trans. Magoulias 140).

²¹¹ Beihammer 2013: 182.

²¹² Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 256-257 (trans. Magoulias 143).

²¹³ For Andronikos' promotion as Alexios' guardian/regent: Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 36-37; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 247-249, 252 (trans. Magoulias 139-140, 142). For the fate of the *protosebastos*: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 255 (trans. Magoulias 143).

²¹⁴ Beihammer 2013: 183.

²¹⁵ '...all the revenues which had been collected with much sweat by the preceding Komnenian emperors who, I might add, stripped even the indigent, were channelled to the *protosebastos* and the empress; and that was fulfilled which Archilochos plainly wrote, that what has been amassed at the expense of much time and labour often flows into the belly of the whore.' Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 230 (trans. Magoulias 130).

²¹⁶ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 250-251 (trans. Magoulias 140-141); Nicol 1988: 106.

for the ‘impoverished’, and Eustathios writes that he sought to introduce ‘new practices’ (μελετῶν καινά) that were opposed by the nobility (especially the Angeloi) and supported by ‘the mob’.²¹⁷ Jurewicz and Angold argue that Andronikos sought to portray himself as a champion of the ‘common people’ and actively targeted socioeconomic policies to win their support.²¹⁸ Although we cannot be certain that these policies were actually beneficial to the masses, his encomiasts spoke of successes in this area.²¹⁹ He was also purported to have complained at length when these policies were opposed, even expressing a desire to return to Paphlagonia which he claimed was filled with his riches.²²⁰ It seems that, in part, Andronikos’ rhetoric made use of supposed financial successes elsewhere to present him as a suitable candidate to head the regency, and implied that his governance would be beneficial for the wider empire. His efforts to present himself restoring political and economic stability distinguished him from predecessors who were believed to have undermined this.

The next stage of Andronikos’ ascent was justified on the basis of threats to the empire. Over the next year he faced opposition to his authority. The Angeloi had broken into revolt at Nikaia during his march on Constantinople,²²¹ and at Philadelphia Ioannes Vatatzes claimed that Andronikos was supplanting Alexios and establishing a ‘tyranny’.²²² In Constantinople the *kaisarissa* and her husband had died under unusual circumstances,²²³ and

²¹⁷ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 324 (trans. Magoulias 179); Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessalonike*, ed. Melville Jones 36-39.

²¹⁸ Jurewicz 1970: esp. 101-102; Angold 1984: 265-266. Kazhdan and Franklin 1984: 259, also suggests that Andronikos’ propaganda sought to indicate ‘his affinity with the ordinary people’.

²¹⁹ Choniates gives an encomiastic assessment of Andronikos’ deeds, including economic successes, that undoubtedly originally derived from an ‘official’ source, see Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 325-326 (trans. Magoulias 179). Kazhdan, and Tivcev, have argued that Andronikos’ economic policy was actually detrimental to this section of society: Kazhdan and Constable 1982: 135-136; Tivcev 1962: 19-39.

²²⁰ ‘...he had come upon cataracts which hindered his current and made it flow upstream. For this reason he feigned a wish to return again to the country of the Paphlagonians. In fact he was completely at variance with the nobles and men of power...’; ‘With his tongue he was always speaking of Paphlagonia: he eloquently described the advantages which it possessed by comparison with the deficiencies of Constantinople, and boasted of the treasures which were stored under guard for him there...’ Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 36-37, 42-43.

²²¹ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 245 (trans. Magoulias 138).

²²² Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 263 (trans. Magoulias 146).

²²³ The *kaisarissa* Maria and her husband were allegedly killed by poison administered in a shared drink (c. July 1182). The eunuch Pterygeonites, a former attendant of Manuel I, was identified as the murderer, and had

in September 1183 Empress Maria was accused of conspiring with her sister's husband, Bela III, to attack the territory around Belgrade and Braničevo. Her death warrant was approved by the judges, and signed by Alexios at Andronikos' behest.²²⁴ Andronikos' rhetoric particularly condemned Maria: he is reported to have termed her a 'concubine/harlot', he left her corpse on display on the beach outside the city walls (a traditional fate for traitors and rebels),²²⁵ and throughout the city he instigated a *damnatio* by modifying her imperial portraits in order to depict her as 'a wrinkled old woman'.²²⁶ Here the critique of old age was directed against a figure accused of sexual immorality, who was believed to have created political paralysis, and had been executed for treason.

When Maria's death triggered the rebellions of Theodoros Angelos and Theodoros Kantakouzenos, these prompted calls for Andronikos' proclamation as co-emperor.²²⁷ According to Eustathios this was championed by the 'vulgar people' before the court elite joined them. In the acclamations following his coronation Andronikos was granted seniority over Alexios on account of his greater experience, gained from his 'distant wanderings'.²²⁸ These 'wanderings' referred to Andronikos' ventures with the Turks, when he campaigned

allegedly acted on Andronikos' orders: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 259-260 (trans. Magoulias 145). The story is too often accepted at face value. Eustathios does not mention it at all, and Choniates does not cite his source for the accusation against Andronikos, claims that Andronikos was not recognised 'as a poisoner at first', but identified Pterygeonites as the murderer after Andronikos' overthrow. Moreover, the deaths complement his overall image of Andronikos as a scheming individual willing to betray and murder anyone in order to acquire power. In fact, it seems highly unlikely that he would have eliminated two of his most prominent supporters within the palace before removing Empress Maria. If we accept that the pair were murdered (rather than both falling ill), some attention might be paid to Empress Maria's faction. Her motive was clearer than Andronikos': the two Maria's disliked each other intensely and had fought for control of the regency. The Empress or her supporters may have seen the removal of the *kaisarissa* as a damaging blow to Andronikos' authority in the early days of his regency that would also remove one of her most persistent opponents.

²²⁴ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 267-268 (trans. Magoulias 149).

²²⁵ ... ἡ δὲ ὡς περιεσχήμενον ἑταιρικὸν περὺβρίζεται γύναιον: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 274 (trans. Magoulias 152). For Maria's 'burial' on a nearby beach: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 269 (trans. Magoulias 149); Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 40-41, somewhat by contrast, states that Maria had been held at St Diomedes monastery, was strangled, and then thrown into the sea.

²²⁶ In fact, she was in her mid-thirties (34/35) at the time of her death. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 332-333 (trans. Magoulias 183).

²²⁷ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 270 (trans. Magoulias 149-150).

²²⁸ Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 42-45; Choniates, *Chronographia*, ed. van Dieten 269-272 (trans. Magoulias 149-151).

alongside them, and thus invoked his military experience.²²⁹ Choniates confirms this, saying that it was decided that promotion was the only way that Andronikos would be able to combat rebellions and rule ‘more forcefully and authoritatively than Alexios’.²³⁰ Certainly, once he was in power, Andronikos was active in prosecuting campaigns against rivals at Nikaia and Prousa.²³¹ His encomiasts are also reported to have spoken of wars of reconquest and the ‘good governance of cities’, which implies that his military credentials represented a significant element of his propaganda.²³² It also appears that Andronikos continually presented himself as a figure restoring order and justice since, elsewhere, Choniates reveals that his recourses to capital punishments were always lawfully sanctioned²³³ and his panegyrists connected this with the ‘Sword of Justice’.²³⁴

Finally, although during his coronation Andronikos swore that he had only agreed to reign in order to aid Alexios, it was soon decided that the boy should be made a ‘private citizen’, and then that he should be murdered.²³⁵ As Beihammer concludes, it would be wrong to view the course of Andronikos’ ascent as pre-calculated. His return was a reaction to paralysis in Constantinople and he was believed capable of restoring order through effective administrative, economic, and military leadership.²³⁶ Notably, whereas his name

²²⁹ See below, page 259.

²³⁰ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 270 (trans. Magoulias 150).

²³¹ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 283-289 (trans. Magoulias 157-160).

²³² Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 309-310 (trans. Magoulias 171); Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 28-29, ‘Andronikos gave the impression to most people of being a man who could order the government well.’

²³³ ‘...he assembled his partisans and those judges who could be bought... His partisans, who raised their voices and loudly shouted for him to remove his enemies from the face of the earth and to spare none, sanctioned the destruction of all those he had cast into prison or who were sentenced to banishment, as well as their attendants and kinsmen. And forthwith the decision was set down in writing, with the *protoasekritis* dictating, the officer in charge of petitions taking down the words, and the *protonotarios* of the *dromos* leading the shouts of approval.’ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 334-335 (trans. Magoulias 184-185).

²³⁴ ‘He contended that the judges [δικαστὰς] and the senate [γερονσίαν] had determined the punishments which were endured by those who had offended him before and after he came to the throne, and that he had only enforced their decisions (*for he did not bare the sword in vain [μηδὲ γὰρ εἰκῆ φορεῖν τὴν μάχαιραν]*) and executed their judgements. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 337 (trans. Magoulias 186). Andronikos’ rhetorical use of the *topos* of the ‘Sword of Justice’ might help to explain Isaakios II’s association with the ‘Sword of Tyrannicide’, with which it was said he had overthrown Andronikos’ rule: see below, page 234.

²³⁵ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 272-273 (trans. Magoulias 151).

²³⁶ Beihammer 2013: esp. 179-182.

was expunged from the *Synodikon* in Constantinople it continued to appear in those of the provinces: proof of his continued status amongst some sections of society.²³⁷ He was supported at each stage by members of the senate and the populace, and his justifications were evidently convincing.

Discussion

The case studies are instructive of the kinds of justifications that were espoused by usurpers at any period in the empire's history. In seeking to explain the source of a conflict, or manipulating justifications to serve invective, authors provide us with glimpses into the world of revolutionary discourse. The factual content of justifications (or the narratives' records of them) was to some extent irrelevant; more important was the belief that they would be understood as appropriate pretexts in the political sphere. We see that multiple explanations were advocated in each case, and that these fit into four general categories: the defence of successional rights, economic maladministration, injustice, and military concerns. These charges could incriminate an emperor directly, or indirectly through his subordinates. However, in every case, they were adduced as evidence of a regime's illegitimacy and proved sufficient to warrant the reigning emperor's deposition.

The defence of successional rights was used intermittently as a pretext, usually in association with regency governments where a powerful figure at court was said to be threatening a minority emperor. The first prominent example was Valentinus' rebellion on behalf of Konstans II, which resulted in the overthrow of Heraklonas and Martina.²³⁸ As we saw, Romanos, Alexios, and Andronikos, also made recourse to this kind of justification as a way of securing support for their rebellions. Later, Georgios Akropolites' justified Michael

²³⁷ *Synodikon*, ed. Gouillard 96.

²³⁸ Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 78-85; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 341 (trans. Mango and Scott 475); John of Nikiu, *Chronicle*, trans. Charles 197.

VIII's murder of the regent Georgios Mouzalon by stating that Theodoros II 'had made a will, supposedly for the son, but in truth for his *protovestiaros* Georgios,' and implied divine inspiration for the act.²³⁹ And Gregoras records Ioannes VI's accusations that the regency of Empress Anna, Patriarch Kalekas, and Alexios Apokaukos, was appropriating wealth and power for itself; neglecting Ioannes V.²⁴⁰

Other forms of nominally loyalist revolt might seek to restore a deposed emperor or proclaim a pseudo-emperor. These needed minimal incentive since candidates had access to client-networks whose interests might best be served by their restoration: as with the rebellion which sought to restore Artemios-Anastasios, the conspiracies surrounding the sons of Constantine V, and the attempted restorations of the Lekapenoi.²⁴¹ However, these emperors were never guaranteed the support of their countrymen: in his appeal to the Turks in 1211 Alexios III allegedly called Theodoros I 'unjust in seizing another's realm,' yet Alexios' former subjects refused to recognise his authority and blinded him.²⁴²

Heredity alone was never sufficient justification for rebellion. Whenever a usurper claimed to be defending an emperor's rights, this was always accompanied by other justifications: the regency or senior emperor was incompetent, greedy, or unjust. When Andronikos III was disinherited in 1320-1321, his partisans presented his grandfather's actions as being the result of unfounded and excessive hatred but accompanied this with allegations of senility designed to query the grandfather's competence.²⁴³ The wellbeing of

²³⁹ ὁ δὲ πατὴρ τούτου καὶ βασιλεὺς διαθήκην πεποίηκε, τάχα μὲν ὡς ἐπὶ τῷ παιδί, τῇ δ' ἀληθείᾳ ἐπὶ τῷ πρωτοβεστιαρίῳ αὐτοῦ τῷ Μουζάλωνι Γεωργίῳ. Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 154-155 (trans. Macrides 339); '...when *as if by common agreement* (συνθήματος συνδραμόντες), all the Romans who were there gathered together.'

²⁴⁰ According to Gregoras' account of these accusations: the patriarch was acting as if 'he had the keys of the kingdom in his hands'; Apokaukos had read about Octavian-Augustus and wanted to emulate his accession to the throne; and Anna was accruing wealth for herself, but being misled by Apokaukos. Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen II, 578, 583-585, 591, 594, 604, 606-607, 612.

²⁴¹ See Table 1.

²⁴² Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 15 (trans. Macrides 129); Skoutariotes, *Synopsis Chronike*, ed. Sathas 457.

²⁴³ Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 391-401. Andronikos III had been removed from precedence after causing the death of his brother, Manuel, in 1320, which prompted his father's death from 'heartbreak'.

the empire was being threatened alongside the wellbeing of an emperor. The hereditary rights ‘being defended’ were then typically subverted by the usurper, which was justified on the basis of his superior abilities.

In every case, the security and prosperity of the state mattered foremost, not the preservation of a dynastic claim. Classical models of political thought, known in Byzantium, established that public affairs were to be conducted as a meritocratic bureaucracy, not a family business.²⁴⁴ Thus Skylitzes historically rebuked Leon Phokas for thinking of *basileia* ‘as an inheritance’, and Choniates ridiculed Alexios the *pinkernes*’ belief that he would be welcomed as Manuel I’s heir.²⁴⁵ Even after 1204, when usurpers were almost exclusively family members, Michael VIII’s propagandists claimed that his authority was owed to his superior virtues, and an oration of Nikolaos Kabasilas addressed to Matthew Kantakouzenos claimed that imperial lineage was insufficient qualification for *basileia* since it included ‘disgraceful persons’ (read Ioannes V).²⁴⁶ The persistence of this principle even seems to have prevented the emergence of ‘dynastic history’ writing in Byzantium, when it flourished elsewhere.²⁴⁷ Meritocratic claims thus proved necessary alternatives to dynastic claims, a

Andronikos II blamed his grandson for both deaths, leading to a permanent state of estrangement, despite ritual reconciliations between the pair during the stages of the civil war of 1320-1328.

²⁴⁴ West 2012: 514.

²⁴⁵ For Leon Phokas: Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 205-206 (trans. Wortley 199-200). For Alexios the *pinkernes*: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 320 (trans. Magoulias 176); Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 60-61. For Ioannes Komnenos: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 49, 219 (trans. Magoulias 49, 124).

²⁴⁶ For Michael: Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 129. For Matthew: Kabasilas, *Panegyriques inédits de Mathieu Cantacuzène et d’Anne Paléologue*, ed. Jugie 117. Both claims are discussed (briefly) by Angelov 2007: 125-127.

²⁴⁷ West 2012 comments that, ‘Only in Byzantium does there seem to have been little space at all for a developed interweaving of family and history.’ The lacuna is suggestive when compared to Western historiography of the tenth to sixteenth centuries, when dynastic histories emerged, flourished, and then receded, in accordance with the prevailing value of ‘lineage’ and ‘nobility’ in political culture (concepts embraced concurrently in Byzantium). I would add that works deemed ‘imperial biography/hagiography’ exist, but that these represent commemorations of particular emperors: for example: Anna Komnene’s *Alexias* which glorified Alexios I, and the *Vita Basilii* which glorified Basileios I. *Theophanes Continuatus*, or Choniates’ *Historia* come even closer (the former since it exalts the Macedonian dynasty, the latter because it documents the reigns of emperors who were all relatives of Alexios I) but these were not compiled with the aim of providing a ‘dynastic history’. On the compilation of *Theophanes Continuatus*: Frei 1985: 348-353; Kazhdan 2006: esp. 137-152; Markopoulos 2009: esp. 697-702; Featherstone 2011; Ljubarskij 1992: 184. On the compilation of Choniates’ *Historia*: Simpson 2006; Simpson 2009, with bibliographies.

way of justifying disputed successions.²⁴⁸

Economic concerns represented an opportunity to demonstrate an emperor's lack of merit. Military pay disputes were an especially prominent cause of civil wars in the sixth to mid-ninth centuries.²⁴⁹ The mutiny and eventual usurpation of Phocas in 602 was prompted by the troops being ordered to winter across the Danube frontier (an old punishment duty), in preparation for a campaign against the Avars. Maurice attempted to cut expenditure by having them support themselves in enemy territory and did not offer compensations.²⁵⁰ According to Theophylaktos, '[they] were troubled by the emperor's order, both because of the lack of booty and the exhaustion of the horses, and in addition because of the many barbarians who surged around the country across the Danube.'²⁵¹ Discontent was created by the danger, lack of financial recompense, and risk to mounts that had been purchased independently and would need to be replaced. The troops believed themselves spurned by Maurice and turned to rebellion by proclaiming Phocas.²⁵² Naturally, financial unrest also affected the civil population. Economic concerns swayed Leontios to consign Justinian II's finance ministers Theodotos and Stephanos to flames. Unpopular tax policies had been introduced in order to raise finances and there was particular resentment over the activities of the *kommerkiarioi*.²⁵³ Leontios appears to have harnessed discontent amongst the public

²⁴⁸ Therefore, it is not coincidence that Angelov 2007: 127, finds that the idea of the acquisition of the throne as a reward for virtue fell out of favour in extant Palaiologan imperial rhetoric (in panegyric and encomiastic works) during the reign of Andronikos II never to be revived. Michael VIII's Palaiologan descendants no longer had a need for it, since they were not 'outsiders/usurpers'. Nevertheless, these themes were retained in the histories of the period, and (as we have seen) were adduced by Matthew Kantakouzenos' partisans.

²⁴⁹ Treadgold 2006: 225-226; Treadgold 1995: 118-157; Kaegi 1981.

²⁵⁰ Kaegi 1981: 112-113.

²⁵¹ Theophylaktos Simokattes, *Historiae*, ed. de Boor 324 (trans. Whitby 218). Author's translation.

²⁵² Theophylaktos Simokattes, *Historiae*, ed. de Boor 326-7 (trans. Whitby 219-220). See also, Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 142.

²⁵³ Oikonomides 2002: 985. We know from the sigillographic evidence that the *kommerkiarioi* Georgios (a *patrikios*) and Theophylaktos operated under Justinian's first reign, were out of favour with Leontios and Tiberios-Apsimaros, but returned under Justinian's second reign. Similarly, another Georgios was active in monopolising the resettlement of Slavic populations in Asia Minor (possibly as slaves) during Justinian's first and second reigns, but was out of favour during the interregnum. Incidentally, the resettlement of the Slavs had been another source of antipathy towards Justinian's government.

and aristocracy to instigate his usurpation.²⁵⁴ In 1077 Nikephoros Bryennios rebelled against Michael VII and exploited disapprobation with the tax reforms of the *logothetes tou dromou*, Nikephoritzes to promise economic rewards for his supporters in Thrace.²⁵⁵ And we saw that Andronikos I innovated economic policies to win support; despite opposition from the elites. The emperor believed to best serve the needs of the community would win support.

In questioning an individual's competence to administer economic affairs an established category of imperial evaluation was employed. Advice literature established that ideal emperors ensured the financial security of the state and populace, and concerns about fiscal stability and 'oppressive' taxation had long influenced *Kaiserkritik*.²⁵⁶ Magdalino highlights twelfth-century authors' concerns that emperors should manage the 'public finances/common property' for the common good, not just their own faction's enrichment.²⁵⁷ Zonaras had accused Alexios I of thinking 'of the palace as his own house', and calling it that; and of misappropriating the *pronoiai* system for his own (and his supporters') personal wellbeing, depleting public finances. He argued that an emperor should be *oikonomos*, not *despotes*, and that Alexios had failed to understand this.²⁵⁸ We saw similar charges levelled against Michael VI, and the regency of Alexios II. In the late-Byzantine period the proper role of the emperor's economic policies and discretionary rights over the empire's landed

²⁵⁴ For the consignment to flames of Theodotos and Stephanos at the *Forum Bovis*: Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 96-99; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 369 (trans. Mango and Scott 515). For Justinian's unpopular policies, see Stratos 1980: esp. 73-74; Head 1972: esp. 59-98; Oikonomides 2002: 980-981, 985.

²⁵⁵ Nikephoritzes' attempted tax reforms and the establishment of the *phoundax*, a centralised warehouse for the grain supply of Constantinople, had created a state monopoly leading to grain shortages and inflation. The allegedly willing population pulled down the *phoundax* located outside the city and acclaimed Bryennios. Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 244, 248-249 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 446-447, 452-453); Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 216-217. On Nikephoritzes, see Kazhdan 1991: 1475. On Nikephoritzes' reforms and the *phoundax*, see Métivier 2007: 143-145; Angold 1997: 121-124; Stephenson 2000: 98-100. On the promise to the population of Thrace, and Rhaidestos in particular, see Kaldellis 2015: 155-156.

²⁵⁶ On these aspects of advice literature and *Kaiserkritik*, see Dmitriev 2015: 21-22; Angelov 2003: esp. 55, 57; Stone 2011: esp. 187; Magdalino 1983; Tinnfeld 1971; Brubaker 2004: 83, 86, 101.

²⁵⁷ Magdalino 1983: esp. 327-330.

²⁵⁸ Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 732-733; III, 766-767. By contrast, Ioannes III received praise for his care over separating public wealth from private, and even reproved his son for wearing the imperial insignia while hunting because these represented the blood of their subjects and should only be worn for state business: Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 61-63.

wealth was increasingly debated. Confiscations in the name of the ‘public benefit’ were challenged by the belief that property rights were inviolable, and the discussion was framed in the language of ‘tyranny’ versus ‘good rulership’: the elites’ financial independence was considered a form of liberty not to be infringed.²⁵⁹ During the civil wars of the 1320’s Andronikos III decreed that Thrace was to be liberated of tax duties, and that the soldiery would receive higher pay.²⁶⁰ Andronikos II condemned his grandson for ‘dividing the public finances’, leaving the treasury depleted,²⁶¹ and claimed the grandson had no idea how to govern since he had only lived a life of pleasure-seeking indolence.²⁶² Those emperors who could be presented as unfair or incompetent financial administrators were seen to be abusing the common funds and could legitimately be challenged.

‘Justice’ represented yet another category of evaluation. Emperors’ ideological duties as defenders of truth and justice were frequently alluded to in literature and art.²⁶³ If an emperor was believed to have wrongly persecuted someone, or failed to defend him against a false accusation, then he had acted unlawfully and emulated a tyrant in that instance. Consequently, alleged miscarriages of justice remained common pretexts for rebellion. In 355, the *magister militum* Silvanus had claimed to be the victim of slander at court. Out of fear that Constantius would simply order his execution Silvanus had himself proclaimed and was assassinated after twenty-eight days.²⁶⁴ In the case of Alexios I, false accusations and conspiracies directed against him by Nikephoros’ favourites were at the heart of his propagandists’ apologetics. This wrongdoing went unchallenged by the emperor

²⁵⁹ Angelov 2011: esp. 324-327. See also, Smrylis 2013; Smrylis 2009.

²⁶⁰ Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 392-393; Nicol 1993: 155.

²⁶¹ Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 403-405.

²⁶² Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 394.

²⁶³ For example: Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Basilikos Andrias*, ed. Hunger and Ševčenko §110-122, 155-171, 209-216; a portrait of the emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates (Paris, BnF, Coislin 79, fol. 2r.) depicts the enthroned emperor flanked by allegorical representations of the imperial virtues of truth and justice; similarly, the description of a work depicting the emperor Manuel I, that once adorned a dome of the *kouboukleion* at the Blachernai, mentions that he was accompanied by figures representing Justice, Fortitude, Prudence and Temperance: Magdalino and Nelson 1982: 142-146.

²⁶⁴ Ammianus 15.5.1-31; Icks 2012: 462; Boer 1960; Barnes 1998.

which indicated that injustice had taken hold at court and invalidated Nikephoros' moral qualifications. Given that Nikephoros had exploited injustices committed by Michael VII as part of his own propaganda, Alexios appears to have tapped into a prevailing mood of hostility towards governmental power.²⁶⁵ In the thirteenth century, Michael VIII did likewise. Theodoros II had attempted to curtail the power and influence of the 'over-mighty' through his own legislative activities, thus creating resentment that Michael exploited.²⁶⁶ Michael excused his exile as a result of the 'arrows of jealousy' emanating from Theodoros,²⁶⁷ and his propagandists explained how Mouzalon had been killed by those Theodoros had penalised unfairly.²⁶⁸ Given that Michael promised to reform the justice system soon after his proclamation, that Manuel Holobolos refers to such reforms in an oration of 1265, and that Michael's novel 'On maladministration' has been dated to the early years of his reign, the eradication of widespread 'injustice' perpetuated by Theodoros was clearly a significant cause for his promotion by the aristocracy.²⁶⁹

In exploiting these worries usurpers tapped into the uncertainties of their peers who might also fall prey to falsehoods. 'Envy' emerged as a recurring accusation in the case studies, and represented the most frequently adduced cause of conspiracies in all periods since it was understood to induce *sykophantia* (false testimony).²⁷⁰ Advice literature warned emperors to avoid envy and to rule in a benevolent fashion. Kekaumenos explained that slander and injustice were occupational hazards, and counselled emperors to ignore

²⁶⁵ For Nikephoros' propaganda in this regard see below, page 301. See also, Kekaumenos' statements about slander and injustice: below (main text).

²⁶⁶ Angold 1975a: esp. 75-81.

²⁶⁷ *Imperatoris Michaeli Palaeologi de vita sua*, ed. Grégoire 453 (trans. Dennis 1243).

²⁶⁸ The murder occurred on 24 August 1258. Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 134-135 (trans. Macrides 312-313).

²⁶⁹ For Michael's promise to reform the system of justice, see Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 132-133. For Manuel Holobolos' oration, see *Manuelis Holoboli Orationes* ed. Treu p. 36. For Michael's novel 'On Maladministration', see Burgmann and Magdalino 1984: esp. 386.

²⁷⁰ On the relationship between envy and *sykophantia*, see Maguire 1994: 219-221. The possibility was recognised in law: *Ekloga* 17.51, states that those found guilty of false testimony were to suffer the same penalty as their victim.

accusations unless there was clear evidence of wrongdoing.²⁷¹ The use of these *topoi* was not merely rhetorical, for they reinforced an implied axiom of Byzantine political culture: it was ruthlessly competitive at all levels.

In a society where positions were hotly contested and service to the state was valorised, the unfair distribution of titles and honours, or failure to adequately reward service, were other forms of injustice which led to disapprobation and open war. As we saw from Isaakios I's defences, neglect or unfair dismissal could be successfully exploited by military commanders. The usurpation of Ioannes I similarly involved demobilised and disaffected commanders who accused Nikephoros of dismissing them to 'idle on their estates like peasants without rights'.²⁷² And Bardas Skleros entered into revolt on account of his 'demotion' from *stratelates* to *doux*.²⁷³ Skylitzes, who made use of a pro-Skleros source for that period,²⁷⁴ writes that, 'this all grieved Skleros severely, so much so that he was not able to keep to himself his grief magnanimously, but protested out loud... Was demotion the kind of reward he was to receive for all the courageous deeds and victories he had brought about?' When Skleros appealed, he was ignored. A colleague, Michael Bourtzes, was similarly suspected, dispatched to Antioch, and joined Skleros' revolt along with 'many people in whom Skleros had confidence'.²⁷⁵ We read in this how usurpers were able to mobilise supporters who equally felt maltreated, had interests best served by their accession, or else were loyal to them. The charisma and power-networks of prominent figures naturally engendered support, and emperors could be accused of fostering factionalism or dismissing

²⁷¹ Even then emperors were advised to be mild in persecuting these cases: Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij p.3.

²⁷² Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 88 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 139). For details, see below, page 184.

²⁷³ The demotion was ordered by Basileios the *parakoimomenos*, acting on behalf of Basileios II. Bardas had been suspected of treason and Basileios the *parakoimomenos* sought to limit the troops at Skleros' disposal should the suspicion prove accurate. Holmes 2005: 324-327, questions whether this could really have been considered a demotion, since Skleros remained in command of the forces arrayed against Hamdanides of Mosul, a crucial command.

²⁷⁴ On the evidence for this source, see Holmes 2005: 255-298, and esp. 268-278, 324.

²⁷⁵ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 315 (trans. Wortley 299-300).

more competent figures, bringing into question their concern for the empire's wellbeing.

Wrongdoing by an emperor's subordinates was used as evidence of his own ineptitude and immorality. He appointed them to help administer the affairs of state on his behalf, and it was crucial that they were competent individuals able to fulfil their duties. As we saw, the supposed ineptitude of Leon Phokas and the *parakoimomenos* Constantine allowed Patriarch Nikolaos to return as Constantine VII's regent. The mismanagement of Michael VI's government was partly blamed on the policies of Paraspondylos who had maltreated and dismissed commanders responsible for the defence of the empire, and Michael was additionally condemned for promoting people above their ability: including his decision to advance secretaries to act as tax collectors.²⁷⁶ The regency of Empress Maria and Alexios the *protosebastos*, was undermined by their injustices and the complicity of the judge Theodoros Pantechnes. These kinds of maladministration provoked injustice and *ataxia* and provided a pretext for a usurper to intervene in order to restore order to the government since the emperor was evidently incapable of doing so.

The most extreme forms of injustice were those associated with the stereotypical 'tyrant-emperor' model: use of force and arbitrary punishment.²⁷⁷ Herakleios created this image for Phocas in order to legitimise his rebellion. We read of numerous executions and purges attending the years of Phocas' reign, yet their historicity is questionable since Phocas enjoyed broad support from the military, *demes*, and an aristocratic faction headed by the *patricius* Germanus, and his governmental appointments showed relative continuity with those of his predecessor.²⁷⁸ Instead Herakleian propaganda invented executions which

²⁷⁶ By contrast Isaakios I received praise for scrupulously keeping records of the taxes he raised during his rebellion. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 483 (trans. Wortley 450); Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 188-189; ed. Renauld II, 88 (trans. Sewter 279).

²⁷⁷ On the literary presentation of tyranny, with a special focus on the *Historia* of Choniates, see Simpson 2013a: esp. 163-164; Simpson 2013b. On a comparable examination of 'tyranny' in relation to Justinian II, see Head 1972.

²⁷⁸ Meier 2014: 144-150, with bibliography.

continually projected Phocas as a ‘destroyer of order’, and simply called him ‘*tyrannos*’.²⁷⁹ This imagery was also used by Philippikos against Justinian II, to whom vast purges and mass murders are attributed. Yet, as Head notes, nowhere is it mentioned that Theodosios, the son and co-emperor of Tiberios-Apsimaros, was killed: a rather extraordinary omission if we are to believe that Justinian indiscriminately purged all opposition.²⁸⁰ And in 1185 Isaakios II depicted Andronikos I as an unjust emperor willing to kill and penalise arbitrarily, despite Andronikos’ consistent recourse to legal sanction. In all three cases it was suggested that these emperors had no respect for the law, and they were condemned as ‘tyrants’. Usurpation was warranted since they apparently could not rule in accordance with accepted legal and moral standards and the people were suffering as a result.

Rebels had to prove that injustice affected more than just their own personal ambitions or else appear to be acting for immoral reasons of personal profit rather than out of concern for the state. Thus Attaleiates condemned a plot by ‘certain people’ who were ‘hoping for new profits’ when they accused Constantine X of ‘slacking in his imperial munificence’.²⁸¹ Self-serving actions and motives were signs of illegitimacy and it was expected that readers would recognise these justifications to be unsound.

Our case studies show the ease with which a regime could be challenged when deemed incapable of handling internal or external threats. Naturally, significant defeats, or periods of territorial contraction, provided evidence of an emperor’s deficiencies. When the *strategos ton Anatolikon* Leon III rebelled in 717 it was only nominally a response to Theodosios III’s overthrow of Artemios-Anastasios.²⁸² Instead, Leon successfully presented

²⁷⁹ Meier 2014: 154, 161, 165-166, demonstrating that there was a concerted effort by Herakleios’ propagandists to associate Phocas with the term ‘tyrannos’. Theophylaktos Simokattes, for example, refers to Phocas by the term ‘*tyrannos*’ twelve times in just two books.

²⁸⁰ Head 1972: 117-118.

²⁸¹ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 72 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 130-131).

²⁸² Although neither Leon nor his colleague Artabasdos, the *strategos ton Armeniakon*, swore fidelity to Theodosios in 716, they did not march to Anastasios’ aid either.

himself as capable of handling the Umayyad threat by organising the defence of the local populations and winning their loyalties away from Theodosios, who had made no response to the raiding. When the public realised that Theodosios could not protect them, Leon was their best hope.²⁸³ The pragmatic decision of the populace highlights how local opinion and political realities shaped loyalties. Likewise, Psellos asserts that Leon Tornikios believed he would be welcomed into Constantinople since ‘the people hated Monomachos as a ruler and wanted to see a soldier-emperor, a man capable of fighting for them who would put an end to the barbarian incursions.’²⁸⁴ Tornikios’ supporters amongst the families of Adrianople were those most affected by the settlement in the west of the Pechnevs who had crossed the Danube in 1046/1047. Their disaffection was compounded by Monomachos’ continued campaigning in the east, prompting them to promote Tornikios as their champion.²⁸⁵

Discontent over failed promises of military success could also be exploited. As we saw, Alexios I’s propagandists depicted him as a more capable campaigner than Nikephoros, but when his reign was challenged by territorial losses in the east in the early 1090s, the eastern military commanders united around Nikephoros Diogenes and Constantine Doukas to attempt a coup in 1094.²⁸⁶ The deteriorating situation in Asia Minor caused resentment of Alexios’ campaigns in the west amongst the eastern aristocracy.²⁸⁷ Isaakios II comparably exploited Andronikos I’s propaganda of military restoration, the ongoing civil wars, and Latin encroachment in the west, to present himself as ‘the liberator Moses and Zorobabel

²⁸³ Against Leon’s wishes, Amorion, capital of the Anatolikon theme, declared itself for Theodosios within months of the accession. Yet, faced with the Umayyad threat, the populace switched their allegiance and acclaimed Leon, who was able to reinforce the city’s defences and forestall the attack. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 389-390 (trans. Mango and Scott 539-540); Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 73-75; Kaegi 1981: 193-194.

²⁸⁴ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 44-45; ed. Renauld II, 18 (trans. Sewter 209-210).

²⁸⁵ Cheynet 2008b: 63-64. Monomachos intended to employ the Pechnevs in his Eastern campaigns.

²⁸⁶ See below, page 257.

²⁸⁷ Cheynet 1990: esp. 367, noting that those principally affected were the Anatolian families: the Antiochoi, Kekaumenoi, and Skleroi.

leading back the captives of Zion'.²⁸⁸ Emperors unable to maintain state security and live up to their own rhetoric became easy targets for figures who could present themselves as superior alternatives. The common good was, they argued, better served by their leadership than by an emperor who allowed enemies to commit injustices against Roman citizens.

Revolutionary propaganda often accused emperors of cowardice or a lack of energy in pursuing political and military interests. We saw this deployed against Michael VI and Nikephoros III in connection with their 'old age'. It was implied that they had lived to become a danger to the state because the burden of governance was too much for them.²⁸⁹ Romanos I and Andronikos I used rhetoric to highlight a minority emperor's youth and the incompetence of the regency in order to propose their own promotion on account of their superior abilities. This aligns with another common *topos* of leadership in the narratives, namely that those who exercised authority were described as 'dynamic' or 'active' (ἐργατικόν) individuals, capable of getting things done.²⁹⁰ The renewal of the empire's fortunes was thus to be accompanied by a rhetorical rejuvenation of the imperial office by men in their prime who would be more active in safeguarding the empire than their predecessors.

Finally, the most serious indictment that could be levelled against a reigning emperor was that of collusion against the empire. When Alexios IV appealed to the crusaders (1203)

²⁸⁸ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 356 (trans. Magoulias 197). Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 2-3, even refers to the Thessalonikans' belief that Isaakios was a 'liberator' who would rid them of the Latin threat. On the association of the epithet with Isaakios II, see Angelov 2011: esp. 317 and n.34.

²⁸⁹ Kaldellis has argued that Psellos used the same charge against Romanos III in order to justify Michael IV's involvement in his murder: thus the weight of the imperial robes was described as too much for him to bear. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 108-109; ed. Renauld I, 50 (trans. Sewter 80-81); Kaldellis 1999: 30.

²⁹⁰ For example: Ioannes I claimed to be more 'active' (νεανικόν) than Nikephoros II, and Leon Tornikios was said to have regretted his decision not to force entry to Constantinople when he had the opportunity ('he then cursed his own bad judgement: opportunity had presented itself, but he had been too soft in pressing his advantage.'): Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 88 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 139); Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Perez Martin 27-28 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 46-47). On these qualities and their role in the selection of a leader, see Cheynet 1990: 186-187; Schminck 2014: 689-692.

to establish him on the throne, he set in motion his own downfall.²⁹¹ In July, Alexios was restored alongside his father Isaakios II and the pair imposed confiscations in order to pay the crusaders.²⁹² Anti-Latin sentiment provoked violence, which intensified when the crusaders started fires in response. The emperors were not seen to challenge this behaviour, continued to associate with crusader leaders, and imposed additional confiscations. On 25 January 1204 representatives of the senate, church, and citizenry gathered at Hagia Sophia to find a rival emperor. They promoted Nikolaos Kannavos on 27 January, but were frustrated when Alexios V Doukas (a prominent anti-crusader figure) proclaimed himself and deposed the Angeloi.²⁹³ The absence of any form of resistance to their removal attests to the comprehensive rejection of their authority. It marked the only occasion of a regime being overthrown for appearing to conspire against the populace with foreign enemies, although a related charge was levelled against Manuel II during the Ottoman siege of Constantinople (1394-1399).²⁹⁴ In theory, diplomacy had to benefit the whole empire, not just an individual emperor. When he forgot this he could be accused of treason and deposed.

Chapter Summary

Real power, determined by the relative support given to a candidate by the representative

²⁹¹ The crusaders agreed to restore Alexios in exchange for finances and the submission of the Patriarchate to Rome. Additionally, a contingent of 500 Byzantine troops was to be sent to Jerusalem and its upkeep paid for by Alexios IV until his death. On the negotiations and terms of the treaty signed in January 1203, see Geoffrey de Villehardouin, *La conquête de Constantinople*, ed. Dufournet 84. For the motives of the crusaders in accepting Alexios' proposal, see Neocleous 2012a, with bibliography.

²⁹² These were imposed on the deposed Empress Eirene's relatives and supporters, and upon the accumulated wealth of the Constantinopolitan churches: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dielen 551-552 (trans. Magoulias 302).

²⁹³ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dielen 550-563 (trans. Magoulias 301-308); see also below, page 108.

²⁹⁴ Bayezid, who had supported Ioannes VII against Manuel II and Ioannes V in 1390, was acting as Ioannes VII's legitimist by offering terms conditional on his restoration (Necipoğlu 2009: 132-133). When Manuel refused, dissent began being voiced in the city over the handling of the siege. It appeared that Manuel was helping the Turks to damage the empire, and Doukas, *Historia Turco-Byzantina*, ed. Grecu 83 (trans. Magoulias 85-86) records how the 'vulgar people' reportedly accused Manuel of not caring about 'the salvation of the state because he desired to rule tyrannically'. By contrast, the exiled Ioannes VII's partisans claimed that *he* would put an end to current 'scandals'. In his *Dialogue on Marriage*, Manuel has the empress-mother confirm that Ioannes himself was making the allegations: '[Ioannes claims] that it is he who cares more for the empire, not you.' Manuel Palaiologos, *Dialogue with the Empress-Mother on Marriage*, ed. Angelou 114-115.

groups of state and other political actors, determined the success or failure of a rebellion. The interests of these disparate socio-political groups had to be considered by any emperor who wanted to remain in power. Although dynastic integration became increasingly important as authority was restricted to members of the imperial family and its clients, hereditary rights were only ever weakly established in Byzantium. They coexisted and conflicted with meritocratic-republican ideals of rulership. Therefore, usurpations could be justified on the basis of the 'election' of a usurper who looked capable of bringing about an improvement in the condition of the state, and hereditary rights were not strictly necessary in order to claim the throne.

The conflict between these theories of rulership was borne out in justificatory materials that revealed a reigning emperor's failures to administer or defend the empire. This propaganda sought to exploit established systems of imperial evaluation in order to undermine an opponent's legitimacy. Although authority did not depend upon how an emperor came to occupy the throne, how a usurper managed to attain power could provide an indication of whether he possessed necessary characteristics. A comparison between an emperor ruling in accordance with idealised legal and moral norms associated with the virtues of Christian rulership, and a tyrant exercising authority by force was implied. The reigning emperor could occupy either role depending on one's perspective.

Injustices and maladministration were signs of an emperor's descent into tyrannical behaviours that threatened his subjects, and were prominent motives for rebellion. When an emperor introduced policies detrimental to some section of society, that section might argue that his government was acting unjustly against them and lend their support to his rivals. When he was believed to have displayed ingratitude, or promoted ineffective, incompetent, or hostile individuals to act on his behalf, the government could be said to have become a danger to the wellbeing of the community and a revolution might be considered necessary

to restore order. External threats to the empire represented another failure of rulership since the populace suffered under an inept commander. Usurpers frequently exploited reverses and presented themselves as superior generals in order to assume power with the promise of future successes.

III. AUTHORISING INVESTITURES

Rituals existed at all levels and in all places in Byzantium. They were of singular importance in shaping emperors' public images and projecting the realities of power, wealth, and rank, through symbolic gestures and behaviours.²⁹⁵ Ceremony served to 'create stability in crises of power... through orderly interaction between various social groups, controlled by precise regulations on behaviour.'²⁹⁶ Sociologists recognise that these communicative patterns possess a demonstrative and constructive character which help to create a sense of identity; if one wanted to propagate a certain idea or identity this could be more easily achieved by embracing the ritual patterns associated with it.²⁹⁷ Consequently, ritual theory asserts that inauguration ceremonies contributed to the perceived transformation of a usurper into a 'legitimate' claimant.²⁹⁸ Moreover, any significant deviation from normative ritual behaviours might be understood to indicate a change in the structure or ideology of that culture.²⁹⁹ This means that usurpers had to adopt ritual behaviours compliant with existing norms or else appear out of the ordinary and attain ritual legitimation in new ways.

The present chapter examines the development and format of four stages of 'investiture' that are emphasised in the narratives of usurpation: proclamation, assumption of imperial attire, entry into Constantinople, and coronation. It employs ritual theory and the narrative evidence to explore how these stages were believed to contribute to an emperor's legitimization, and surveys the ideologies of rulership that were projected. Some trends in the use and adaption of these investitures by usurpers will be adduced. Ultimately, this allows us to draw some conclusions about the socio-political and cultural contexts that

²⁹⁵ McCormick 1985; McCormick 1989.

²⁹⁶ Arena 2007: 327, following the Hobsbawmian interpretation of ritual behaviours.

²⁹⁷ Kertzer 2006: esp. 370-374; Schwedler and Tounta 2010: 349.

²⁹⁸ Schwedler and Tounta 2010 350; Tounta 2010: 447.

²⁹⁹ As Tounta 2010: 448, stresses, 'Completely new ritual forms, or the transformation of old ritual forms, imply changes in the political structure and vice versa.'

influenced a usurper's inauguration ceremonies, and the conceptions of power that were communicated by these investitures.

Proclamations and acclamations

The tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies* identified four stages in the inauguration of emperors: ἐκλογή, the choice of candidate; ἀναγόρευσις, the proclamation of the chosen candidate through acclamations; στέψις, the coronation; and εὐφημία, the acclamation acknowledging a newly crowned emperor.³⁰⁰ These fundamental elements had evolved in response to the succession crises of the first and second centuries, and were commonplace by the third century, usually performed in accreted form by field armies proclaiming commanders.³⁰¹ Those proclamations comprised an acclamation of the candidate by the troops, an investiture, and an acclamation of acknowledgement. Emperors subsequently addressed the troops, distributed donatives, and received oaths of fidelity.³⁰² By the accession of Valentinian, investiture with a diadem and military *torques/maniakion* had become traditional, and emperors were raised on a shield.³⁰³

At Constantinople, proclamations became more inclusive, reducing their military character. They were enacted within the military grounds of Hebdomon until the fifth century when it was substituted by the Hippodrome.³⁰⁴ The change corresponded with a strengthening of the capital's significance in Byzantine ceremonial and the growing need for ritual communication between emperors and citizens following the withdrawal of emperors

³⁰⁰ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, ed. Reiske (trans. Moffatt and Tall). It should be noted that these terms were used in a variety of different ways by (at the latest) the mid-thirteenth century. Thirteenth- to fifteenth-century authors may sometimes consider ἀναγόρευσις and στέψις as synonymous (indiscrete) phases, and ἀναγόρευσις sometimes meant 'coronation'. These usages are briefly considered in Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov 424 (*Studies*); Failler 1986.

³⁰¹ Arena 2007: 329.

³⁰² Brightman 1901.

³⁰³ On the development of the ritual in Late Antiquity, see Szidat 2010: 71-75; Icks 2012: 464; with bibliographies. On the martial connotations of the *torques* (it was particularly associated with insignia of service in elite military units), and its history as an ensign in Byzantium, see Grotowski 2010: 294-300.

³⁰⁴ Treitingner 1938: esp. 10.

from active campaigning.³⁰⁵ The martial setting, which symbolically linked the procedure with historic military advancements, was thus replaced by a civilian locale representative of the newly strengthened role of the populace in ‘authorising’ imperial elevations. Yet the military continued to participate in the proclamation’s attendant acclamations and procedures. Troops joined the *demes* and senate in acknowledging that emperors were ‘worthy’ of office. Eventually, the proclamation was transplanted from the Hippodrome to Hagia Sophia, but representatives of military, populace, and senate were always participants.³⁰⁶

The military character of the fourth-century shield-raising also became more ‘representative’ in later Constantinopolitan and Nikaian performances. The proclamation of Julian at Paris (360), as a rival to Constantius II, represents the first attested performance.³⁰⁷ The procedure was quickly adopted and, despite a punctuated silence in the histories, shield-raising probably remained a recurrent feature of inauguration rituals until the fall of the empire.³⁰⁸ By the sixth-century shield-raising were performed in the *kathisma* of the Hippodrome: technically a section of the palace which bridged the symbolic divide between ‘public’ and ‘imperial’ domains.³⁰⁹ This imbued the procedure with a civil characteristic

³⁰⁵ Emperors withdrew from active campaigning during the late-fourth and fifth centuries. That withdrawal afforded relative stability to the imperial office in this period. Ward-Perkins 2012: 54; Arena 2007: 328; Lee 2007: 54.

³⁰⁶ On the transition to Hagia Sophia, see Trampedach 2005: esp. 233.

³⁰⁷ Brightman 1901: 366; Teitler 2002: 505-507.

³⁰⁸ Phocas’ proclamation in 602 is the last attestation of its performance until the *Book of Ceremonies* gives an ambiguous reference to Nikephoros II’s ‘elevation’ during his proclamation. Psellos’ description of the Bulgarian uprising of 1040, and Leon Tornikios’ proclamation in 1047, are rather more definitive about its use. Another lacuna then exists until we hear that Theodoros II was raised on a shield in 1254, supposedly in accordance with ‘custom.’ For Phocas: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 287 (trans. Mango and Scott 412). For Tornikios: Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 42-43; ed. Renaud II, 18 (trans. Sewter 209); discussed in Kazhdan 1984: 51. For Nikephoros: Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. Reiske I, 434 (trans. Moffatt and Tall I, 434), ἐκ τῆς τέντας ὑψώσαντες ἀνηγόρευσαν αὐτὸν βασιλέα. For Theodoros: Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 105 (trans. Macrides 277-278). On the evidence for shield-raising in the medieval period, see Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov esp. 419 (*Studies*). To be clear, the possibility of shield-raising being a recurrent feature does not mean that every emperor or usurper who was proclaimed was actually elevated on a shield, only that this was always a possible element of the ceremony and could be embraced.

³⁰⁹ Dagron 2003: 95-96.

alongside the military. Under the Palaiologoi shield-raising was typically performed within the patriarchal palace, moving it into an ecclesiastical locale.³¹⁰ Pseudo-Kodinos lists it among the procedures of coronation rather than proclamation, and a thirteenth-century innovation saw emperors sitting on the shield and raised in elevated locale.³¹¹ High-ranking churchmen were now recorded as participants, and their involvement has been interpreted as an acknowledgement of their increased status as representatives of the polity, approving the election of the emperor akin to the soldiery and populace.³¹² Palaiologan modifications to the procedure need not indicate, as some scholars have suggested,³¹³ that it was reintroduced after centuries of absence, since authorial omission of ceremonial details is a well-known phenomenon. Other forms of elevation may also have been in use.³¹⁴ Importantly, the soldiery remained present in the shield-raising, represented by their commanders alongside proxies from each consensus group.

The weakening of proclamation's association with the military and the expansion of the ritual procedures to incorporate other groups rendered it a ceremony of popular 'ratification' or 'election'. Byzantine proclamation rituals revived the *consensus* seeking rites initially developed in first-century Rome to establish the symbolic approval of multiple

³¹⁰ However, Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen III, 188-189, mentions that Matthew Kantakouzenos was raised on a shield at his proclamation in the imperial palace at least a year before his coronation. The use of the ritual was thus not, as Pseudo-Kodinos implies, exclusively associated with coronations, and could potentially be performed outside the patriarchal palace.

³¹¹ Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov 216-217 (*Text*), and 418-421 (*Studies*).

³¹² For this interpretation, see Angelov 2005: 309. For the involvement of churchmen in the elevation of Michael VIII, see Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 137; III, 221. It is important to note that the involvement of churchmen in shield-raising is inconsistently recorded by the sources. Churchmen may be listed as present for one instance and yet absent for the next. This does not necessarily mean that they really were absent, but may simply indicate that an author had omitted to mention them because readers familiar with the ritual would automatically infer their presence. Consequently, the fact that churchmen start making an appearance in accounts of this ritual from the thirteenth century onward does not imply that this was a thirteenth-century 'innovation'. Their involvement in earlier iterations of the ritual should not be discounted.

³¹³ Kazhdan 1984: 114.

³¹⁴ For example, in the eleventh century, Theodora was proclaimed by the crowds, invested with a mantle, and then elevated to sit atop a horse. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 228-229; ed. Renauld I, 108-109 (trans. Sewter 144).

‘*consensus* groups’ (military, senate, and populace) for a new emperor.³¹⁵ Narratives’ confirm this by frequently describing proclamations in association with words and phrases like ‘elected’, ‘by common vote’, or ‘by lot’, regardless of the circumstances.³¹⁶ Even proclamations ‘in the field’, which persisted because ritual performance in Constantinople was never a prerequisite of claiming power, held elective overtones. Furthermore, a ritual *adventus* was performed upon arrival at each new town/city that a rebel won to his cause, symbolically allowing the citizenry to offer loyalty and ratify the usurper’s election, via acclamation.³¹⁷ The supporting acclamations were shouted rank by rank, and street by street.³¹⁸ Failure to project *consensus* allowed authority to be questioned: Lactantius, for example, inveighed that Maximinus’ proclamation by Diocletian occurred in full accordance with protocol except that it was against Diocletian’s better judgement and lacked the support of the troops (who allegedly favoured Constantine I instead). The circumstances served to

³¹⁵ On the Roman prototypes, see Flaig 1997: esp. 16-18. On the emulation in Byzantine rituals, see Dagron 2003: esp. 13-48, 78-79; Brightman 1901: esp. 359. Arena 2007, notes the correspondence between the ceremonial locations used for the proclamation of emperors in first- and second-century Rome, and those of Late Antique Constantinople. The symbolism of popular election expressed through the choice of inauguration sites, that was a feature of accessions in Rome, is also found in the Late Antique Constantinopolitan ceremonial.

³¹⁶ For example: the proclamation of Phocas: καὶ χύριος τῶν σκήπτρων ὁ τύραννος προχειρίζεται... Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 289 (trans. Mango and Scott 413). The proclamation of Tiberios-Apsimaros: ψηφίζονται δὲ Ἀψίμαρον ὄνομα... Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 98-99. The proclamation of Leon III: εἶτα εἰς ψῆφον ἐλληλοθότων τοῦ βασιλεύσοντος ἠρέθη Λέων ὁ πατρίκιος... Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 120-121. The proclamation of Nikephoros III: καὶ κοινῇ ψῆφῳ πάντες οἱ ἐν αὐτῇ τὸν Βοτανειάτην αὐτοκράτορα Ῥωμαίων καὶ δεσπότην ἀναγορεύουσι μετὰ πολλῆς καὶ ἀκατασχέτου τῆς συνδρομῆς καὶ περηχῆς... Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 269-270 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 490-491). The proclamation of Constantine Laskaris: Ἐκ δὲ κλήρου τὸ πρωτεῖον εἰληφῶς ὁ Λάσκαρις τὰ μὲν τῆς βασιλείας οὐ προσίεται σύμβολα... Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dielen 571-572 (trans. Magoulias 314). On the use of this kind of phraseology in connection with proclamations, see Christophilopoulou 1956: esp. 76.

³¹⁷ For example: Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder’s acclamation at Rhaidestos, and Alexios I’s acclamations in towns and cities while en-route to Constantinople. Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 247-249 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 450-455); Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 71 (trans. Frankopan 66). On the history of the *adventus*, see Shepard 2013.

³¹⁸ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 93-94 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 143), notes how the acclamations announcing the proclamation of Ioannes I were performed throughout the neighbourhoods of Constantinople by hand-picked supporters. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 204-205; ed. Renauld II, 96 (trans. Sewter 288), describes the military acclamation of Isaakios I (for which Psellos was an eyewitness), noting how it was performed rank by rank. Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 75, 82-83 (trans. Frankopan 68, 75) describes acclamations attending the proclamations of Alexios I in the field and in Constantinople. The initial acclamation in the field was performed by each group of her father’s supporters, one rank at a time, led by the Doukai; when Alexios’ troops subsequently gained entry to Constantinople they set about proclaiming him throughout the streets.

invalidate rhetorically Maximinus' authority and validate Constantine's later overthrow of the tetrarchic system since Constantine was then shown to have acted with 'consent': an idea Constantine also promoted elsewhere.³¹⁹

The proclamation of an emperor/usurper remained the most important ritual of investiture throughout the empire's history. Every serious rival to a reigning emperor was proclaimed by representatives of one or more of the constituent groups. Even during Constantinopolitan uprisings proclamation was among the very first acts undertaken. The citizens and senators who instigated the rebellion against Michael V, for example, found Theodora and rushed to proclaim her in Hagia Sophia.³²⁰ Although they typically continue to use '*tyrannos/apostates*' to refer to a usurper, the accounts confirm that proclamation represented a transformative moment in which his supporters believed him to have been granted *basileia*,³²¹ by detailing how he now fulfilled duties usually restricted to the emperor. Bardas Phokas distributed donatives to supporters and began assigning dignities and functions.³²² Leon Tornikios was unable to distribute largess, but granted a remission of taxes, assigned rights to booty, and allocated supporters and senators to his inner council and military commands.³²³ Nikephoros Bryennios contacted notables in Constantinople to offer titlature, and promoted his own brother, Ioannes, *kouropalates* and *domestikos*.³²⁴ And

³¹⁹ Icks 2012: 465-467. See also, Drake 1995, on how Constantine I's own justificatory writings emphasised that his actions were undertaken in order to form *consensus*, or were in response to *consensus*; with particular reference to Constantine's 'conversion'. For a comparable later example, see Choniates' criticism of Alexios V who acted without popular *consensus* to depose Isaakios II and Alexios IV: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 561-564 (trans. Magoulias 307-309).

³²⁰ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 228-229; ed. Renaud I, 109 (trans. Sewter 144), draws attention to the organised and speedy manner with which the rebellion was conducted. Constantine Kabasilas was appointed its head, led the populace to Theodora, extricated her from the sanctuary of her church, promptly invested her, and processed to Hagia Sophia to proclaim her.

³²¹ As Nicol 1993: 190 observes, 'the act of proclamation... was sufficient in itself to make a man an emperor, at least in the eyes of the representatives... who proclaimed him.' According to Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 83 (trans. Frankopan 75), Georgios Palaiologos, a member of Alexios' conspiracy, *already* believed Alexios to be emperor when Alexios entered Constantinople. Alexios had already been proclaimed, but Nikephoros III had not yet abdicated and Alexios had not received a coronation.

³²² Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 113 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 163).

³²³ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 42-43; ed. Renaud II, 18 (trans. Sewter 209).

³²⁴ Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 230-233; Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 249-50 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 454-455).

Alexios I, and Ioannes Komnenos Doukas, began issuing *chrysobulls* signed in the imperial red/purple ink.³²⁵

Whenever possible, newly proclaimed usurpers undertook to mint coinage: common practice in Late Antiquity and the Early Byzantine period when the size and wealth of the empire afforded easier access to the necessary materials and personnel. Herakleios issued coins before he even claimed the imperial title.³²⁶ In the seventh and eighth centuries only usurpers in Sicily and Italy, which retained independent mints, were able to produce rival issue.³²⁷ Afterwards, with the centralisation of mints in Constantinople and (periodically) Thessalonike, opportunities became fewer and those usurpers who did issue coinage either captured Thessalonike or founded their own mint.³²⁸ Cheynet establishes that only six out of more than two-hundred rebels and usurpers produced coins between 963 and 1204. Those minted by Theodoros Mangaphas were even considered noteworthy by Choniates.³²⁹ Coinage was a viable propagandist media because of the necessity for pay, and the cases emphasise the effort put into producing rival coin in order to assert one's claims to authority. Their subversive and legitimist potential was also well understood: when the fourth-century

³²⁵ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 77 (trans. Frankopan 70); Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 33 (trans. Macrides 162): '[Theodoros Komnenos-Doukas] did not wish to be called emperor, because of the condition of his eyes, but named his son Ioannes emperor, shod his feet in the red shoes and prescribed that he sign with letters of the same colour, while he was to manage public affairs and administer his son's business.' ... βασιλεὺς δὲ ὀνομάζεσθαι οὐκ ἠθέλησε διὰ τὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν πάθος, τὸν δὲ υἱὸν αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννην βασιλέα ὠνόμασε καὶ τοιοῦτοις γράμμασιν ὑπογράφειν διώρισε, αὐτὸν τε διέπειν τὰ κοινὰ καὶ διεξάγειν τὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ. On the ideological importance and symbolism of imperial documents and the red/purple ink, see Dölger 1939: 235-236.

³²⁶ His revolt coinage names him as *consul*, but never *Augustus*. Since emperors in this period claimed the consular title upon their proclamation, Herakleios' use of it may have been intended to minimise Phocas' claims to authority without Herakleios being accused of similarly overreaching (a way of denying Phocas' legitimacy without Herakleios actually claiming to be emperor himself). On emperor's claiming the consular title, see Kaegi 2003: 40-42.

³²⁷ (For example, the usurper Mizizios c.668-669). Grierson 1982: 152.

³²⁸ Penna and Morrisson 2013: 41-42. On the mint of Thessalonike during the tenth-twelfth centuries, see Hendy 1969: 79; Grierson 1982: 224.

³²⁹ Cheynet 1990: 20-145. Particularly noteworthy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were issues of Basilakes, whose revolt lasted only six months (1078-1079); the Gabrades, who established a mint at Trebizond (c.1092-1098) during Alexios I's reign; Isaakios Komnenos of Cyprus (1184-1191), who employed outsiders to mint issue bearing his image; and Theodoros Mangaphas, who established an amateur mint in Philadelphia (1188). On Basilakes: Hendy 1969: 79. On the Gabrades: Hendy 1985: 438; Bendall 1977: esp. 130, 134-136. On Komnenos: Bellinger and Grierson 1994: IV, 354-364. On Mangaphas: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 399 (trans. Magoulias 219); Hendy 1969: 149; Grierson 1982: 235-236.

usurper Procopius attempted to win support by distributing gold issue, his agents were quickly neutralised and the coinage seized,³³⁰ and Justinian II may have attempted a systematic withdrawal of Leontios and Tiberios-Apsimaros' issues from circulation.³³¹

In another indication of *basileia*, after a proclamation in the field, a usurper's command tent assumed the guise of the imperial tent. Mullett outlines how imperial tents functioned as mobile courts acting as a microcosm for ceremonial, receptions, and palace life *in absentia*. Psellos confirms that Isaakios I's courtiers would arrange themselves hierarchically inside his tent for receptions during his rebellion.³³² Alexios III's conveyance to the 'actual' imperial tent after his proclamation, has been described as a *rite de passage* denoting his transition to imperial status, and imbuing the tent with a ceremonial importance akin to the palace.³³³ Proclaimed usurpers thus imitated the court and administration even outside Constantinople.

Finally, there is some evidence to suggest that usurpers sought to exploit symbolic dates for their proclamation in order to enhance their imperial charisma. To cite three examples: Isaakios I was proclaimed near Kastamon on 8 June 1057, the anniversary of the Translation of the military saint Theodoros Stratelates.³³⁴ The military symbolism of the date would have integrated neatly with the justificatory material espoused by Isaakios.³³⁵ Nikephoros III's rebellion was given a false chronology by Michael Attaleiates. He writes that Nikephoros was proclaimed on 2 July 1078, which was both the date of the summer

³³⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum*, 26.7.11.

³³¹ Grierson 1968: II.2, 644.

³³² Mullett 2013: esp. 504; Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 204-207; ed. Renauld II, 96 (trans. Sewter 288). Henty 1985: 273, documents how the wealth and splendour of the imperial tent could even rival that of a palace, and the image of splendour was certainly promoted by Psellos in relation to Isaakios. See also, Grünbart 2008, on Psellos' description of the golden ornamentations adorning the imperial tent of Basileios II.

³³³ Tounta 2010: 464.

³³⁴ The date is found only in Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 489 (trans. Wortley 456). Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martín 54 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 96-97), gives the more general 'Spring Equinox' as the date for the start of the rebellion (although not necessarily the proclamation); Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 184-185; ed. Renauld II, 86 (trans. Sewter 278) gives no useful information with which to determine the date of proclamation.

³³⁵ See above, page 29.

equinox and, although Attaleiates does not mention this, the commemoration of the Translation of the Robe of the Theotokos to the Blachernai.³³⁶ Fictive dates for significant events are not unknown³³⁷ and, given that Nikephoros' revolt actually commenced in late 1077, it seems clear that his propagandists sought to exploit the invented date. Attaleiates' accompanying allusions to 'sunlight' may indicate a connection to rhetorical 'sun-king' imagery associated with emperors.³³⁸ Or the date may have implied the favour of Constantinople's saintly protector, especially since Nikephoros captured the city without bloodshed. Finally, Ioannes VI's proclamation at Didymoteichon on 26 October 1341, coincided with the feast of St Demetrios, the military saint, presumably to signify Demetrios' favour for Ioannes' nascent campaign.³³⁹ Demetrios was an imperial patron since the Komnenoi, and was closely aligned with the Palaiologan family in official propaganda as defender and legitimist.³⁴⁰ Given Ioannes' efforts to espouse familial relations with the Palaiologoi as a means of self-legitimation, the adoption of the family's protector undoubtedly served this effort.³⁴¹ Despite these examples, it should be noted that the dates of proclamations are exceedingly rarely recorded, generally provide only the month/season, and were most likely to have coincided with tactically opportune moments or have been dictated by changing political circumstances.³⁴²

³³⁶ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 215 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 392-393), claiming that the proclamation took place in 'the first year of the indiction' (i.e. 1078). *Skylitzes Continuatus*, ed. Tsolakos 172, establishes that Nikephoros was proclaimed emperor by the magnates of the East in October 1077.

³³⁷ Angelov 2009: 100, points to the unlikely correspondence ('happy coincidence') of imperial birthdays with major feasts in twelfth- and thirteenth-century orations and suggests that the closest major feast day to an actual imperial birthday was often deliberately conflated.

³³⁸ On the use of sun-king imagery in imperial panegyric, see Dennis 1997: 134; Hunger 1965: 97-102. The birth of the emperor Constantine was even said to have caused the sun to stand still: *Vita Constantini*, ed. Guidi 308.

³³⁹ Kantakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen II, 167. Discussed in Nicol 1996: 55-56; Dölger 1938: 20-24.

³⁴⁰ On the importance of St Demetrios to Palaiologan propaganda (Andronikos II even named a son Demetrios), see Nelson 2004: esp. 31, 36. On Demetrios' elevation from local saint to dynastic patron under Alexios I and the Komnenoi, see Grotowski 2010: 115-117.

³⁴¹ On Ioannes VI's attempts to position himself as a family member, see Dölger 1938: esp. 26-29, showing that Ioannes' efforts in that regard were not particularly unusual: links to past emperors provided a form of 'dynastic pedigree' (lineage) that a candidate could espouse in order to win support for their accession.

³⁴² Leon Tornikios fled confinement in Constantinople on 14 September 1047, the day of the Elevation of the Cross. However, the timing was seemingly a practical decision allowing Tornikios a favourable moment to

Authorising attire

Just as proclamation invested usurpers with authority to behave imperially, it permitted them to adopt insignia connoting their newfound status. The functional symbolism of costume in Byzantine political culture cannot be underestimated, and ‘the impression given in the texts is that titles and the robes that accompanied them were used to denote power... [and] express hierarchical relationships to the imperial throne.’³⁴³ The *Kletorologion* of Philotheos, compiled c.899, and the fourteenth-century *Pseudo-Kodinos* emphasise the close association of particular attire with particular titles.³⁴⁴ Liudprand of Cremona’s account of the *roga* ceremony of 949 indicates how hierarchy was represented via differing pay and robes of office.³⁴⁵ Fundamentally, one’s clothing was emblematic of one’s identity, therefore investitures and divestitures were frequently recorded in the narrative histories in order to underscore changes in identity.³⁴⁶ Since the language of power thus anticipated a visual component,³⁴⁷ a usurper’s adoption of imperial insignia represented an easily understandable transformation that intended to convey and confirm his new identity/status.

In most cases, the specific items conferred at a proclamation are omitted or inconsistently recorded. Generalised expressions like ‘imperial insignia’ or ‘imperial attire’ abound, and we must suspect representational usages elsewhere. Unfortunately, coinage and art cannot help since they rarely survive for unsuccessful usurpers, rarely depict

escape, since he was proclaimed emperor several days later, at Adrianople. Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martín 22-23 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 38-39).

³⁴³ Eastmond and Jones 2001: 166. The deliberate association of attire and authority was long-understood, and emperors of late antiquity were forced to legislate against provincial officials who ‘claimed their ceremonial due even when they were not wearing their insignia.’ McCormick 1989: 163.

³⁴⁴ *Pseudo-Kodinos*, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov 319-358.

³⁴⁵ On the procedure and Liudprand’s account, see Oikonomides 1997: 200-202.

³⁴⁶ McCormick 1989: esp. 163, citing the example of Clovis of Tours, who embraced this ‘identity’ principle when adopting Byzantine costume and ritual behaviour upon receipt of the rank of *consul*, in order to present himself as a member of the same civilisation.

³⁴⁷ Choniates expresses the wide-spread understanding of this link (scathingly) when recounting how, during the successional crisis of January-February 1204, the popular assembly sought to promote anyone who appeared *sufficiently affluently attired*. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 562 (trans. Magoulias 308).

proclamations, and served primarily to propagate an idealised image of *basileia*.³⁴⁸ Three principal ensigns emerge. The purple *chlamys* and the diadem are the most frequently recorded items used between the fourth and eighth centuries. Thereafter the *chlamys* was supplanted by the red boots as most frequently attending a proclamation, but does not disappear entirely. Investiture could occur before or after the acclamation.

The symbolic connotations of imperial insignia, pertaining to the imperial mission and sacral charisma, can only have increased the belief that usurpers needed appropriate attire.³⁴⁹ The ‘imperial purple’ *chlamys* and *loros* costumes were the ceremonial garments most often associated with emperors.³⁵⁰ Dyed silk was interwoven with fine strands of gold, and decorated with jewels. The *chlamys* remained in use until at least the early-thirteenth century, when it fell out of favour at Nikaia. The *loros* had gradually replaced it in preference during the middle-Byzantine period and remained in use until 1453.³⁵¹ Purple was most singularly associated with *basileia*, and fulfilled a practical purpose since ‘spectators could immediately pick out the key person in a group.’³⁵²

The diadem, after its introduction in the fourth century, became the most prominent ensign. For the first three centuries CE it conflicted with Roman republican rhetoric surrounding the imperial office.³⁵³ When Constantine transformed his imperial self-

³⁴⁸ Parani 2003: 11-34. As Eastmond 2003: 74-78, explains, rather than a personalised representation, imperial art provided an idealised model of the emperor with which to understand the *essence* of the imperial office, and thus ‘see’ and understand the nature of the emperor himself. These were not strictly accurate physical representations of the emperors they purported to depict.

³⁴⁹ Regarding the symbolism of the imperial insignia, Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 61-63, for example, details how Ioannes III Doukas Vatatzes rebuked his son for wearing the imperial insignia while hunting, since it represented the blood of the people and thus should only be worn to impress ambassadors with the people’s wealth.

³⁵⁰ These were the imperial vestments most often recorded in the *Book of Ceremonies*, *Pseudo-Kodinos*, and imperial art. Grabar 1936; Parani 2003: esp. 11-34.

³⁵¹ Parani 2003: 11-13: tentatively traces the latest established reference to the *chlamys*-costume as a part of imperial attire to the reign of Manuel I in Choniates’ narrative. Parani 2007: esp. 117-118: argues that the *chlamys* had fallen out of favour by the early thirteenth century as a result of changes in court ceremonials, the reduced bureaucratic contingent of the Empire of Nikaia, and the adoption of ‘oriental’ styles of dress by courtiers in this period.

³⁵² McCormick 1985: 19.

³⁵³ Wienand 2015: 448.

representation by adopting a diadem in 325 it signified an ideological innovation. Constantine was now sole ruler, reigning charismatically in accordance with imperial and divine ideals.³⁵⁴ The diadem personified his God-given power, embodying the close relationship of ‘God-crowned’ (θεόστεπτοι) emperors with the divine. This found expression in numerous images depicting the *Manus Dei* crowning emperors.³⁵⁵ Initially a simple band that replaced the wreath, diadems became increasingly elaborate and incorporated pearls, rosettes, and various gemstones. The design continued to change and under Alexios I assumed a hemispherical shape.³⁵⁶ In the fourteenth century, economic constraints forced Anna of Savoy to sell the crown (*‘stephanos’*) with which her son Ioannes V had been invested. Consequently, Ioannes VI used an improvised crown of gilded leather and coloured glass.³⁵⁷

The red footwear was to be worn by emperors at all times and was considered inseparable from the imperial person (often being the last element of attire surrendered by an imperial claimant).³⁵⁸ Roman tradition associated it with Julius Caesar, who wore red buskins as evidence of his descent from the Alban kings, and to differentiate his authority from all predecessors.³⁵⁹ Like other elements of the imperial costume, footwear became increasingly elaborate. Diocletian was reportedly the first emperor to adorn his shoes with precious stones.³⁶⁰ Manuel I’s red shoes (*tzangia*) were decorated with white pearls forming eagles, a motif symbolising the purity and lofty-status of the emperor.³⁶¹ Later, eagle motifs

³⁵⁴ Wienand 2015: 448-449.

³⁵⁵ On the sacral symbolism of the coronation, see Woodrow 2001: 127-130.

³⁵⁶ Parani 2003: 27-30.

³⁵⁷ ‘...also their diadems and vestments in that ceremony, for the most part, had some appearance of gold and precious gems; but the former were made of leather, of the kind sometimes gilded according to the custom of the leatherworkers; the latter of glass, gleaming with every kind of colour.’ Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen II, 787-788. Author’s translation. This was the *stephanos* used for Ioannes VI’s second coronation, he had previously received a coronation while in revolt, outside Constantinople (see below).

³⁵⁸ Heher 2015b: 82-93, provides a useful overview of the history of the imperial footwear and its symbolisms.

³⁵⁹ On the red shoes of the emperor, see Gioles 2002: 68.

³⁶⁰ For the sources and for discussion of this ‘innovation’, see Philostorgius, trans. Amidon 242-243 (*Appendix*), esp. n.12; Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst II, 617 (trans. Banchich and Lane 66).

³⁶¹ A twelfth-century description of the jousts of Manuel I records that, ‘His footwear was red and truly imperial. White eagles were depicted on his shoes in pearls, so that through the whiteness of the pearls and the

adorned the shoes of the *despotes* and *sebastokrator*, strengthening ‘dynastic’ implications of the imagery.³⁶²

Given the expense and intricacy of these items, and the fact that they resided with the emperor, we may question with what exactly usurpers were invested. Unfortunately, provenance and descriptions are rarely given. From the little evidence available, a division appears between proclamations in the capital and the provinces. In Constantinople, ensigns could be taken through deceit or networking.³⁶³ During the Nika riots, the *patricius* Hypatius was proclaimed at the Column of Constantine with a golden *torques*, and diadem, taken from ‘a palace’.³⁶⁴ And in 1200 Ioannes Komnenos(-Axouchos) entered Hagia Sophia to take ‘one of the small crowns which hung suspended around the altar’.³⁶⁵ Outside the capital the availability of ‘official’ insignia diminished. In the fourth century, Silvanus improvised a *chlamys* using an imperial banner standard, and Procopius made do with the gold tunic of a courtier, but wore red shoes, and a small purple cloth (since no mantle could be found).³⁶⁶ Later, the usurpers Leontius, Herakleios, and Thomas the Slav, were invested with diadems taken from local churches by clergymen.³⁶⁷ We might suspect, given his adoption by Empress Maria, that the red shoes provided for Alexios I were genuine.³⁶⁸ There is also some

high flying of the birds the total elevation of the emperor might be depicted. For the emperor is spotless like a pearl and high-flying like the eagles.’ Translated in Jones and Maguire 2002: 108.

³⁶² Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov 78-79. The eagle became a symbol particularly associated with the Palaiologan dynasty: Kazhdan et al 1991: I, 669; Grotowski 2010: 249-250. The appearance of an eagle was a commonplace omen indicating future rule: among the copious bibliography, see Brackertz 1993: 228-229; Moravesik 1961: 83-88; Solovjev 1935: 122-125, 129-135; Angelov 2007: 85; Coote 1997: esp. 23; Koch 2010: esp. 520-524; Scott 2010: 115-132.

³⁶³ We may add that Empress Theodora was provided with ‘radiant robes’ (*λαμπροτέρων στολών*) by her supporters, who included members of the senate with access to palaces: Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 228-229; ed. Renaud I, 108 (trans. Sewter 144).

³⁶⁴ Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn 397-398 (trans. Jeffreys 278).

³⁶⁵ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 526 (trans. Magoulias 289-290). See also, Mesarites, *Die Palastrevolution des Johannes Komnenos*, ed. Heisenberg 22.

³⁶⁶ For Silvanus: Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum* 15.5.15. For Procopius: Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum* 26.6.15-16.

³⁶⁷ For Leontius: Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn 312-313 (trans. Jeffreys 216); Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 128-129 (trans. Mango and Scott 197). For Herakleios: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 299 (trans. Mango and Scott 428). For Thomas: Genesisios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 24 (trans. Kaldellis 29).

³⁶⁸ For Alexios’ investiture with the red shoes, see below, page 102.

limited evidence that usurpers produced their own attire: Bardas Phokas allegedly walked among the troops before noticing that his shoes were a dark colour rather than red. The response of his retainers, that they actually were red, suggests that a wide colour range was acceptable and/or that the boots had been dyed by his supporters.³⁶⁹ Nikephoros Bryennios reportedly contrived purple shoes with pearls and precious stones.³⁷⁰ And, in the fourteenth century, Ioannes VI commissioned goldsmiths to make a crown.³⁷¹

These disparate approaches to securing insignia indicate that there were no ‘unique’ items that a usurper had to acquire in order to claim *basileia*.³⁷² Instead, a range of items were utilised in approximation of what might be expected. This contrasts with practices in many parts of the medieval West where the possession of one or more unique ensigns was literally identified with holding office.³⁷³ The relative ease with which Byzantine usurpers could claim to possess insignia may even help to explain the discrepancy between incidences of usurpation in Byzantium and the West: ritually, it was easier to claim authority in Byzantium. However, this does not imply that ritual investiture was ‘diluted’, since the refusal of Byzantine usurpers to delay assuming insignia until they could take possession of ‘genuine’ items at the coronation emphasises the legitimist value of appearance.³⁷⁴

³⁶⁹ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 121 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 169). The possibility that the story was merely an apocryphal propagandist invention must also be taken into account.

³⁷⁰ Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 280-281.

³⁷¹ Kantakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen and Niebuhr II, 564. This was used for his first coronation, outside Constantinople.

³⁷² Of course, the previous emperors’ imperial attire became available to those usurpers who successfully overthrew the regime.

³⁷³ The Holy Roman Emperor Henry II, for example, secured his position against Hermann II of Swabia because neither possessed the crown. All Hermann could do to prevent Henry’s accession (1002) was prevent him from arriving at Mainz to be crowned; he could not attempt to be crowned himself. On the circumstances, see Bagge 2002: 167, also citing how Gerard of Elsass’ enemies captured the banner conferred on him by the king as a sign of the fief he had received, forcing him to leave the fiefdom in spite of promising to reclaim the banner. Note also how, upon the recapture of Constantinople in 1261, the Latin Emperor Baldwin II left behind his insignia of office; presumably because he could no longer claim authority: see below, page 235, footnote 1163.

³⁷⁴ The Madrid Skylitzes seemingly confirms this conclusion (although perhaps only incidentally) and the discrepancy between the respective importance of insignia in Western and Byzantine thought. Ioannes I is depicted by its Western miniaturist(s) in imperial attire immediately after the murder of Nikephoros II despite the text itself never referring to Ioannes as *basileus* or *autokrator* until after his proclamation in the *Chrysotriklinos*: Boeck 2015: 195.

The charismatic significance of ‘correct’ attire was also exploited to undermine rhetorically a usurper’s authority. In an oration of Valens’ court c.366/367 the usurper Procopius was ridiculed for being garbed as an emperor without really being one.³⁷⁵ Ammianus and Zosimus’ accounts of the proclamation employed similar ridicule. Ammianus asserted that Procopius resembled how ‘on the stage... a splendidly decorated figure was suddenly made to appear... or through some mimic deception. [He was] raised in a laughable manner to this dishonour of all honours.’³⁷⁶ Zosimus recalled how everyone looked upon Procopius ‘as on a king made in a theatre.’³⁷⁷ Later, Psellos asserted that Leon Tornikios ‘forgot that he was merely an actor playing a part on the stage or adopting a pose.’³⁷⁸ In both cases, although supporters considered the usurper to be emperor, the criticisms implied that proclamation, investiture, and behaving in an imperial fashion were insufficient to claim authority. Choniates enhanced this criticism to illustrate Andronikos I’s ‘barbarian’ nature when Andronikos fled the Great Palace: he threw aside imperial insignia and adopted ‘barbarian’ attire. The wilful abandonment of his former identity was paralleled by Isaakios II’s proclamation and investiture by the crowd. Andronikos, who we infer had merely mimicked the appearance of an emperor, was thus replaced by a true emperor; one supported by the people.³⁷⁹ These invectives reveal the subjective nature of ritual investitures: approximating the appearance of an emperor was sufficient for those who believed that one deserved to be emperor. But popular acceptance of the particular individual

³⁷⁵ Icks 2012: 473.

³⁷⁶ Ammianus, *Rerum Gestarum* 26.6.15-16.

³⁷⁷ Zosimus 4.6.2; Icks 2012: 473.

³⁷⁸ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 42-43; ed. Renauld II, 18 (trans. Sewter 209). Translation adapted.

³⁷⁹ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 347 (trans. Magoulias 191). Andronikos reportedly placed a ‘barbarian’ pyramidal-hat upon his head, as he sought his escape. Since the question of Andronikos’ *true* identity and nature were recurrent considerations in narratives of his reign, we may suspect that the scene is also a comment on Andronikos’ ‘Protean’ nature as alluded to in propaganda recorded by Choniates and his contemporaries. Andronikos’ irregular, and ‘barbarian’ dress sense, has been noted in the scholarship, see Kazhdan and Franklin 1984: 257-261; Kazhdan and Epstein 1985: 78; Grünbart 2011: 83. For other references to Andronikos’ unusual attire, see Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 139, 252, 271, 321 (trans. Magoulias 79, 141-142, 151, 177).

was of more importance because vestments and prerogatives merely provided an outward confirmation of authority/identity and could not bestow it.³⁸⁰

Constantinople: political capital

In the histories, control of Constantinople represented another transitional moment in claiming *basileia*. The city was deeply symbolic of empire and ‘Roman’ identity, and during the ‘period of exile’ attempts were made by Epirot and Nikaian emperors to recreate its ideological and functional significance at new capitals.³⁸¹ It housed the political and administrative apparatus and as Constantinople-based investiture protocols developed its possession was necessary in order to complete an emperor’s inauguration.³⁸² The strength of the ideological connection between possession of *basileia* and possession of Constantinople allowed Basiliscus (475-476) and Artabasdos (741/2-743), who were subsequently ousted by emperors they had dispossessed of the capital yet failed to defeat, to receive coronations and administer affairs. And Alexios III’s flight from the city in 1203 permitted his replacement.

The city’s singular importance was alluded to by Kekaumenos who advised readers to ‘keep faith toward the emperor in Constantinople,’ and speciously claimed that ‘the

³⁸⁰ Blemmydes, *Basilikos Andrias*, ed. Hunger and Ševčenko 60-63, 127, agrees with this summation: ‘I praise the Roman Emperors of earlier days because, instead of writing “My Imperial Highness”, they put “Our Serenity” in all of their ordinances thus showing that serenity and gentleness were the special sacred obligations of the Emperor, to be set above the purple cloak itself or the diadem, for even tyrants appropriate these latter: but serenity is an inviolate and inalienable possession of the imperial dignity alone.’

³⁸¹ On the singular importance of Constantinople in Byzantine ideology and identity, see Olster 1996. See also Magdalino 2000a: esp. 150-151, who comments that ‘the constitutional and ideological role of Constantinople within Byzantium far exceeded that of any capital city or metropolis in almost any other territorial state. It was the status of Constantinople as the New Rome which made it legitimate for Byzantines to call themselves Rhomaioi and their state Romania. For both these identities, Constantinople was the fixed point on the map’. On the numerous and varied Epirot efforts to ideologically model their capital, Arta, on Constantinople (perhaps more so than any of the other so-called ‘successor states’), see Fundić 2014. On Nikaia as an imitation of Constantinople, see Leszka 2012.

³⁸² Curiously, Tounta 2010: 465, has argued that the need to capture Constantinople was not a ritual necessity for a usurper, but rather a practical necessity since it was the administrative heart of the empire. Such a reading misses the singular importance of Constantinople in Byzantine thought concerning the imperial office. Although usurpers could ‘legitimately’ be considered emperors by their partisans before capturing Constantinople, it was always expected that they would make an attempt to gain the city. The number of usurpers who engaged in civil war and did not attempt to march on Constantinople can be counted on one hand.

emperor who sits in Constantinople always wins.³⁸³ After entreating contemporary emperors to resume active campaigning, Kekaumenos advised them to ignore claims that if they left the city ‘another will become emperor in your place.’³⁸⁴ In fact, the prospect of the latter threat had prompted surprise when Nikephoros III’s supporters were able to maintain calm and security in the capital for three days before Nikephoros arrived.³⁸⁵ The competition for the capital imbued its possession with additional significance as a symbol of authority.

Within the city, control of the Great Palace, Blachernai, and Hagia Sophia, was of the utmost importance. The palaces represented imperial spaces and served as sites of memory-politics and government. They contained the state archives and were places of work for many members of the state bureaucracy.³⁸⁶ The Great Palace housed the imperial mint and, together with Hagia Sophia, acted as a locus for ceremonial, including coronation.³⁸⁷ Despite administrative and ceremonial bi-location between the two palaces from the middle-period,³⁸⁸ even under the Palaiologoi (when emperors resided at Blachernai) the Great Palace and Hagia Sophia remained the sites chosen for coronations.³⁸⁹ The existence of two palaces also afforded a measure of security, as two defensible regions at opposite ends of the city needed to be secured in order to prevent a possible imperial reorganisation and counter-offensive.³⁹⁰ Upon his restoration Justinian II arrayed his forces at Blachernai until it was established that Tiberios-Apsimaros had fled the city and the Great Palace could be

³⁸³ Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij 64, 74 (trans. Roueché).

³⁸⁴ Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij 103 (trans. Roueché).

³⁸⁵ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 272 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 494-495).

³⁸⁶ Dagron 2003: 96-97; Grünbart 2015.

³⁸⁷ For the role of the palace in imperial ceremonial of the early- and middle-Byzantine periods, see Magdalino 1978: 111; Featherstone 2006, with bibliography. For the role of the palaces in late Byzantine imperial ceremonial, see Macrides 2011.

³⁸⁸ On the use of both the Great Palace and Blachernai as seats of government from (at least) the late-eleventh century onward, see Macrides 2013a: esp. 289-291; Macrides 2011: 226.

³⁸⁹ Ioannes VI was the only Palaiologan exception, and held the ceremony at the Blachernai instead because Hagia Sophia had been damaged in an earthquake in 1347: Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen II, 787-788. On the coronation proceedings of this period, and with reference to Ioannes VI, see Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov esp. 414-415 (*Studies*).

³⁹⁰ Wright 2017: 181, notes the importance of the Blachernai Palace as a defensible place for besieged regimes to retreat to within the city in the fourteenth century.

secured.³⁹¹ Nikephoros III dispatched troops to each location upon entering Constantinople.³⁹²

Numerous usurpations centred on capturing the Great Palace, a feat that could prompt acclamations from supporters.³⁹³ Eleven figures successfully assumed power after deposing an emperor, or frustrating a succession, having already had access.³⁹⁴ Justinian II, Michael V, and Andronikos I, were dislodged in Constantinopolitan uprisings, and many other failed uprisings also targeted the building: the usurper Marcian (479), briefly seized it from Zeno, who narrowly evaded capture;³⁹⁵ Hypatius attempted entry via the *kathisma*, almost prompting Justinian to flee; Constantine Doukas, and Theodosios Monomachos, independently failed to force entrance;³⁹⁶ and Ioannes Komnenos(-Axouchos) temporarily captured the *triklinos* of Justinian.³⁹⁷ Other attempts were deterred in the early stages: Leon and Nikephoros Phokas escaped imprisonment in 971 and were discovered plotting to capture the Great Palace from an absent Tzimiskes; and c.1106 Michael Anemas' conspiracy planned to murder Alexios I in the imperial bedchamber.³⁹⁸ Although most attempts against the palace ended in failure, they demonstrate an understanding of its symbolic importance.

³⁹¹ Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 100-105. It is important to note that Justinian II was using the Blachernai *region* as a staging area for his troops' advance into the rest of the city. It is not known that there was already a palace in the region, although that section of the city was of ceremonial importance due to the presence of the Church of the Theotokos (which was believed to defend the walls nearby). Despite the absence of a palace, the area was evidently considered a useful tactical position from which to stage Justinian's advance.

³⁹² For Nikephoros, see Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 249-250.

³⁹³ Isaakios II was acclaimed *autokrator* when Andronikos I abandoned the palace, and Andronikos III was acclaimed after capturing the Blachernai from his grandfather. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 347 (trans. Magoulias 191); Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 422.

³⁹⁴ These were, Artemios-Anastasios, Nikephoros I, Michael II, Basileios I, Ioannes I, Michael IV, Theodora, Constantine X, Andronikos I, Alexios V, and Michael VIII. For citations, see Table 1.

³⁹⁵ Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Bidez and Parmentier 122-123 (trans. Whitby 161); Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 126-127 (trans. Mango and Scott 195).

³⁹⁶ For Constantine: *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 383; *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter p.131-133; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 197-199 (trans. Wortley 191-194). For Theodosios, see Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 481-482 (trans. Wortley 449-450).

³⁹⁷ Alexios III's loyalists subsequently rallied from the Blachernai and regained control of the Great Palace, killing Komnenos(-Axouchos) in the process: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 527-528 (trans. Magoulias 289).

³⁹⁸ For Leon and Nikephoros Phokas: Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 145-146 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 189-190). For Michael Anemas: Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 372-375 (trans. Frankopan 346-349); Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 745.

The historic association of the palace with *basileia* meant that whoever controlled it gained legitimacy merely by association, distinguishing them from persons who had merely been proclaimed elsewhere.

The speed with which the Great Palace was secured at moments of successional insecurity further underscores its close association with the transition and projection of authority. In the twelfth century alone,³⁹⁹ Ioannes II missed his father's funeral because he was 'clinging' to the Great Palace; Manuel I's brother (and prospective rival) was prevented from accessing it until after Manuel's coronation; Andronikos I rushed to defend it from Isaakios II's supporters;⁴⁰⁰ and Empress Euphrosyne secured it for Alexios III.⁴⁰¹ In each case, possession of the palace subsequently allowed Constantinopolitan inauguration rituals to be performed.

Hagia Sophia represented another historic site of imperial ceremonial and (increasingly) of popular politics. The populace often descended upon the church when supporting a rival candidate, protecting persons claiming asylum, or seeking patriarchal support against imperial policy. Nikephoros III and Alexios III each bribed sacristans to proclaim them before they had entered the city, providing the semblance of ecclesiastical support and mimicking customary practice.⁴⁰² After the deposition of Michael V, the church became a vital staging post for Constantinopolitan uprisings. Ten candidates were proclaimed inside Hagia Sophia in the period to 1204 and this pattern became especially

³⁹⁹ In the eleventh century, Isaakios I returned to the Great Palace to secure the succession when believed to be dying. See below, page 110. And in 1341, Ioannes VI ensured the successional security of Ioannes V in the immediate aftermath of Andronikos III's death, by escorting Ioannes and the empress-regent to the palace. Ioannes VI had 'feared that something might happen to the young emperor, as is often the case in these circumstances.' Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen II, 576-577.

⁴⁰⁰ On Ioannes' absence from Alexios' funeral, see below, page 225, footnote 1110. On Manuel I's side-lining of his brother: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 46-49 (trans. Magoulias 26-29); Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 29-31 (trans. Brand 32-33). On Andronikos I's defence of the Great Palace, see below, page 134, footnote 668.

⁴⁰¹ Euphrosyne's retinue also had to crush the Constantinopolitan insurrection of Alexios Kontostephanos which also aimed to capture the palace. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 455-456 (trans. Magoulias 250).

⁴⁰² For Nikephoros: Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 256, 269-270 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 466-467, 490-491); Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 242-243. For Alexios: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 456 (trans. Magoulias 250).

popular after Isaakios II's accession,⁴⁰³ eventually prompting Alexios III to station Varangians at the church.⁴⁰⁴ The trend implies an increasing influence of ecclesiastical authorities in imperial successions.⁴⁰⁵ Hagia Sophia was a relatively defensible position, and the taboo against bloodshed within a Church was hoped to dissuade direct assaults.

Coronation

Control of Constantinople's ceremonial topography enabled a usurper to enact the final investiture ritual, the coronation. The two generalised forms of coronation outlined in the *Book of Ceremonies* and *Pseudo-Kodinos* corresponded to the principal modes of succession: the coronation of a senior emperor by the patriarch, when no other emperor occupied the throne, and the coronation of a co-emperor by a senior colleague.⁴⁰⁶ Regardless of which ceremony was performed, emperors received acclamations and other signs of honour. The coronation of a usurper-emperor was usually preceded by a triumphal *adventus*, which presented him as a conquering general visiting sites of religious or political significance along a route that was never strictly defined. Martial connotations were

⁴⁰³ These were: Empress Theodora, Isaakios I, Nikephoros III, Isaakios II, Alexios Branas, Isaakios Komnenos (the nephew of Andronikos I), an unnamed son of the governor of Thessalonike (Andronikos Komnenos), the unnamed candidate of a Constantinopolitan revolt in 1200, Ioannes Komnenos (-Axouchos), and Nikolaos Kannavos. To my knowledge, before the eleventh century, only the conspiracy of the sons of Constantine V in 797 had focused on securing Hagia Sophia as a place of proclamation from the outset, and before challenging the palaces. It must also be noted that this 'conspiracy' may actually have been little more than a desperate attempt for the sons of Constantine to ensure their survival in the tempestuous circumstances of Eirene and Constantine's accession. In other words, they may simply have been seeking asylum in the church rather than proclamation. For citations, see Table 1.

⁴⁰⁴ Alexios' actions mimicked those of Empress Euphrosyne, who had secured Hagia Sophia against the rebellion of Kontostephanos while Alexios was being proclaimed on campaign. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 525 (trans. Magoulias 288). Discussed in Angold 2015: 121-122. See also, Choniates' statement regarding the failed coup of the son of Andronikos, governor of Thessalonike, which recognises the importance of Hagia Sophia to revolts in the last decades of the twelfth century: 'Although another should have been the last to be punished for seeking the throne by going into the temple, he was the seal and the last of the rebels; henceforward, no one was to follow the same course.' Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 428 (trans. Magoulias 235-236).

⁴⁰⁵ A development in this period that is suggested by Christophilopoulou 1956: 158-159, and followed by Angold 1997: 183, on the basis of Zonaras' account of the acclamations for Ioannes II (1118) being led by the 'clergy'. The Church's public support, Christophilopoulou and Angold believe, allowed Ioannes to survive the intrigue of Anna Komnene and Nikephoros Bryennios. Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 763-764.

⁴⁰⁶ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. Reiske I, 191-196 (trans. Moffatt and Tall I, 191-196); Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov 210-243.

prominent.⁴⁰⁷

Although the specific procedures were continually changing and no two coronations were identical, after the relocation of the procedure from the Hippodrome, coronations in Constantinople usually took place within Hagia Sophia.⁴⁰⁸ According to the *Book of Ceremonies*:⁴⁰⁹ the emperor would enter the church and process with the patriarch to the sanctuary where a prayer would be intoned. They would then mount the ambo. After the litany, the patriarch would intone prayers over the insignia, emphasising through these the emperor's obligations to ensure security, protection, and justice, to defend orthodoxy, and to govern benevolently on behalf of the community.⁴¹⁰ A triple acclamation ('Worthy!') led by the patriarch, would be shouted after the emperor's investiture, and he would retire to the *metatorion* to receive officials. Ideally, the ceremony communicated divine favour and the tenets of the imperial mission.⁴¹¹

Dagron notes that, after iconoclasm, coronations were usually scheduled to coincide with one of the major feasts in order to imbue the ceremony with a religious character.⁴¹² That development was undoubtedly linked to the increased need for emperors to assert their orthodoxy and sacral charisma after both had been questioned during iconoclasm. Usurpers exploited symbolic dates when possible but were often constrained by political

⁴⁰⁷ On the relative adaptability of Byzantine coronation protocols and triumphal entries, see Dagron 2003: 59-78; Hunger 1990.

⁴⁰⁸ An accounting of all the myriad variations and developments in coronation proceedings is beyond the scope of this study. This brief synthesis therefore relates only the 'essential' details of coronations, providing a simplified model upon which to build. Some of the developments and other elements are discussed below. Among the vast literature on Byzantine coronation procedures, see Treitinger 1938; Majeska 1997; Dagron 2003; Trampedach 2005; Woodrow 2001: 116-145; Brightman 1901; Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, all with extensive bibliography.

⁴⁰⁹ Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. Reiske I, 191-196 (trans. Moffatt and Tall I, 191-196). A useful summation of the procedure, complete with a summation of what the congregation would actually have been able to see, is offered by Majeska 1997: 2-4.

⁴¹⁰ For the eighth century prayers, see *Euchologion*, ed. Goar 726-727. On the significance of the prayers in the coronation ceremonies of the *Book of Ceremonies*, see Woodrow 2001: 135-138, and esp. 137. For the performance of these prayers during coronations in the late Byzantine period, see Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov 220-223 (*Text*), 425 (*Studies*).

⁴¹¹ On the ceremonial emphasis on the relationship between the emperor and God, see Treitinger 1938: esp. 109-110.

⁴¹² Dagron 2003: 82-83.

circumstance.⁴¹³ McCormick postulates that Nikephoros II deliberately delayed coronation until the anniversary of the Virgin's victory over the Arab besiegers of Constantinople in 718,⁴¹⁴ which also coincided with the entrance of the *Mandylion* in 944, because both suggested his divine favour.⁴¹⁵ By contrast, Ioannes VI's supporters derided Ioannes V's coronation on 19 November 1341 because the date held no symbolic value.⁴¹⁶

The 'constitutional' function of coronation and the patriarch's role have been subject to debate. The view of the 'Charanis School' holds that the introduction of the patriarch in the fifth-century represented a 'constitutional innovation... [and] the church became an essential element in the constitutional system of the empire.'⁴¹⁷ The patriarch, as an authorised representative of the church, sanctioned the emperor's accession and conferred the imperial title upon him.⁴¹⁸ Thus Charanis argues, Theodoros I was forced to content himself with the title of *despotes* until his coronation by Patriarch Autoreianos (1208).⁴¹⁹ However, present consensus views Charanis' interpretation as a significant miscalculation of coronation's value and the patriarch's function.⁴²⁰ *Basileia* was not conferred by coronation, nor did patriarchs fulfil a constitutional role on behalf of the church. Authority had already been conferred by the proclamation; hence Leon Diakonos asserted that, 'it was customary for those who have newly embarked upon the Roman rule to ascend the ambo of the church to be blessed by the patriarch and have the imperial crown placed on their

⁴¹³ See the comments of Kalavrezou 1997: 75, and fn. 91, regarding the explicit choices of liturgical dates for the coronations of Macedonian emperors, and of usurpers of that dynasty. Kalavrezou notes, in particular, that Romanos I's choice of 17 December must have been a product of political opportunism at that exact moment or he would have waited a few days for a more significant date (25 December).

⁴¹⁴ McCormick 1986: 169.

⁴¹⁵ Talbot & Sullivan 2005: 98 n.68.

⁴¹⁶ The date was supposedly chosen by Patriarch Kalekas, who rushed to arrange the event. Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen II, 616; II, 697-699.

⁴¹⁷ Charanis 1937: 194.

⁴¹⁸ Charanis 1940/41: esp. 60, 64-65; Charanis 1937; Charanis 1938; Grabar 1936: 176; Hussey 1937: 149; Svoronos 1951: 125-128.

⁴¹⁹ Charanis 1940/41: 61-62; Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 11-12 (trans. Macrides 119).

⁴²⁰ Following studies by Sickel 1898; Treitinger 1939; Dolger 1950. See also, Christophilopoulou 1956: esp. 28-34, 173, 230; Boak 1919: 44-47, Dagron 2003.

heads.⁴²¹ Furthermore, the profession of faith written by the new emperor and deposited at Hagia Sophia before the coronation took place, in the fourteenth century (and probably earlier), already named him ‘*basileus kai autokrator Rhomaion*’.⁴²²

Coronation confirmed real power and ritually transferred the imperial office’s characteristic of divine protection to the new emperor. He was already *de facto* emperor,⁴²³ but the unity of ecclesiastical and imperial power (establishing his divine election and mandate to govern) were symbolically ratified by the representative groups present at the ceremony: providing the appearance of a *de jure* legitimation.⁴²⁴ Since the patriarch’s leading of the triple intonation, ‘Worthy’, mirrored historic recitations by the populace during past coronation proceedings, it seems that patriarchs acted as ‘first citizens’ handing over insignia which new emperors were permitted to wear, but which had been blessed in the patriarch’s ecclesiastical guise.⁴²⁵ The patriarchal prayers then served to express the hopes of the whole, civil, community.⁴²⁶ The ceremony thus held no ‘constitutive’ function in the attainment of political power, but rather its projection.⁴²⁷ To refute Charanis, Laskaris’ delay in claiming *basileia* was not evidence of a legal need for patriarchal sanction, but a result of the dynastic origins of his claim and desire to emulate tradition by having a patriarch

⁴²¹ εἴθισται γὰρ τοὺς νέον τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς ἡγεμονίας προσεπιβαίνοντας ἐπὶ τε τὸν ἄμβωνα τοῦ νεῶ ἀνιέναι, καὶ πρὸς τοῦ κατὰ καιροῦς ἱεράρχου εὐλογεῖσθαι τε, καὶ τῷ βασιλείῳ στέφει ταινιοῦσθαι τὴν κεφαλὴν. Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 98 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 147). Emphasis added.

⁴²² (... βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ Ῥωμαίων... Οὕτω μὲν ὁ στεφόμενος τῆς ἑαυτοῦ προτάσσωσιν ὁμολογίας γράφει...) As noticed by Dölger 1950: 146-147; Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov 210-213 (*Text*), and the discussion at 415-418, 421-429 (*Studies*). The profession is attested from as early as Anastasios I’s reign, but the earlier formula, and the profession’s continuous history cannot be established with absolute certainty. The formula was undoubtedly similar to that found in Pseudo-Kodinos, and the profession’s use was most likely continuous.

⁴²³ See the remarks of Yannopoulos 1991: 73-89, ‘...ne conférait pas un pouvoir ou une fonction, mais il reconnaissait un pouvoir et l’exercice d’une fonction en leur conférant la couverture de la protection divine, qui a Byzance constituait la forme suprême de la légitimité.’

⁴²⁴ Brightman 1901: 359; Woodrow 2001: 120; Dagron 2003: 78-79.

⁴²⁵ Thus the patriarch inhabits ‘secular/civil’ and ‘ecclesiastical’ guises at different points in the ceremony. For a Roman precedent for this dualism, see below, page 127. On the presentation of insignia by the patriarch, see Dagron 2003: 67-68. Majeska 1997: esp. 3-4, proposes that the triple intonation and ritual procedures mimicked those for clerical ordination, which implies a new emperor’s sacral charisma and initiation to (an ill-defined, quasi-)clerical status.

⁴²⁶ Woodrow 2001: 134-135, 139.

⁴²⁷ Tounta 2010: 466.

crown him.⁴²⁸ Furthermore, patriarchs who refused to perform a coronation might simply be replaced like Patriarch Kallistos, who refused Matthew Kantakouzenos.⁴²⁹

This does not mean that coronation was understood in the same way by all observers at all times. Psellos betrays his own beliefs and concerns in stating that Isaakios I's coronation marked his transition to legitimate rule.⁴³⁰ Fifteenth-century ecclesiastical authors parsed the 'emperor's promise' in the profession of faith as evidence of his supposed subservience to the church, the church's constitutional position as the guarantor of imperial justice, and the patriarchs' *de jure* role.⁴³¹ Although not a legal prerequisite of *basileia*,⁴³² the introduction of unction, in (or by) the thirteenth century, further expanded the ecclesiastical functions of the patriarch in the ceremony, simultaneously binding it to the

⁴²⁸ Theodoros' claims to *basileia* stemmed from his marriage to Alexios III's daughter. He only began to seek the imperial title after Alexios' capture by the Latins in 1205: Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 11-12 (trans. Macrides 119-120). In any case, it should be remembered that, in 1227/8, the Epirot Theodoros Komnenos-Doukas had himself crowned by Archbishop Demetrios Chomatenos in Thessalonike, and Chomatenos believed he had ecclesiastical authority to anoint a new emperor: Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 33-34 (trans. Macrides 162-163); Prinzing 2013. And coronation by a religious figure other than the patriarch of Constantinople was certainly not unheard of: see below.

⁴²⁹ Kallistos refused in 1353 and was dismissed. Ioannes VI authorised the synod to elect a new patriarch, Philotheos, who was confirmed in office in November. Matthew's coronation finally went ahead in February 1354. Kantakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen III, 270-276, and esp. 272-274; Nicol 1968: 113-114.

⁴³⁰ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 254-255; Renault II, 120 (trans. Sewter 312), '...after taking the weight of the empire on his shoulders from the day on which he was crowned, the usurper took the title of legitimate ruler...'. Translation adapted.

⁴³¹ The clauses in question read: 'Likewise I promise to remain and constantly be a faithful and genuine son and servant of the holy church and, in addition, to be its defender (*dephensor*) and vindicator, to be well-disposed and philanthropic toward the subjects in accordance with the principles of reason and propriety, to abstain as much as possible from murder, mutilation, and similar acts, and to incline always toward truth and justice.' Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov 212-215. On the hierocratic interpretations of the profession of faith by ecclesiastical authors, see Angelov 2007: 412-414.

⁴³² Manuel II did not receive physical unction until his second coronation, but still reigned as *basileus* and *autokrator* (see below). The date of the introduction of imperial unction to Byzantine coronation rituals has been subject to substantial debate. For the fundamental study, see Ostrogorsky 1955, who argues for its adoption in imitation of Latin practices, after 1204 (probably for the coronation of Theodoros I), and suggests that earlier references to unction are metaphorical in nature. This is the interpretation followed by Dagron 2003: 267-276, esp. 275. For different views, see Nicol 1976, who argues that physical anointing *was* in use before 1204 and distinguishes the earlier unction with oil (possibly modelled on western practice) from late Byzantine unction with *myron*. Christophilopoulou 1961-1962: 382-385, follows Brightman 1901: 383, in suggesting that physical unction was performed as early as the coronation of Manuel I. Note also, Macrides' suggestion that a material unction may have been in use as early as the protocol of the *Book of Ceremonies*: '... the "*hagios*" acclamations at the moment of anointing can be found in both Pseudo-Kodinos' protocol and in the coronation ritual in the *Book of Ceremonies*. What was the source of the emperor's holiness in earlier centuries if not unction?' For this suggestion, see Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov 424-425 (*Studies*). In light of the various source problems I am not inclined to favour any particular interpretation. In summation, therefore, Theodoros I and his successors were physically anointed as part of their coronation and this may, or may not, have been in accordance with the existing practices.

church and enacting the emperor's attainment of 'holiness'. However, it is instructive that narratives generally pass over coronations as mere formalities (unless irregular), but devote substantial prose to proclamations: the latter were seemingly of greater ideological and political importance.

Despite the narratives' favour for proclamations, usurpers often endeavoured to exploit coronation ceremonies as a means of communicating legitimising propaganda, or to present them as a 'legal' mark of authority. The first successful usurper from outside a dynasty, Phocas, embraced traditional inauguration rites, but extended them over the course of a week.⁴³³ The army, despite promoting Phocas in a military coup, played little role in the coronation ceremonies beyond the shield-raising and proclamation.⁴³⁴ The *adventus*, crowning, and distribution of donatives were spaced over several days, and preceded the coronation of Leontia as *Augusta*, allowing multiple opportunities for public acclamations.⁴³⁵ Phocas evidently sought to use ceremonials to project the existence of a *consensus* and rationalise his usurpation as a function of this. He was also the first emperor to be crowned within a church, seemingly exploiting imperial sacral charisma (and implied piety) to project moral-legitimacy.⁴³⁶

Usurper-regents were particularly active in exploiting coronations to communicate ideology. In all eight cases a member of the dynasty is reported to have given 'consent' for the investiture, thus implying the association of a junior emperor (the usurper) by a senior colleague, akin to the traditional coronation of a successor. However, in practice these coronations took on a variety of forms: Romanos I was physically invested as co-emperor

⁴³³ The best study of Phocas' inaugural procedures is that of Olster 1993.

⁴³⁴ Performed at the Hebdomon. John of Antioch, *Chronographia*, ed. Müller 37.

⁴³⁵ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 288-289 (trans. Mango and Scott 412-413); Olster 1993: 178-179.

⁴³⁶ He was crowned at the Church of St John the Baptist. Olster 1993: 168.

by Constantine VII and Patriarch Nikolaos, and only later claimed precedence.⁴³⁷ Nikephoros II staged an *adventus* typical of a ‘new man’.⁴³⁸ Andronikos I received the crown from Alexios II and Patriarch Kamateros, but changed the order of precedence in the acclamations performed after the investiture; thereby suggesting that Alexios had made him senior emperor (justifying the break with tradition).⁴³⁹ And Ioannes VI was crowned for a second time, with Ioannes V and Empress Anna observing from a gallery; suggesting their consent and signalling his ambition for dynastic unity.⁴⁴⁰ After the coronation of a usurper-regent the minority emperors were notably minimised in official ceremonials and propaganda.⁴⁴¹ Ceremony was adapted to suit the circumstances and to project the political hierarchies that best served a usurper’s aims.

The communicative-legitimist potential of coronation was particularly exploited in five known cases of emperors receiving a second coronation. Each was usurpation-inspired, and three principal reasons for re-coronation emerge: to remedy a perceived inadequacy in

⁴³⁷ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 395-396, writes that Constantine was present for the coronation and that Romanos received the crown from Patriarch Nikolaos and Constantine: ...τῶ τῆς βασιλείας στέφεται διαδήματι παρὰ Κωνσταντίνου βασιλέως καὶ Νικολάου πατριάρχου. See also, Symeon Magister, *Chronicon*, ed. Wahlgren 313-314: ...τῶ τῆς βασιλείας στέφεται διαδήματι παρὰ Κωνσταντίνου βασιλέως καὶ Νικολάου πατριάρχου.

⁴³⁸ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 47-48 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 98); Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 259 (trans. Wortley 249).

⁴³⁹ Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 50-51; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 272 (trans. Magoulias 151). Neither states who crowned Andronikos, however, given their hostility and the specificity with which his manipulations of coronation ‘protocols’ are recorded by the authors, we would expect to read that Alexios played no role in his physical investiture if that had actually been the case. See also, Beihammer 2013: 186-187, noting the importance of the inversion of the acclamations, but missing the authorising symbolism of Alexios’ role. Among the many similarities between the two emperors, Michael VIII’s first coronation similarly changed the order of precedence beforehand (but although he was in attendance Ioannes IV was not crowned but, rather, invested with a ‘close-fitting cap’).

⁴⁴⁰ See below.

⁴⁴¹ For example: after his coronation, Nikephoros II seemingly ensured that his throne was visibly differentiated from those of the *basileis*. In the account of his second embassy to Constantinople, Liudprand of Cremona, *Relatio de Legatione Constantinopolitana*, ed. Chisea §3 (trans. Squatriti 240-241), reports how ‘There sat on the left [of Nikephoros], not aligned with him but far behind, two small emperors, once his rulers, now subject to him.’ After his own coronation, Ioannes I removed the *basileis* from precedence on his coinage: see below, page 186, and footnote 906. Nikephoros III never permitted Constantine Doukas to wear the imperial insignia that were due him, only permitting him silken shoes with a few strands of purple woven in: Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 97 (trans. Frankopan 88). And Alexios I, although restoring Constantine’s right to wear the insignia of a co-emperor, appointed the former *kaisar* Ioannes Doukas as Constantine’s *basileiopator*, effectively minimising Constantine’s authority by drawing attention to his youth, while simultaneously placating the Doukai. Ioannes’ appointment as *basileiopator* is established by Gkoutzioukostas 2014: 228-230.

the original; to assert an independent basis for authority after dynastic claims had been shattered; and to counteract a rival claimant.

In the first category: Herakleios was proclaimed emperor in the field and crowned first by the metropolitan of Kyzikos (August-September 610).⁴⁴² After deposing Phocas (5 October), Herakleios received a second coronation by Patriarch Sergios at the chapel of St. Stephen. Immediately after, Sergios officiated over the marriage of Herakleios and Eudokia, and Eudokia was crowned *Augusta*.⁴⁴³ The sources offer no explanation for this second coronation, but Herakleios appears to have been reasserting procedural continuity to the takeover of power, which had been so viscerally undermined by rebellion and the executions of Maurice and Phocas.

In the fourteenth century, Ioannes VI was contented with his proclamation as *basileus*, alongside Ioannes V in absentia (1341). However, after gaining a decisive advantage in the civil war,⁴⁴⁴ he was induced to arrange an investiture. In response to Stephen Dušan's coronation (1346),⁴⁴⁵ Lazaros of Jerusalem crowned Ioannes on 21 May, the Feast of SS. Constantine and Helena. Eirene, Ioannes' wife, was crowned immediately afterwards, but Matthew Kantakouzenos, their son, was not associated emperor at this point. Ioannes' memoirs stress that 'everything was performed according to custom as much as was

⁴⁴² This proclamation and coronation occurred at Herakleia. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 299 (trans. Mango and Scott 428).

⁴⁴³ John of Nikiu, trans. Charles 177-178; Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 36-37; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 299 (trans. Mango and Scott 428). *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. Dindorf 701, claims that the coronation took place in Hagia Sophia. The chapel of St. Stephen is the more probable location given that it held the relic of St. Stephen (the *protomartyr*, who held symbolic associations with emperors), was particularly favoured by members of the Herakleian dynasty, and was the standard location for the coronation of an empress in this period (Herakleios' new wife, Fabia/Eudokia, was crowned immediately after). For the argument in favour of the chapel of St. Stephen, see Kaegi 2003: 51. On the relics and ceremonial functions of the chapel of St. Stephen, and its favour under the Herakleian dynasty, see Kalavrezou 1997: esp. 59-67.

⁴⁴⁴ By June 1345, after Apokaukos' death.

⁴⁴⁵ Stephen Dušan had begun to call himself 'Emperor of the Serbs and Greeks' by the end of 1345 and was crowned on Easter Sunday (16 April 1346) by the Archbishop of the Serbian Church, whom he had promoted to patriarchal status. For an account of these events, see Nicol 1993: esp. 205, with references.

possible.⁴⁴⁶ Like Herakleios, after Ioannes had captured Constantinople⁴⁴⁷ he was crowned again (21 May 1347), exactly a year after the first; by the newly-appointed Patriarch Isidore.⁴⁴⁸ Ioannes again emphasised that ‘everything was performed in accordance with established custom,’ asserted that the second coronation prevented disputes about his authority on the basis of the first taking place outside Constantinople, and claimed that Lazaros’ unction would have sufficed for supporters.⁴⁴⁹ Gaul concludes that, in order to mitigate claims of illegitimacy regarding his usurpation, Kantakouzenos adopted a rhetorical strategy wherein his coronations were performed in accordance with the *ethos* of Palaiologan ceremonial.⁴⁵⁰ For both emperors ‘customary’ investitures performed in Constantinople would have remedied deficiencies arising from the original having taken place outside the city. In other words, both emperors asserted memory-history and the ‘continuity’ of imperial ceremony itself as a *de jure* legitimation. Kantakouzenos’ insistence on ‘custom’ would suggest that his efforts were not accepted by all observers.

The second category presents a radically different picture: Basileios I was made co-emperor on 26 May 866 (Pentecost), having already been adopted by Michael III. After Michael’s murder (September 867) Basileios appears to have arranged a second coronation at the Church of the Asomatoi.⁴⁵¹ This re-coronation is problematic, not least because of the source materials.⁴⁵² Christophilopoulou rejects its historicity since there was no need to mark

⁴⁴⁶ Kantakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen II, 564. See also, Gaul 2007: 83-84.

⁴⁴⁷ And a power-sharing treaty with Palaiologos establishing Kantakouzenos’ seniority. For a discussion of the terms of this settlement (which granted Ioannes VI seniority for a period of ten years), see Nicol 1968: 62-63.

⁴⁴⁸ Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen II, 787-788. Kantakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen III, 29: gives the date as 13 May which would be particularly unusual given its proximity to the anniversary of the first, and cannot be accurate.

⁴⁴⁹ ‘...he had been crowned before in Adrianople by Lazaros, the patriarch of Jerusalem, and that anointing with holy oil would have sufficed for those who were well intentioned. So as not to give any pretext to the unruly because he had not been crowned in Constantinople according to the ancient custom of emperors, also the second rite was performed.’ Kantakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen III, 29; translation adapted from Gaul 2007: 84.

⁴⁵⁰ Gaul 2007: esp. 70, 82-84.

⁴⁵¹ The Church of the ‘bodiless’ Michael and Gabriel.

⁴⁵² As has long been recognised, all of the accounts rely on materials produced at the court of Basileios and his descendants, but do not all provide an (identical) account: Ostrogorsky 1969: 223-232.

the transition from emperor to co-emperor,⁴⁵³ but Genesisios clearly affirms it.⁴⁵⁴ Symbolic investitures with a ‘crown of victory’ featured in Basileios’ triumphs of 873 and 879, indicating his desire to ritually renew his authority. Therefore his re-coronation has been deemed a legitimising effort necessitated by Michael’s murder. It integrated neatly with Basileios’ approval-seeking pattern and fulfilled his need for popular-legitimation after the assassination. According to McCormick, ‘the only explicit ecclesiastical sanction of his [Basileios’] authority had come in the original ceremony of his elevation to the purple by his benefactor and victim.’⁴⁵⁵ The second coronation, at a church associated with Basileios’ patron saints, changed this. Dagron recognised that the ideological foundation of Basileios’ authority was no longer reliant upon Michael, but God, through the ‘archangels’ Michael and Elijah who interceded to promote Basileios and expiate his wrongdoing.⁴⁵⁶ Michael VIII adopted a comparable strategy. He had been crowned with Ioannes IV at Nikaia soon after 1 January 1259,⁴⁵⁷ but received a second coronation before 25 December 1261, after the recapture of Constantinople.⁴⁵⁸ Ioannes IV had already been minimised, and was blinded soon after. The coronation represented a break with the original Laskarid source of Michael’s authority, and commemorated Constantinople’s recapture which was ascribed to the Mother

⁴⁵³ Christophilopoulou 1956: 92.

⁴⁵⁴ ‘Basileios... believed that, contrary to his previous elevation, God himself had now given him the right to rule... he inaugurated the church of the archangels... and Basileios received the imperial crown from the hands of the patriarch, thus establishing his own dynasty on the throne, which he had gained with the support of the archangels.’ Genesisios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 80 (trans. Kaldellis 100). Translation adapted. It should be noted that this second coronation is wholly omitted in the *Vita Basilii*. Although the two works are interrelated, the omission is hardly surprising: the *Vita* is more consistently laudatory of the Macedonian emperors, and as probable direct-product of Constantine VII’s court may have considered a second (irregular and unnecessary) coronation to draw excessive attention to the disreputable circumstances of Basileios’ accession. Omission would have preserved rhetorically Basileios’ succession as a function of his elevation by Michael and the Amorian dynasty.

⁴⁵⁵ McCormick 1986: 152-157.

⁴⁵⁶ Dagron 2003: 74, 198-199, ‘...it was to God alone that he owed the empire’. See also, Woodrow 2001: 145-146, on the symbolic importance of this coronation as a ‘fresh start’.

⁴⁵⁷ After his proclamation on 1 January 1259 at Nymphaion or Magnesia (Akropolites and Pachymeres disagree on the location of this proclamation). *Manuelis Holoboli orationes*, ed. Treu 92; Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 159-160 (trans. Macrides 346); Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 139-141; I, 145-147, noting that Ioannes IV did not receive a crown but rather a cap decorated with gemstones.

⁴⁵⁸ The date of Michael’s second coronation must have fallen between 15 August and 25 December 1261. Macrides 1980: 14-15, and n.6.

of God.⁴⁵⁹ Both emperors had removed predecessors, and both used a second coronation to redefine the ideological origins of their authority. Instead of claiming that these coronations fulfilled a *de jure* function, they appealed to divine authorisation to provide an independent, superior, source for their legitimacy.

In the final category: Manuel II's re-coronation was seemingly prompted by dynastic infighting. Schreiner argues that the first (1373) lacked unction by the patriarch, because Manuel's father had converted to Catholicism in 1369 and was excluded from Orthodox rites.⁴⁶⁰ Consequently, the second, on 11 February 1392, the feast of the Prodigal Son, corrected this deficiency.⁴⁶¹ It held no *de jure* connotations since Manuel was already recognised as emperor, but it celebrated his accession as *autokrator* after his father's death, presented an opportune moment to crown Helena, and must be viewed against Ioannes VII's counter-claims.⁴⁶² Ioannes' authority originated from his father, Andronikos IV, Ioannes V's heir-apparent, who had previously usurped authority as *autokrator*.⁴⁶³ The Palaiologan practice of primogeniture, crowning sons and grandsons as heirs in an emperor's lifetime (a form of 'succession planning' that may naturally have developed in response to dynastic infighting),⁴⁶⁴ implied Ioannes VII's accession. Therefore, Manuel's legitimacy was contestable. The coronation provided a vehicle for his response:⁴⁶⁵ the readings that accompanied it were not those of the Prodigal Son, but Lazarus Saturday and the parable of the Good Shepherd. Reinert views them as tantamount to 'instruments of imperial

⁴⁵⁹ Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 188-189 (trans. Macrides 387); Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 255-257. On his coins, Michael was now shown being crowned by the Mother of God: Iliescu 1965: 94-99.

⁴⁶⁰ Schreiner 1967: 741, followed by Reinert 2001: 293.

⁴⁶¹ On the date of the coronation, see *Russian Travellers*, ed. Majeska 418-419, esp. n.12 (*Coronation of Manuel II*).

⁴⁶² Barker 1969: 103-104.

⁴⁶³ On the source of Ioannes' claims, and his potential coronation as co-emperor, see Geanakoplos 1959: 46, and n.67; Charanis 1942-1943: 295-301.

⁴⁶⁴ On this distinctly Palaiologan successional practice, see Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov 429 (*Studies*).

⁴⁶⁵ Reinert 2001: 295-301.

propaganda' intended to style Manuel as the legitimate heir of Ioannes V and cast Ioannes VII as a pretender whose ambitions were patently illicit.⁴⁶⁶ The Lazarus reading established Manuel's succession in spite of Ioannes' own claims ('we have been given possession of an unshakable kingdom') and spoke of the virtues of forgiveness and marriage, whilst cautioning against greed.⁴⁶⁷ Manuel's moral superiority and divine favour were inferred. The Good Shepherd then introduced the concepts of legitimate rule and loyalty, reinforcing through allegory the image of Ioannes as a usurper (false shepherd) and Manuel as the emperor (true shepherd).⁴⁶⁸ Manuel's desire for Ioannes' loyalty was implicit. Importantly, the coronation was witnessed not just by the Byzantine elites, but the Genoese and Venetian factions who had supported Ioannes VII and Manuel II during their respective usurpations. The choice of politically suggestive readings recited by a clerical proxy, and the patriarch's performance of the coronation, revealed that the church would work with Manuel. The coronation established his superior authority by demonstrating his consolidation of power and outlining that the dynasty's future lay in the marriage to Helena. Heirs would grant additional stability and prove yet another problem for Ioannes to overcome.

All five of these emperors exploited re-coronation in an attempt to reinforce legitimacy in light of challenges to it. Consequently, it is noteworthy that no emperor whose reign was interrupted by a usurper who also received a coronation in Constantinople ever exploited the possibility of a second coronation. When Zeno ousted Basiliscus (476), he promoted the son of the *magister militum* Armatus to the rank of *caesar* (as agreed). The

⁴⁶⁶ Reinert 2001: 295-296.

⁴⁶⁷ Hebrews 12:28-13:8: 'We have been given possession of an unshakable kingdom. Let us therefore hold on to the grace that we have been given and use it to worship God in the way he finds acceptable, in reverence and fear. For our God is a consuming fire. Continue to love each other like brothers, and remember always to welcome strangers... Keep in mind those who are in prison... Marriage is to be honoured by all... Put greed out of your lives and be content with whatever you have... Remember your leaders, who preached the word of God to you, and as you reflect on the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith...'

⁴⁶⁸ John 10:1-8: '...he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber, but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep... A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers... "Truly, truly, I say to you. I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them.'

opportunity for acclamation was thus taken, but Zeno refused to risk validating Basiliscus' tenure through a re-coronation.⁴⁶⁹ Justinian II promoted as *kaisar* his principal supporter, Khan Tervel, and arranged the coronation of Empress Theodora and co-emperor Tiberios; exploiting acclamations and establishing the succession whilst culling opponents.⁴⁷⁰ But Justinian's coinage dated his exile as part of his reign, denying the usurpers altogether.⁴⁷¹ Five other emperors acted similarly.⁴⁷² We might explain this pattern of behaviour as a denial of the constitutive significance of coronation. The emperors in question never acknowledged the validity of an ('illegitimate') rival's coronation, and instead appealed to the acclamations of the people as a source for their own authority upon their return. The *consensus* of those acclamations was then turned against usurpers during rituals of degradation. Real power and the suggestion of popular consent at that moment were deemed more significant than any perceived 'constitutive' authorisation arising from a prior investiture.

Chapter Summary

The histories detail four transitional moments at which a usurper legitimised his claims to authority. During proclamation in the field or in Constantinople his supporters believed him to have been invested with *basileia*. His new status as *basileus* allowed him to arrogate rights and privileges restricted to a reigning emperor. He made promotions and established a rival

⁴⁶⁹ Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn 302-303 (trans. Jeffreys 210); Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 124-125 (trans. Mango and Scott 191-192).

⁴⁷⁰ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 375 (trans. Mango and Scott 523).

⁴⁷¹ See below, page 333.

⁴⁷² Constantine V subjected Artabasdos to public degradation including acclamations for himself: see below, page 296). Constantine VII's restoration prompted a purge and the coronation of his son Romanos II at Easter: Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 237 (trans. Wortley 228), states that Romanos was crowned in the year of the indiction but fails to specify *which* year of the indiction he means: 945 or 946 are possibilities, although 945 would be the obvious choice in order to solidify his position through the creation of an imperial college and commemorate his restoration via acclamations for his designated successor. Isaakios II's restoration included the coronation of Alexios IV, who subsequently assumed power as *de facto* senior emperor: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 550 (trans. Magoulias 301). And Ioannes V promoted Manuel II to precedence in place of Andronikos IV in 1373, following Andronikos' attempted usurpation: see above, page 89; and below, page 265.

administration outside of Constantinople. The proclamation also necessitated his adoption of attire that mimicked and conveyed the identity and charismatic authority of an emperor.⁴⁷³ This visual transformation allowed him to be distinguished from those who had chosen him to rule, and fulfilled another of the essential characteristics of an emperor. No ‘unique’ items were required to affect this investiture. The usurper’s attire merely had to satisfy the expectations of his supporters, who already believed him qualified to fulfil the imperial duties. The possession of Constantinople, especially the palaces and Hagia Sophia, sites of memory-history, government, and ceremonial, was another transformative moment. It denoted that real power now lay with the possessor, closely associated him with the traditions and practices of imperial authority, and represented a significant obstacle for rivals to overcome. Finally, the coronation acted as a confirmation of authority that allowed the representative groups of state to symbolically ratify the accession of a new *autokrator*, and permit the sacral charisma of the imperial office to be ritually conferred.

In all cases, the ritual formats allowed adaptations, and emperors exploited this to communicate ideology and political realities, to enhance their authority or redefine its source. However, since legitimacy included ‘factors beyond constituted legal mechanisms... [and rulership was] an integral exercise which needed more than only one distinct method of legitimation’,⁴⁷⁴ investiture rites could never instil permanent legitimacy. Ongoing compliance with idealised moral-behavioural norms was essential.

⁴⁷³ On the charismatic qualities of ritual attire, see Glassman 1975: esp. 619.

⁴⁷⁴ Schwedler 2010: 362.

IV. RELUCTANT EMPERORS

In an extensive article on the *rex renitens*, ‘the king who, reluctantly and under protest, is forced to take up the sceptre and rule the realm’, Björn Weiler examined this *topos* prevalent in medieval European historiography. Despite his confession that ‘the figure of the reluctant ruler was probably even more common in Byzantium [than elsewhere]’, the broad spectrum of Weiler’s study meant that Byzantium was relegated to just a single paragraph.⁴⁷⁵ The present chapter addresses this *topos* in Byzantine historiography. It will show that the theme of reluctance was not simply literary dressing but, rather, a powerful instrument in a historian’s legitimising/delegitimising arsenal. An emperor who conformed to the *topos* could simultaneously be revealed as a morally pure and ideal ruler at the moment of his accession. The permutations it allowed will be surveyed, and examples of its manipulation to buttress or undermine an emperor’s legitimacy will be examined. We will see that its prevalence in medieval Europe and Byzantium was a result of ideologies of rulership that stemmed from the Republic and Principate, and that these easily coexisted with Christianised notions of moral rulership and divine favour. Finally, we will question whether the usage persisted as a purely politico-literary innovation or as a performative ritual attendant with the proclamation of new emperors.

Permutations and functions

Between the proclamation of Constantine I (306) and the death of Constantine XI (1453), twenty-two emperors and one empress are reported to have only reluctantly accepted

⁴⁷⁵ Weiler 2000: 7, citing the examples of Michael VII Doukas and Alexios I Komnenos only.

basileia.⁴⁷⁶ Seventeen additional instances of reluctance can be identified regarding the proclamation of would-be usurper-emperors and alternate candidates who never succeeded in securing the throne. Other occurrences surely exist. Our provisional examples are from the fourth to fourteenth centuries and their distribution is undoubtedly influenced by the increased narrative coverage of certain periods and the choices of authors in writing. The fact that many of these cases are attested in only one or two of multiple extant narratives on the same event suggests that overt politico-literary concerns were also involved. In every case the circumstances of the associated succession were problematic and the claim to *basileia* was either contested or contestable.

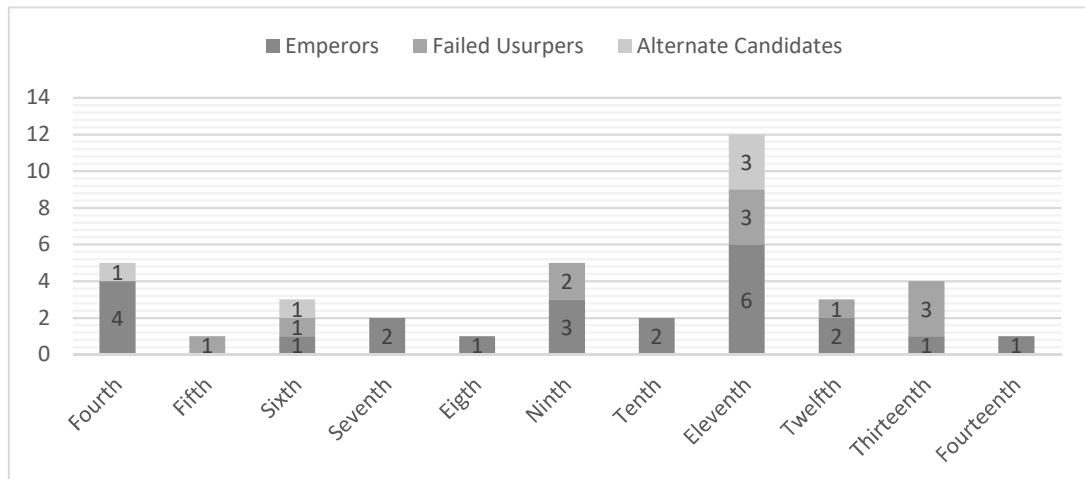


Figure 1: Reported instances of reluctance among emperors, failed usurpers, and alternate candidates, shown by century.

In its most essential form, the *topos* of reluctance acted as an *apologia*, comprising a single word or phrase that indicated that an imperial candidate was unwilling to claim power. Thus we read in Theophanes' *Chronographia* that in 588, in the course of a military pay dispute that escalated into a rebellion,⁴⁷⁷ '[the army] proclaimed Germanus as general against

⁴⁷⁶ This figure represents approximately one-fifth of the total number of emperors to reign during this period. For a provisional case list of reluctant emperors in the historical narratives of the period 306-1453, see Table 2. Many of these cases are referenced in the following discussion.

⁴⁷⁷ The revolt was sparked by the removal of Philippicus as *Magister Militum per Orientem*. In retribution, he ordered that a missive from the emperor Maurice, calling for pay and ration cuts of one quarter, be read to the

his will, raising him aloft on a shield.⁴⁷⁸ Admittedly the formulation communicates the essential idea of reluctance, but its brevity also makes it possible for an inattentive reader to miss. More typically, the *topos* is articulated at greater length and with additional emphasis on the reluctance being displayed. Hence Theophylaktos, writing about the same event, claims that after deposing their general Priscus,

...the soldiers assembled and sanctioned the election of a general. It was for this reason that they summoned Germanus, introduced him into the council, and decided to entrust to him the reins of generalship. But when he rejected the camp's demand, they insisted that he comply with the election, and added threats that the punishment for disobedience would even be death... the soldiers' resolve prevailed, and Germanus was proclaimed...⁴⁷⁹

The enhancement makes reluctance a feature of Germanus' promotion rather than a mere incidental detail. Despite their differing emphasis, both narratives later agreed that Germanus was the only person capable of restraining the troops from looting, putting a positive gloss on his usurpation.⁴⁸⁰ The proclamation of the *kaisar* Ioannes Doukas (1074) by the rebel Roussel de Balliol, is similarly described.⁴⁸¹ Bryennios' *Historia*, a work favourable to Doukas because of his later involvement with the Komnenoi rebellion (Bryennios' in-laws

troops. His replacement, Priscus, also reportedly failed to show the troops the necessary respect by dismounting his horse to greet them. The soldiery overthrew Priscus' command on 20 April 588 (Easter). For chronology and details, see Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou 1970: 186-189; Kaegi 1981: 68-69; Higgins 1939: 31-33. On the sources, see Krivouchine 1993. There is some dispute as to the precise role to which Germanus was being promoted (general or emperor). Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Bidez and Parmentier 224-225 (trans. Whitby 294-296), confirms the supposed arrogance of Priscus' arrival, his overthrow, the forced election and elevation of Germanus, but adds that Germanus was proclaimed 'emperor'. Germanus' elevation on a shield, and association with the reluctance *topos*, suggest that Evagrius' account is accurate and he really was being proclaimed emperor, not merely a general.

⁴⁷⁸ ὁ δὲ στρατὸς... τὸν τε Γερμανὸν ἄκουντα στρατηγὸν ἀνηγόρευσαν ἐπὶ ἀσπίδος ὑψώσαντες... Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 260 (trans. Mango and Scott 382).

⁴⁷⁹ ...τὰ δὲ στρατεύματα συναθροίζεται, καὶ στρατηγὸν χειροτονεῖν ἐδοκίμαζε. διὰ τοι τοῦτο μετάκλητον τὸν Γερμανὸν ποιησάμενοι, καὶ εἰσαγώγιμον εἰς τὸ βουλευτήριον ἐνεγκάμενοι, ἠξίουσαν ἐγχειρίζειν αὐτῷ τὰς στρατηγίδας ἡνίας. τοῦ δ' ἀποπεμπομένου τὴν τοῦ στρατοπέδου ἀξίωσιν, τῶν δὲ καταναγκαζόντων αὐτὸν ἔσεσθαι περὶ τὴν χειροτονίαν πειθήνιον, καὶ προσαπειλούντων καὶ θάνατον τῆς παρακοῆς εἶναι τὸ διαζήμιον, νικῶσι τὰ τῶν στρατευμάτων βουλευματα, καὶ στρατηγὸς Γερμανὸς ἀνακηρύττεται... Theophylaktos Simokattes, *Historiae*, ed. de Boor 115-116 (trans. Whitby 74).

⁴⁸⁰ '...he had secured on oath matters of future expediency, that the Romans would refrain from pillaging the subjects, and that disorder would be banished...' Theophylaktos Simokattes, *Historiae*, ed. de Boor (trans. Whitby 74). '...they would have gone as far as looting had not Germanos prevented them by his many admonitions and exhortations.' Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 260 (trans. Mango and Scott 382).

⁴⁸¹ On Balliol's rebellion, see Cheynet 1990: 78-79, Angold 1997: 116-118; Angold 2008b: 609-610.

and sponsors),⁴⁸² records the particular circumstances of the unexpected promotion.⁴⁸³ We read that Roussel contrived the elevation in order to win the support of the local cities and ‘influential people’ of the capital.⁴⁸⁴ Doukas, on account of his honesty and the high esteem in which he was held by all, previously could have laid claim to the throne had he so wished, but he had not. Instead, ‘the illustrious *kaisar* was troubled and irritated’ and sought to avoid the business.⁴⁸⁵ Only later did he become an active participant in claiming *basileia*. In a masterfully contrived explication, Bryennios presented Doukas’ hesitant promotion by Roussel as beneficial to the empire: it allowed Nikephoritzes time to secure Turkish reinforcements for Alexios Komnenos to defeat and capture Roussel.⁴⁸⁶ Doukas’ prevarications thus allowed Bryennios to revive his image by lessening the stigma of a failed rebellion that had been supported by a foreigner, and which had cost Roman lives. Doukas, although not a hero, was not wholly contemptible either.

In both cases initial reluctance was coupled with a morally positive outcome related to the individual’s promotion. The conceit serves to divert attention from the illegality of rebellion since the advancements eventually prevented something worse from taking place. This amounts to a speculative and tendentious ethical defence of seditious activities. The reputation of the individual concerned was being partially rehabilitated, and we might therefore expect that a rebel who was favoured by an author is presented as reluctant to

⁴⁸² Neville 2008, points to internal narrative conceits, register changes, and plot points, to suggest that Bryennios’ narrative may have drawn from an apologetic work linked with (or favourable to) Doukas.

⁴⁸³ Doukas’ forces were defeated by Roussel in battle at the river crossing near Dorylaeum. The circumstances of the battle are described (hostilely) by Michael Attaleiates, who inserts praise for the future emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates for his sound advice to the *kaisar* which the latter ignored to his cost. Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 185-187 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 336-339). See also, Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 709-712.

⁴⁸⁴ Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 177, 179.

⁴⁸⁵ Ο δὲ κλεινός καῖσαρ πρότον μὲν ἐδυσφόρει καὶ ἡσχαλλε καὶ πάντα καλῶν, ὃ φασιν, ἐκ ἵνει ὥστε διαδρᾶναι το δρᾶμα. Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 177.

⁴⁸⁶ For the presentation of Doukas’ reluctance as beneficial to the empire and Nikephoritzes’ efforts see Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 179, ἼΑλλὰ κινῆσαν τοῦτο τὸν ἐκτομίαν Νικηφόρον σπουδαιότερον τῶν πραγμάτων ἀντιλαβέσθαι τὰς ἐκείνων βουλὰς ἀπράκτους ἀποδέδειχεν... ‘But his action, because it allowed the Eunuch Nikephoritzes to deal more actively with the situation, undid their plan...’ For the capture of Doukas and Roussel, see Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 189-193 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 344-351); Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 179-181; Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 709-712.

engage in rebellion.

The implied association of the *topos* with the communication of moral and ethical concerns or misgivings is stated more explicitly in other episodes. In eight cases, the importance of respecting oaths is reported as an overt consideration in the initial refusal of office.⁴⁸⁷ Typifying these, Michael I initially declined his proclamation because of the oath that he had sworn to Staurakios, and had to be convinced that his accession would be beneficial to the empire.⁴⁸⁸ Leon V was entreated by the *strategoï* to help the ‘common cause’ and ‘protect the Christian state,’ but declined for some time on account of military concerns and his desire to ‘preserve his correct stance, untouched by treachery, toward the emperors.’⁴⁸⁹ And Michael VIII, whose reluctance was imperceptible for much of Pachymeres’ account of his rise,⁴⁹⁰ was far more reticent to accept in Akropolites’ pro-Michael narrative.⁴⁹¹ He refused to become guardian to Ioannes IV, or assume the regency, because of the oaths he had sworn. The clergy provided him with their ‘unwritten consent’ and then produced a signed document excusing any wrongdoing implied by these former promises. He was thus raised ‘...willingly or unwillingly, to imperial eminence, constrained greatly by the prominent men and those for whom public affairs were a concern.’⁴⁹² We

⁴⁸⁷ The cases are Julian, Herakleios, Nikephoros I, Bardanes Tourkos, Michael I, Leon V, Andronikos I, and Michael VIII. For citations and details, see Table 2.

⁴⁸⁸ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 492 (trans. Mango and Scott 674). See also, Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 5 (trans. Wortley 4), who agrees that Michael declined the offer, but does not say that this was because of his oaths to the emperor. Skylitzes also has Leon V force Michael to accept the elevation.

⁴⁸⁹ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 502 (trans. Mango and Scott 685).

⁴⁹⁰ As each honour was granted to Michael VIII he was said to remain silent, neither affirming nor declining these decisions made on his behalf. The image is more of an individual silently scheming and seeing his ambitions come to fruition than that of the reluctant emperor. Only after his ascent to imperial power does Michael actively demonstrate humility: by offering to resign if either he or his son should prove themselves unworthy of ruling. An element of doubt had evidently crept into the emperor’s mind at this point, or, more likely, Pachymeres was signposting Michael’s impending misdeeds and poor governance, exploiting this semblance of humble reluctance to serve *Kaiserkritik*. Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 96, 104, 130.

⁴⁹¹ Akropolites’ account is also in agreement with Michael VIII’s general statements in his *Typikon* for the Monastery of St. Demetrios. Here, after excessive use of *paralipsis* and *proslepsis* in detailing his outstanding qualities and character, Michael eloquently clarifies the proximate causes of his accession: “I did not persuade anyone, but was myself persuaded. I did not bring force to bear on anyone, but was myself forced.” *Imperatoris Michaeli Palaeologi de vita sua*, ed. Grégoire 453-455. See also below, page 109, footnote 541.

⁴⁹² Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 158-159, 161 (trans. Macrides 344, 346, 351).

deduce that, ideally, the depiction of a candidate's hesitation to break fidelity prevented accusations of disloyalty to the previous regime from being levelled against him. Instead, he had been 'persuaded' to accept, and 'correct' procedures and authorisations were adduced in order to legitimise his promotion. Reluctance allowed a candidate's respect for lawful authority to be demonstrated. Readers were to understand that these persons were not acting on personal desires or with undue haste.

In the cases of Michael I, Leon V, and Michael VIII it undoubtedly helped that image that those particular accessions were successful and relatively uncontested,⁴⁹³ but even when a usurper failed to become *autokrator* or the succession was violently contested, these moral and ethical concerns recurred. After Julian's palace was surrounded by his troops (February 360), and the new emperor reluctantly acclaimed and invested, Ammianus records a speech to the army, and two letters sent to Constantius (who refused to recognise Julian's new status). In the speech, Julian showed deference to the troops by thanking them for their support and assuring them that he would live up to their expectations. However, there was no doubt about his original reluctance or the awkwardness of his unauthorised elevation: 'Now that your deliberate choice has raised your *Caesar* to the height of supreme power, the difficulty of the situation...[demands] right and prudent steps...[be taken].'⁴⁹⁴ In the first letter, which was read publicly, Julian's past successes and loyalty to Constantius were emphasised, but he also recounted how he had sought to conceal himself from the troops when he heard their acclamations, and then agreed to promotion so that he might 'assuage the violence of their proceedings.' He would remain loyal to Constantius, he claimed, as

⁴⁹³ Michael I succeeded Staurakios who was mortally ill, and deemed completely incapable of exercising authority. The promotion of Michael was approved by military and palace officials, and by the senate. Leon V was promoted by the military and marched on Constantinople. However, Michael I abdicated in favour of Leon and bloodshed was avoided (Michael's children were subsequently mutilated to prevent opposition). Michael VIII, after removing Georgios Mouzalon was appointed emperor at the behest of the *consensus* groups, dissenters only really coalesced into a viable opposition movement after he had blinded Ioannes IV in 1261.

⁴⁹⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum*, 20.5. Translation adapted. See also, Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 50-52.

long as Constantius acted in the best interests of the state and the army. Julian's troops were thus to remain in Gaul and not be sent to the east as Constantius intended, the rebellion's *casus belli*.⁴⁹⁵ Julian's reasoning is informative: he was clear that he had not sought promotion due to personal ambition, but had accepted it for the public good, to restrain the army and intercede on their behalf. The emphasis on continued loyalty revealed Julian's desire to avoid charges of overt treachery.⁴⁹⁶ His advice to Constantius established his continued fidelity but also invoked a contrast between his concern for the common good and Constantius' apparent lack thereof. The reader infers that if Constantius had been a competent administrator these things would not have been said, and there would have been no revolt.

The same reasoning was employed by Kekaumenos to detail the events of the Larissaeon revolt (1066/7) and the actions of his 'relative by marriage' Nikoulitzas Delphinas.⁴⁹⁷ We read that Delphinas approached Constantine X to warn him that a revolt was brewing in Hellas but was repeatedly dismissed and instructed to remain silent.⁴⁹⁸ Delphinas returned to Larissa and the predicted rebellion soon began.⁴⁹⁹ He was approached in secret by its leaders and feigned his agreement with the cause.⁵⁰⁰ When the conspiracy became public, he was seized, threatened with violence, and reluctantly made its head.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum*, 20.8.2-17.

⁴⁹⁶ Zonaras' source for the period claims that Julian's private letter to Constantius conveyed his willingness to content himself with the title of *Caesar* (which he had already possessed) if Constantius would pardon him and take no actions in revenge. Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 51-52.

⁴⁹⁷ The *protospatharios*. Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij p.66-73. On Delphinas' life and career, see PBW (consulted 3/6/15) *Nikoulitzas 101*.

⁴⁹⁸ He reportedly spent thirty days in Constantinople trying to convince the emperor and his advisors that a rebellion was imminent. Georgios the *protosynkellos* is also specifically named as rebuffing Delphinas' warnings. Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij p.66.

⁴⁹⁹ Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij p.67-70. The rebellion was a result of tax-increases imposed upon Hellas. At its conclusion, Constantine X Doukas receded these increases. Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij p.70. See also, Cheynet 1990: 391-392.

⁵⁰⁰ Kekaumenos names those responsible as Ioannes Gremianetes (the former *protospatharios*) and Gregoras Bambakes. Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij p.68.

⁵⁰¹ Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij p.69-70 (trans. Roueché): '[the Larisseans] seized him, and said... "we choose you, in the present rebellion, to give us orders..." he fended them off once, and twice, and several times with the excuse that he was devoted to peace... some of his friends came, and, swearing to him by God, said "If you do not join the plot, you die..." even though not wanting to, he became their head...?'

After capturing Servia, Delphinus was proclaimed emperor although ‘[he did not] undertake the rebellion willingly, in order to struggle for his own acclamation, but because of the people, so they should not... destroy him like a criminal.’⁵⁰² The narrative evidently lessened the stigma of Delphinus’ failed revolt by presenting him as a victim of circumstance and a devotee of peace who had been repeatedly forced to act against his own will. (This may even have been true.)⁵⁰³ Delphinus’ reluctance was contrasted with Constantine’s lack of care for the empire’s wellbeing. Consequently, Delphinus emerges as an ethical but pragmatic and unfortunate figure. He was to be pitied and forgiven for rebelling because blame lay with Constantine’s maladministration, which had forced him into colluding.

These variations demonstrate how reluctance could serve the dual purpose of reinforcing the ethical integrity of the usurper when this was denied by a rival (Julian, and Delphinus, were forced into breaking fidelity by others), and of undermining the reigning emperor’s suitability to rule. In this way the *topos* was also associated with the justificatory apparatus of usurpation: it did not simply ‘rehabilitate’ a usurper but could suggest a rationale for his actions as well.

It should now be clear that reluctance was frequently accompanied by threats and coercive gestures. On eleven occasions promotions were only realised via the threat of grievous harm to candidates.⁵⁰⁴ As we saw, Germanus’ elevation was said to have occurred after swords were drawn to force his acceptance,⁵⁰⁵ and Michael II reportedly threatened to

⁵⁰² Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij p.70-71.

⁵⁰³ The author’s repeated (almost paranoid) commentary on the dangers of being swept up in populist outbursts or condemned for speaking imprudently would certainly reinforce such a reading. Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij p.3-4, 41, 44, 57, 64, 66-72, 74, 94. Cheynet 1990: 168, suggests that Kekaumenos is not engaging in simple apologetic but Delphinus really was caught up in a rebellion, against his will.

⁵⁰⁴ We may count Julian, Germanus, Theodosios III, Leon V, Theophobos, Nikephoros II, Romanos III, Theodora, Nikoulitzas Delphinus, Nikephoros Bryennios the elder, and Andronikos I. For citations and details, see Table 2.

⁵⁰⁵ Theophylaktos Simokattes, *Historiae*, ed. de Boor 115-116 (trans. Whitby 74); Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 260 (trans. Mango and Scott 382); Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Bidez and Parmentier 224-225 (trans. Whitby 294-296).

kill Leon V if he refused the proclamation.⁵⁰⁶ But these were not the only coercive measures. Eight candidates unambiguously sought to avoid proclamation by attempting to escape and hide from supporters, only two succeeded.⁵⁰⁷ These escapes could take place in the field, Constantinople, or even in the palace,⁵⁰⁸ and the descriptions undoubtedly sought to communicate earnestness (although a comedic element is suggested in one example).⁵⁰⁹ Another standard trope of reluctance, the refusal of insignia, could acquire a bullying overtone. During his revolt, Nikephoros Bryennios (the Elder) was presented by his grandson⁵¹⁰ as disinclined to engage in civil war.⁵¹¹ When selected to lead the rebellion, Bryennios was reluctant to accept any insignia. His brother, Ioannes, therefore invited the troops to forcibly invest him with the imperial purple, and the red boots.⁵¹² In seven other cases of forced investiture some form of restraint or surprise was employed.⁵¹³ On occasion, these installations are seemingly to be read as quasi-comedic/farcical events. Anna Komnene emphasises her father's unwilling feet, flailing about so as to avoid the red sandals he was being offered. Isaakios Komnenos, Alexios' brother,⁵¹⁴ had to remind him of certain signs

⁵⁰⁶ *Genesisios*, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 4 (trans. Kaldellis 6). See also *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 16-17; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 28-29, confirming Leon's reluctance and Michael's threat, but adding that Leon may simply have been acting reluctant in order to later provide himself with an excuse for his actions.

⁵⁰⁷ The eight cases are Constantine I, Julian, Areobindus, Theodosios III, Theodora, Isaakios I, Ioannes Komnenos, and Andronikos I. For citations and details, see Table 2. The successful escapees were Areobindus and Ioannes Komnenos, both cases are discussed in the main text, below.

⁵⁰⁸ Those in the field: Constantine I, Theodosios III, and (rhetorically) Isaakios I. Those in Constantinople: Areobindus and Theodora. Those in the palace: Julian, Ioannes Komnenos, and Andronikos I.

⁵⁰⁹ Uniquely, Theodosios III went so far as to flee to a mountain in effort to avoid (unsuccessfully) his proclamation by the troops of the Opsikion. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 385 (trans. Mango and Scott 536); Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos* ed. Mango 118-119.

⁵¹⁰ Reinsch 1990 has convincingly resolved the question of the relationship between the two Bryenniioi using information from Georgios Tornikes' *Funeral Oration* for Anna Komnene. See also, Carile 1964.

⁵¹¹ He reportedly sued for peace on several occasions. Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 231.

⁵¹² 'Ἐπιφερόμενος οὖν μεθ' ἑαυτοῦ τὰ τῆς βασιλείας παράσημα, ἠνάγκαζε τὸν ἀδελφὸν ταῦτα περιβαλέσθαι· ἐκείνου δὲ ἀναδυομένου καὶ σκέψασθαι περὶ τούτου ζητοῦντος, αὐτὸς ἀνέπειθε πάντα, εἰ οἶόν τε, τὸν ἄνδρα βιάσασθαι. Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 227-231.

⁵¹³ These cases are Julian, Nikephoros I (implicit in his comments to Eirene and his choice of non-imperial – 'black' – footwear after his proclamation and coronation), Theodora, Constantine X, Alexios I, Andronikos I, and Constantine Laskaris. For citations and details, see Table 2.

⁵¹⁴ Anna relates that Isaakios was also a competitor for the throne; supposedly he had been suggested to the army by Alexios as a potential candidate to lead the rebellion. Anna comments that Alexios knew when he proposed Isaakios as an alternative that the soldiers would not accept this. Zonaras notes that Alexios was chosen because the soldiery preferred him and because they had been won over by his superior backers (the

foretelling Alexios' reign and then adopt 'a more energetic approach' by restraining him and forcing the sandals upon him.⁵¹⁵ The scene extracts a smirk from the modern reader, but it need not be read as an authorial comment on the facetious nature of those rejecting and accepting power.⁵¹⁶ Nor does the inherent farce necessarily undermine the message of reluctance that is being promoted. Instead, expected symbolic gestures are deliberately exaggerated in order to demonstrate erudition through the hyperbolic use of the *topos*, and simply to entertain the reader. On an initial reading, these particular expressions of forced investiture may partially ameliorate wrongdoing or invite pity for figures who were apparently being made to act against their will, but their particular legitimising role is less obvious. A solution is suggested by the fact that the candidate was consequently presented as the 'popular choice'. His support was so strong and earnest that he was literally forced to act as the representative of the 'popular will'. If he succeeded in gaining the throne his rebellion could then be presented as having been instigated by popular *consensus*, and thus 'legitimate'. If he failed he would remain an unfortunate figurehead who had been forced into wrongdoing.

The account of an outbreak of Constantinopolitan unrest in 512 appears to confirm this interpretation and features both eventualities. Malalas details how the former consul,

Doukai, led by the *kaisar* Ioannes Doukas). Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 74 (trans. Frankopan 67-68); Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 726-727.

⁵¹⁵ ἀναστὰς δὲ ὁ Ἰσαάκιος καὶ λαβὼν τὸ φοινικοβαφὲς πέδιλον ὑποδιδύσκει τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἐπειρᾶτο. ὡς δὲ ἐκεῖνος πολλακίς ἀνένευεν, «ἔα», φησί, «διὰ σοῦ ὁ Θεὸς τὸ γένος ἡμῶν ἀνακαλέσασθαι βούλεται»... ἐπεὶ δὲ τὰ τοῦ γέροντος προμαντεύματα καὶ ἄπερ εἶπεν ἐκεῖνος ἐν λόγοις ὁ Ἰσαάκιος ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐθεάσατο, ἐνίστατό τε ἀνδρικώτερον αὐτὸν βιαζόμενος καὶ τὸ ἐρυθροβαφὲς ἐνδιδύσκει ὑπόδημα, καὶ μᾶλλον ὄραν τοῦ ὀπλιτικοῦ παντὸς τὴν διάπυρον ἐπιθυμίαν πρὸς τὸν Ἀλέξιον. 'Isaakios stood up and taking the purple-dyed sandal tried to put it on his brother's foot. He objected repeatedly. "Come", said Isaakios, "it is through you that God wishes to recall our family to power."... Now when Isaakios saw the prophecy being fulfilled, with words being translated into action, he followed a more energetic approach and forcibly put on the purple sandal, especially when he recognised the burning zeal of the whole army for Alexios.' Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 74-75 (trans. Frankopan 67-68). It should also be noted that Alexios was unsure that the prophecy predicting his reign was actually valid: he was disinclined to believe it, and reluctant to disclose its content to his brother when directly asked about it. By implication, his reluctance extended to the very thought of his potential accession, enhancing his overall image as a reluctant emperor in Anna's narrative.

⁵¹⁶ However, Eustathios of Thessalonike's farce-filled account of Andronikos I's reluctant investiture is one example where this is certainly so. See below, page 117.

Areobindus,⁵¹⁷ was called upon by the rioting populace to assume *basileia* and replace Anastasius.⁵¹⁸ But the rioters' were frustrated: '[they] went to the home of Juliana, a patrician of most illustrious rank, and called for her husband, Areobindus, to be emperor of the Roman state. [But] Areobindus fled and hid in the Perama.'⁵¹⁹ He was never invested and he disappears from the historical record soon after.⁵²⁰ Yet Areobindus' purported escape essentially inverted Anastasius' response to the crisis. Rather than running, the emperor was able to successfully negate his own overthrow by appearing before the people at the Hippodrome. In a sharp exhibition of political acumen, Anastasius turned this appearance into a ceremonial display of humility and deference to the public will. Having removed the diadem from atop his head, a *mutatio vestis* was enacted as he ascended the *kathisma*. This visual performance of divestiture accompanied a 'sacred pronouncement' that revealed his intent to abdicate the throne,⁵²¹ and an entreaty to the populace calling for them to discontinue their lawless activities. According to Malalas,⁵²² '[when they had witnessed this

⁵¹⁷ Areobindus was a well-connected candidate thanks to his successful military career (*Magister Militum per Orientem*) and his marriage to Anicia Juliana, the daughter of western emperor Olybrius and Placidia (daughter of Valentinian III). Juliana was undoubtedly one of the richest of Constantinople's aristocratic elite, and a prolific commissioner of building works and retained a positive image in later historiography. On Areobindus' life and career, see Martindale and Morris 1980: 143-144; Kazhdan 1991: 162. On Juliana, see Martindale and Morris 1980: 635-636; Capizzi 1968: 191-226; Al. Cameron 1978: 259-276.

⁵¹⁸ We are informed that the riots were the result of Patriarch Timothy, and the Emperor Anastasius, seeking to modify the phrasing of the *Trisagion* to mirror eastern, Monophysite, tradition. On 6 November the residence of the ex-prefect Marinus was looted and burned, as he (we are told) was believed to be the one responsible for suggesting the change. Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn 333-334 (trans. Jeffreys 228); Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 159 (trans. Mango and Scott 240).

⁵¹⁹ ...καὶ ἐλθόντες εἰς τὰ Ἰουλιανῆς τῆς ἐπιφανεστάτης πατρικίας ἔκραζον διὰ τὸν ἄνδρα αὐτῆς· Ἄρεόβινδον βασιλέα τῆ Ῥωμανία· καὶ ἔφυγεν Ἄρεόβινδος ἐν Περάματι κρυβείς. Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn 333-334 (trans. Jeffreys 228). Author's translation. These essential details are confirmed by John of Nikiu, *Chronicle*, trans. Charles 129. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 159 (trans. Mango and Scott 240): agrees that rioting took place and that the crowd called for another emperor to be selected, but states that Vitalian, the *Magister Militum*, was the one acclaimed. Possibly Theophanes confuses which *magister* was actually involved, but a more likely suggestion is that he assigns Areobindus' proposed acclamation to Vitalian in order to reinforce the latter's status as the 'Guardian of Orthodoxy' (for this argument, see Mango and Scott p.242, n.17).

⁵²⁰ Martindale and Morris 1980: 143-144.

⁵²¹ This reading of the pronouncement (as a message that Anastasius suggested he would abdicate) makes sense of the crowd's later calls for him to once again put on his crown – to return/remain as emperor.

⁵²² Malalas' account reads: καὶ ἀνελθὼν ὁ αὐτὸς βασιλεὺς Ἀναστάσιος ἐν τῷ ἵπποδρομίῳ εἰς τὸ κάθισμα δίχα διαδήματος· καὶ τοῦτο γνοὺς ὁ δῆμος εἰσήλθεν ἐν τῷ ἵππικῷ· καὶ διὰ θείας προσφωνήσεως αὐτοῦ μετεχειρίσατο τὰ πλήθη τῆς πόλεως, παραγγείλας αὐτοῖς μὴ ὡς ἔτυχεν φονεῦν ἢ ἐπέρχεσθαι τισιν· καὶ ἡσύχασεν ἅπαν τὸ πλήθος, αἰτήσαντες αὐτὸν φορέσαι τὸ στέμμα. 'And the emperor Anastasius went up to the Kathisma in the Hippodrome, without a diadem. When the people learned of this, they went into the

scene] the entire crowd became quiet and begged him to put on his crown.’ With *taxis* restored, arrests were made. Throughout the incident, Anastasios’ actions, although undoubtedly contrived, showed him as a humble individual who was reluctant to continue his reign when the people no longer considered him worthy and had found a more-preferable candidate (Areobindus). In appearing to abdicate, he not only engendered sentimental support, but exhibited his concern for the well-being of the people/state and thus renewed his worthiness in their eyes. The people acknowledged this by calling for his return. The description of Areobindus’ flight may be read in two ways. Either, he was unconcerned with the public good and escaped his responsibility to his supporters, or, more likely, he recognised Anastasios as the better candidate and fled the *ataxia* of the mob: a reading that preserves him from blame in accordance with the initial precept of the *topos*, and still presented him as an excellent figure.⁵²³ Reluctance, morality, and popularity emerge as interrelated concepts, with each suggesting legitimacy.

The connection of the *topos* with the ideas of legitimate and popular authority may also help us to understand a curiosity of the Constantinopolitan inaugurations of Phocas and Herakleios. During his proclamation, Phocas, reportedly offered *basileia* to the *patrikios* Germanus, the father-in-law of the deposed Maurice’s son and heir, Theodosius. Germanus, who had already been offered the throne by the army if he were to replace Maurice, and before Phocas’ arrival in Constantinople had unsuccessfully attempted to gain power with an appeal to the ‘Greens’, publicly rejected the offer and the assembled *demes* acclaimed Phocas as emperor.⁵²⁴ This situation was then repeated under Herakleios who, Nikephoros

Hippodrome: and through his sacred pronouncement, he gained control of the populace of the city, exhorting them to cease murdering and attacking people wantonly. The entire crowd became quiet and begged him to put on his crown.’ Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn 333-334 (trans. Jeffreys 228). Author’s translation.

⁵²³ Given Areobindus’ marriage to the popular figure of Anicia Juliana, perhaps the preservation of his reputation is not surprising. See above, footnote 517.

⁵²⁴ Theophylaktos’ clearly hostile account reads: ...ἔδοξεν ὁ μιζοβάρβαρος τύραννος κατειρωνεύόμενος Γερμανὸν ἀναγορεύειν ἐθέλειν. τῶν τοίνυν δήμων κατασημούντων τὸν τύραννον, καὶ πάντων τῆς μεταβολῆς γλιχομένων, ἀναγορεύεται τὸ κακόν, καὶ κύριος τῶν σκήπτρων ὁ τύραννος προχειρίζεται, καὶ κρατεῖ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας ἢ συμφορά, καὶ λαμβάνει τὴν ἑναρξιν τὰ μεγάλα καὶ ἐπίσημα τῶν Ῥωμαίων ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν

reports, offered power to Phocas' son-in-law, Priskos, who refused the offer. The accounts give no explanation for Phocas' offer to Maurice. Herakleios, on the other hand, claimed that he 'had come not to take the empire but to punish Phocas for his unlawful [murder] of Maurice and his children...'⁵²⁵ This motive might make sense of Herakleios' revolt coinage, on which he is called consul and only takes the title *Augustus* after his coronation by Patriarch Sergios,⁵²⁶ but Herakleios had already been crowned emperor at Abydos.⁵²⁷ Although that coronation was a poor substitute for one in Constantinople, it shows that Herakleios did intend to claim the imperial title, and reveals that his offer was just as contrived as Phocas'. However, the historical circumstances of these usurpations suggest an explanation: they were the first in Constantinople to fracture the hereditary-dynastic principle of succession, or senatorial election. Consequently, by displaying reluctance and then having a member of the preceding dynasty publicly reject their own elevation, this rendering of successional custom was disguised and outwardly provided 'dynastic approval' for the new emperor by the old order.⁵²⁸ The successions were presented as 'elective' since the emperors had been 'convinced' to accept power from another figure, and the acclamation of the crowds served to reinforce the choice of the newcomer over the old regime.

After these accessions, the offering of power to an alternate candidate recurs as a potential feature of reluctance in the narratives, although in a substantially different form.

ἀτυχήματα. '...dissembling, the half-breed tyrant seemed to want to crown Germanus. Then when the demes were applauding the tyrant, and all wished for a revolution, the evil one was proclaimed, the tyrant became lord of the sceptres, misfortune overcame fortune, and the great, and so to speak, distinguished misfortunes of the Romans took their origins.' Theophylaktos Simokattes, *Historiae*, ed. de Boor 333-334 (trans. Whitby 225). Author's Translation. Theophylaktos' testimony is confirmed by Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 289 (trans. Mango and Scott 413): 'The usurper appeared to encourage Germanus to be emperor. But when Germanus pretended that he was unwilling and the factions acclaimed the usurper, the evil was proclaimed and the usurper was elected as lord of the sceptres, disaster overcame prosperity and the great misfortunes of the Romans began.' On the role of Germanus' refusal in Phocas' inauguration ritual, see Olster 1993: 167-168.

⁵²⁵ καὶ αὐτὸς Κρίσπον εἰς τὴν βασιλείον ἀξίαν προύτρεπε· μηδὲ γὰρ τῆς βασιλείας ἔνεκεν αὐτὸς ἐλληλοθένοι ἔφασκε, τίσασθαι μᾶλλον Φοκᾶν τῆς εἰς Μαυρίκιον καὶ τὰ Μαυρικίου τέκνα παρανομίας. Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 36-37.

⁵²⁶ Braunlin and Nesbitt 1999: 188-191; Grierson 1950: 71-93.

⁵²⁷ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 299 (trans. Mango and Scott 428). For comparison, see *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. Dindorf I, 699-701.

⁵²⁸ Olster 1993: 168.

Since reluctant candidates rarely had a member of the ruling family at hand during their proclamations in the field, one of their own colleagues or family members was proposed as an alternate. Michael I did not believe himself ‘competent’ and offered *basileia* to Leon V who duly protested his own unworthiness and convinced Michael to accept.⁵²⁹ Nikephoros II attempted to promote Tzimiskes, but neither the army nor Tzimiskes would permit it and promptly proclaimed Nikephoros.⁵³⁰ Alexios I suggested his own brother.⁵³¹ And Isaakios II suggested his uncle.⁵³² As with Phokas and Herakleios, these were rigged elections. In each instance the alternate nominee was quickly dismissed by the true candidate’s supporters and by themselves so that the universality of the popular acclamation was emphasised. Ostensibly, there was no doubt in anybody’s mind about who was the superior candidate, and his subsequent actions were seen to have been ratified.

A final confirmation of the relationship between reluctance, legitimacy, and *consensus* politics can be seen in two episodes involving Constantinopolitan revolts, which are juxtaposed with associated ‘unauthorised’ elevations. According to Psellos, in April 1042, Empress Theodora had repeatedly refused the crowd’s calls for her to lead them against Michael V but was dragged from her monastic refuge and forcibly invested. By comparison, Michael had proclaimed himself sole ruler by exiling Zoe.⁵³³ Likewise, in January 1204, the Constantinopolitans were discontent with the stalled deliberations (by the senate, bishops, and clergymen) to proclaim a replacement for Isaakios II and Alexios IV, and took it upon themselves to do so.⁵³⁴ Choniates describes how ‘... on the third day...

⁵²⁹ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 5 (trans. Wortley 4).

⁵³⁰ Τοιαύτην ὁ Νικηφόρος προτεινόμενος κρόφασιν παρηγεῖτο τὴν ἀρχὴν, καὶ Ἰωάννη τῷ Τζιμισκῆ παρεχώρει τῆς τοιαύτης ἐπιβῆναι τιμῆς, καὶ τῶν σκήπτρων ἀνθέξεσθαι. οὐκ ἠνείχετο δὲ τῶν τοιοῦτων λόγων οὔτε τις τῶν τοῦ στρατοῦ, οὔτε μὴν αὐτὸς ὁ Ἰωάννης· ἀλλ’ ὁμοθυμαδὸν αὐτὸν ἐπευφήμουν, σεβάσμιόν τε καὶ βασιλέα Ῥωμαίων προσαγορεύοντες. Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 41 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 92).

⁵³¹ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 74-75 (trans. Frankopan 67-68).

⁵³² Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 345 (trans. Magoulias 190-191).

⁵³³ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 226-229; ed. Renauld I, 108 (trans. Sewter 144).

⁵³⁴ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 561-564 (trans. Magoulias 307-309). Cheynet 1990: 461-462; Beihammer 2013: 201.

seizing a certain youth whose name was Nikolaos and surname Kannavos, they anointed him emperor against his will.⁵³⁵ However, the people were frustrated when Alexios V proclaimed himself emperor with the backing of the Varangians, and crushed Kannavos' supporters.⁵³⁶ The reluctant promotions of Theodora, and Nikolaos, at the hands of 'the multitude', were contrasted with the self-proclaimed accessions of Michael and Alexios. Psellos was extensively critical of Michael's actions, and Choniates had favoured the promotion of the 'gentle' (μειλίχῳ) Kannavos, claiming that Alexios' supporters were the worse faction.⁵³⁷ *Consensus* and moral superiority were aligned with the authors' favoured (reluctant) candidates, whereas the self-proclaimed emperors demonstrated a lack of humility and virtue in acting against the common will and general wellbeing. We are to infer that the reluctant candidate was acting legitimately, and the self-proclaimed candidate illegitimately.

Elsewhere, the *topos* introduces celestial sources of legitimising authority. In two examples of its use in court rhetoric we see that 'divine will' is adduced as the reason that

⁵³⁵ τὸ τοίνυν λαῶδες τῆς πόλεως... εἰς ἀποστασίαν οἰδαίνειν ἤγγατο... ἠναγκάζετο καὶ ἡ σύγκλητος ἢ τε τῶν ἀρχιερέων ὀμήγουρις καὶ οἱ τοῦ βήματος λόγιμοι συνελθεῖν ἐκεῖσε καὶ συνδιασκέψασθαί σφισι περὶ τοῦ ἄρξοντος... ἑαυτοὺς ταλανίζοντες, καὶ πολλὰ τῶν παρειῶν κατελείβομεν δάκρυα... νεανίσκον τινὰ συλλαβόντες Νικόλαον τὴν κλήσιν, Κανναβὸν τὴν ἐπικλήσιν, εἰς βασιλέα χρίουσιν ἄκοντα; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 562 (trans. Magoulias 308). Nikolaos' proclamation by the people occurred on 27 January 1204. Alexios V's removal of Isaakios II and Alexios IV was achieved on 28 January, his public proclamation was no later than the first week of February.

⁵³⁶ With the support of relatives, the *logothetes tou genikou*, and the Varangians, Doukas imprisoned the Angeloi and Kannavos. For details, see C.M. Brand 1968: 250-251; Cheynet 1990: 462.

⁵³⁷ ἐπεὶ δὲ τὰ χεῖρω ἐπικρατέστερα παρὰ τοῖς Κωνσταντινουπολίταις καὶ μάλιστα (φιλτέρα γὰρ ὑπὲρ τοὺς ὁμογενεῖς ἢ ἀλήθεια), ὁ μὲν Δούκας ἐκραταιοῦτο καὶ ἠϋξανε, ὁ δὲ Κανναβὸς ἀμαυρομένην εἶχε τὴν αἴγλην κατὰ σελήνην λειψίφωτον. 'Inasmuch as the worst elements prevail amongst the Constantinopolitans (for truth is dearer to me than my compatriots), Doukas grew stronger and increased in power, while Kannavos' splendour grew dim like a waning moon.' Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 564 (trans. Magoulias 308-309). Although Choniates was contemptuous of Kannavos' elevation by 'the multitude' and disapproved of the circumstances that prompted the promotion, he believed Kannavos to be the better choice of emperor (even listing his virtues). The accession of Alexios V was much worse: a result of intrigue and personal betrayal by a trusted official that resulted in the deaths of Alexios IV and Isaakios II. Given that such acts of betrayal were a recurring theme of Choniates' *Kaiserkritik* and, in his view, a contributing factor to the fall of Constantinople in 1204, Kannavos' reluctance may be understood as a means of emphasising the scale of Alexios' deceit and single-minded ambition. On Choniates' views regarding the imperial office and the role of usurpation and *ataxia* in precipitating the fall of Constantinople in 1204, see Beihammer 2013; Catanzaro 2012; Harris 2000; Kaldellis 2009. See also, the comments of Macrides 1994: esp. 275, on the manner in which Choniates appears to both propagate the imperial image in panegyric and yet deconstruct this image in the narrative history. On Choniates' *Kaiserkritik*, see Tinnefeld 1971: 158-179; Magdalino 1983.

reluctance was overcome. *Panegyrici Latini VI*, composed c.310 for Constantine I, marked a shift in Constantine's strategy of legitimation. Where previously Constantine had utilised his promotion by Maximianus, the latter had betrayed and then been defeated by him. Constantine now sought hereditary and other sources of legitimacy to buttress his claims.⁵³⁸ The panegyric served this purpose: it acknowledged Maximianus' defeat but included reference to Constantine's reluctant proclamation, something that is not mentioned in the histories.⁵³⁹ We learn that Constantine, mourning his father's death, was unexpectedly clothed in the purple by the soldiery and attempted to spur his horse in order to escape. The anonymous composer then proffered an exegesis: Constantine was wrong to flee, because *imperium* was being offered to him by Jupiter and was thus unavoidable. His 'modesty and piety' were commended, but fortunately the needs of the state were said to have triumphed over them.⁵⁴⁰ Nine centuries later, Michael VIII expressed almost identical ideas about his own elevation. Unsought, it was achieved through the will of God and the people, and he was 'persuaded' and 'forced' to accept.⁵⁴¹ Manifest within these works is the notion that, although achieved through human means, the elevation was divinely sanctioned and therefore inevitable. Furthermore, the displays of reluctance were explicitly adduced as

⁵³⁸ On *Panegyrici Latini VI*(7).8.3 (trans. Nixon and Rodgers 215-217). See also, Warmington 1974: esp. 374-375.

⁵³⁹ 'The Triumph of Christianity' narrative was evidently not conducive to this propaganda. The historic certainty of Constantine's victory may have been diminished if he showed doubts.

⁵⁴⁰ '...straight away the soldiers threw the purple over you despite your tears, taking more account of the public advantage than your feelings... You are even said, invincible emperor, to have to have tried to escape the ardour of this army which was demanding you by spurring on your horse. To tell the truth, this was to commit a youthful error. For what Cyllarus or Arion could snatch you away, you whom the Empire pursued? ...that sovereignty I say which was offered you by Jupiter's will... it was attached to you as easily as messages sent from heaven are swift to arrive on earth. And so your attempts to defer your rule showed your modesty and piety, but the good fortune of the state triumphed.' *Panegyrici Latini VI*(7).8.3-6 (trans. Nixon and Rodgers 229-231).

⁵⁴¹ 'I was raised up to be emperor of your people. The proof of this is clear and unambiguous. For it was not the many hands coming to assist me or their frightening weapons which elevated me above the heads of the Romans. It was not any highly persuasive speech delivered by me or by my supporters which fell upon the ears of the crowd, filled them with great hopes, and convinced them to entrust themselves to me. No, it was your right hand, Lord, which did this mighty deed. *Your right hand raised me on high, and established me as lord of all. I did not persuade anyone, but was myself persuaded. I did not bring force to bear on anyone, but was myself forced.*' *Imperatoris Michaeli Palaeologi de vita sua*, ed. Grégoire 453-455 (trans. Dennis 1243-1244). Emphasis added.

symbols of excellent and humble character, and associated with God's will. Here the *topos* served to propagate the imperial sacral charisma, which in turn strengthened the reluctant candidates' claims to be acting legitimately. Although this direct association of the *topos* with divine authorisation is rarely replicated in the narrative histories it is possible that the association was meant to be inferred by the very use of the *topos* in a narrative; especially since most readers would have been familiar with its use in court rhetoric.

In rare cases the *topos* appears to have been used to create a quasi-'dynastic' claim to *basileia*. The efforts of Bryennios' *Material for History* to present the image of continuity between the Komnenoi and Doukai is one example. Bryennios suggests an atmosphere of historic cooperation between the families in their handling of state affairs. Consequently, the description of Isaakios I's abdication and the accession of Constantine X encourages this image. Constantine came to the throne through a conspiracy involving prominent members of the senate and aristocracy,⁵⁴² something concealed by Bryennios. Instead, Isaakios, fearful that he would soon die,⁵⁴³ reportedly offered the diadem to his brother Ioannes the *kouropalates* (father of Alexios I). Despite his wife's cautions that the Komnenoi could all be killed if someone else took the throne, Ioannes was unwilling to accept and, further emphasising this disinclination, ignored the entreaties of his family by hiding within the

⁵⁴² Psellos' *Chronographia* offers a manipulated account of how Isaakios was encouraged to take the monastic tonsure by Psellos and his associates. It reveals the speed with which this was achieved and Constantine promoted: Empress Aikaterine is reported to have been extremely angry with Psellos for his actions in allowing the tonsure, and despite her attentiveness to the emperor's sick-bed was somehow absent when this decision was made. The choice of Constantine X as Isaakios' successor was also contrary to the empresses reported wishes for a member of the Komnenian line to assume the throne. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 272-289; ed. Renault II, 129-136 (trans. Sewter 322-329). Cheynet 1990: 345, and n.43, considers that the succession was delicate enough that the missives announcing Constantine's proclamation claimed that he had the agreement of the army, and the senate, and his acclamation included cheers for Empress Aikaterine. Cheynet also questions if the Varangian conspiracy c.1060 was not an attempt to restore Isaakios I to the throne. Attaleiates' *Historia*, and *Skylitzes Continuatus*, also note the irregularity of Constantine's appointment in place of a family member but do not mention a palace coup, or give specific reasons for his selection. Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 69 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 124-125); *Skylitzes Continuatus*, ed. Tsolakes 108. See also, Kaldellis 1999: 100-101.

⁵⁴³ Isaakios was injured during a hunt and it was believed that he would not survive. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 272-275; ed. Renault II, 129-130 (trans. Sewter 322); Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 69 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 124-125).

palace.⁵⁴⁴ The *proedros*, Constantine, was appointed instead as the best candidate available under the circumstances, although evidently not the first choice.⁵⁴⁵ From Bryennios' conception of the event, the reader knows that the throne 'should' have transferred along the Komnenian line, to Ioannes, and Alexios. The Doukai, although technically emperors, might properly be considered temporary stewards, or even interlopers.⁵⁴⁶

By contrast, Psellos, who also used the *topos* in relation to this accession, and was read by Bryennios,⁵⁴⁷ chose to enhance Constantine's claims to the detriment of Isaakios'. We are told that the people had urged Constantine to seize power under Michael VI, and that Isaakios had even offered it to him before his proclamation, but Constantine refused.⁵⁴⁸ Psellos described Constantine's eventual accession as a work of divine providence, further establishing the excellent qualities and suitability to rule that had initially prompted calls for his accession.⁵⁴⁹ Constantine's earlier refusal revealed his humility and excused the circumstances of his later conspiracy because he should already have been emperor: earlier refusals suggested impeccable character and amended later 'misdeeds'. Given Psellos' involvement in the coup that brought Constantine to power, this formulation of events may be seen to offer a partial apologia for his own participation and a compliment to Constantine

⁵⁴⁴ Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 81-83. In Psellos' version of events it is Empress Aikaterine that speaks these warnings rather than Anna Dalassena. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 286-289; ed. Renauld II, 132-134 (trans. Sewter 325-326). On Bryennios' use of Psellos in his reworking of this scene, see Neville 2010: 78-79.

⁵⁴⁵ Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 83-85.

⁵⁴⁶ Varzos 1984: 49-50 and n.5: has similarly noted that the narrative forms a conceit intended to provide the Komnenoi with legitimacy in the aftermath of Alexios' accession.

⁵⁴⁷ On Bryennios' use of Psellos' *Chronographia* as a source for his *Material for History*, see Carile 1969: 56-87; Neville 2010: 78-79; Neville 2012: 46-47.

⁵⁴⁸ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 286-289; ed. Renauld II, 136 (trans. Sewter 328-329). Skylitzes agrees that Constantine was amongst those who went to Michael VI in search of honours, but does not corroborate Psellos' story that Constantine was enjoined to assume power. Instead, he claims that Katakalon Kekaumenos was chosen as the best candidate but refused and 'immediately declared Isaakios to be emperor of the Romans.' Skylitzes' narrative was dependent upon a biographical work favourable to Kekaumenos, it is therefore unsurprising that the general is flattered and initially chosen in his version of events. Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn 483, 487 (trans. Wortley 451, 454). On Skylitzes' pro-Kekaumenos source, see Shepard 1992: 171-182; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, trans. Wortley xxi-xxii (*The Sources*).

⁵⁴⁹ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 296-299; ed. Renauld II, 142-143 (trans. Sewter 335).

(the candidate he backed).⁵⁵⁰ It also suggests that the two authors' proposed differing conceptions of the nature of imperial power: Psellos invoked the 'populist' connotations of the *topos* and thus the elective principle; Bryennios revised Psellos in order to invoke Alexios' 'dynastic right' and restricted the elective principle to the choice of a candidate by the imperial family.

Returning to Bryennios' narrative, the resignation of Michael VII and the accession of Botaneiates brings the legitimising effort on behalf of Alexios full circle. We are informed that Michael had long contemplated resigning and since circumstance now made this a reality he took the tonsure.⁵⁵¹ Before he did, Alexios persuaded him to allow Konstantios Doukas, Michael's brother, to accede, and had this confirmed in writing. Alexios accompanied Konstantios to the Great Palace in order to ensure the succession, but Konstantios refused it (believing in his implied youthful naiveté that he would be safe under Botaneiates).⁵⁵² The pair subsequently met with Botaneiates and welcomed him as emperor by swearing fidelity.⁵⁵³

Stanković has shown that Bryennios actively associated Alexios with Konstantios, whom Bryennios' narrative presented as the only 'legitimate' heir to Michael, and portrayed them as the closest of friends in order to imbibe authority from this relationship.⁵⁵⁴ But Bryennios was actually doing much more. Botaneiates' reign was presented as an aberration, he did not merit it⁵⁵⁵ and had overthrown the Doukai to get there. Alexios' oath to him was a result of Konstantios' actions with Alexios merely respecting his friend's (Michael's true heir's) lead. Any charge that he broke fidelity with Botaneiates was negated by Botaneiates'

⁵⁵⁰ On Psellos' apologia for his involvement in the coup that brought Constantine to power, see Kaldellis 1999: 100-101.

⁵⁵¹ Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 247-249.

⁵⁵² Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 249-251.

⁵⁵³ Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 251.

⁵⁵⁴ Stanković 2007; Neville 2012: 168-169, goes further, arguing that Konstantios is actually presented as a child, with Alexios leading him around and acting as his protector and tutor.

⁵⁵⁵ Evidenced by his morally and administratively inept and tyrannical rule as presented in Bryennios' narrative.

misrule and Alexios' proven loyalty to the member of the Doukas family who should have been emperor. Further, Konstantios' refusal recalled Ioannes' refusal, and Alexios' overthrow of the interloper Botaneiates with the aid of Empress Maria (in defence of Alexios' adoptive family)⁵⁵⁶ revealed him succeeding from the Doukai, who had already refused power through tonsure (Michael) and naiveté (Konstantios), in much the same way that Constantine X succeeded Isaakios in place of Ioannes. It was not a usurpation, but a succession in accordance with the traditions of the wider (joint) Komnenos-Doukas dynasty. This reading also follows Alexios' early efforts to present his rule as contiguous with the Doukai.⁵⁵⁷

These examples of what may be termed 'providential loops', quasi-dynastic claims based upon past refusals, represent an innovation in the *topos*. In contrast to reluctance at the moment of proclamation, six cases detail a future emperor's past reluctance to accept the throne.⁵⁵⁸ Four (Leon V, Ioannes I, Constantine X, and Ioannes VI) were usurper-emperors who reportedly refused power when previously asked to accept it by their immediate predecessor.⁵⁵⁹ One, Alexios, was closely associated with figures who rejected *basileia*.

⁵⁵⁶ Maria had adopted Alexios, who claimed that he would help ensure the succession of her son when Botaneiates appeared to have other intentions for the succession, before he instigated his coup. Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 57-58, 61 (trans. Frankopan 52, 56). On the adoption, see Smythe 1997: 147; Cheynet 1990: 354-355; Macrides 1990: 117; Macrides 1992: 265, noting that it provided a conduit for information to be passed discreetly between the conspirators and the Empress.

⁵⁵⁷ Anna Komnene's *Alexias* emphasises the pivotal role played by the empress Maria in the overthrow of Botaneiates, and the respect that Alexios had for the rights of Maria's son (the heir-apparent, Constantine). Alexios is portrayed as acting with the consent of the Doukai, in order to safeguard the 'legitimate' heirs. Stanković 2007: 170-171. Constantine Doukas was proclaimed co-emperor alongside Alexios, and was permitted to wear the purple sandals and a crown (a privilege Nikephoros III had denied him): Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 97 (trans. Frankopan 88-89). The influential former *kaisar* Ioannes Doukas (a *paterfamilias*-type figure for the Doukai) was appointed *basileiopator* for Constantine (1081-1088): Gkoutzioukostas 2014: 226-230. Alexios also promoted dynastic links with the Doukai through the iconographic selections of his seals. These notably mimicked the designs of Constantine X and Michael VII, and those of Nikephoros III, whose seals' iconographic schema also borrowed from those of the Doukai. The obverse of a seal in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection (accession number: BZS.1958.106.518; *Dumbarton Oaks Seals* 6, no. 88.2) displays a motif of Christ enthroned that was first utilised by Constantine X, and then by Michael VII. The imperial regalia as depicted on Nikephoros III's seals are retained by Alexios I's seals.

⁵⁵⁸ These are Leon V, Ioannes I, Ioannes Komnenos-Alexios I, Constantine X, Isaakios II, and Ioannes VI. For citations and details, see Table 2.

⁵⁵⁹ Three (Leon V, Ioannes I, and Constantine X) were even proposed as alternate candidates for the throne by the reluctant emperors whom they subsequently replaced.

Another, Isaakios II, successfully rejected a popular call to usurp Andronikos' throne in 1184,⁵⁶⁰ and then did so in 1185. Tentatively, the typology appears to originate with Theophanes' account of the ninth-century emperor Leon V.⁵⁶¹ In all cases it uses the force of providence, and inference, to invalidate the dynastic-legitimacy of the preceding emperor: they should never really have been in power, but the superior candidate refused the throne. Divine will, delayed the first time, was realised the second. When this candidate subsequently claimed what should already have been his, who could oppose him? Ioannes VI's legitimising efforts relied heavily on the strength of this argument, citing his intimate friendship with Andronikos III and multiple refused offers of co-emperorship.⁵⁶²

Another effort to establish a retrospective dynastic claim may illuminate the description of Constantine Laskaris' refusal to accept insignia after he received *basileia* 'by lot'.⁵⁶³ Choniates describes how Laskaris had been chosen after the abandonment of Constantinople by Alexios V, and the entry of the crusader army. He allegedly declined the insignia offered to him by the patriarch and instead rushed away to fight the Latins.⁵⁶⁴ This

⁵⁶⁰ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 284 (trans. Magoulias 157).

⁵⁶¹ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 502 (trans. Mango and Scott 685).

⁵⁶² The narratives of Kantakouzenos and Gregoras are in accordance on these claims constituting a significant part of the emperor's attempts to justify and legitimise his actions. Kantakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen I, 365-370; Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen II, 580, 585-586, 593-594, 604, 611-612. See also, Nicol 1968: 41, 44.9.

⁵⁶³ Constantine Laskaris was elected 'by lot' (κλήρου) in competition with Constantine Doukas. Choniates' description of their competition for the throne is dismissive of their actions: he suggests that they believed the empire to be 'Fortune's prize', and laments that there was nobody suitable remaining in the city to properly examine their claims. Laskaris was most likely selected because of his connection to Alexios III via his brother the (then) *despotes*, Theodoros I Laskaris. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 571-572 (trans. Magoulias 314). Beihammer notes the pathos inherent in the refusal and elsewhere in the account of Constantine's election. He sees this as the terminus of Choniates' deconstruction of imperial ceremonials and the degradation of the imperial office: they were gradually debased by usurpation and innovations in successional procedures until, in practical terms, they came to mean nothing. Beihammer 2013: esp. 201-202. However, despite Choniates' disapproval and misgivings he does not question that Laskaris or his predecessors were 'legitimately' recognised as emperors, only that the circumstances of Laskaris' selection were less than ideal. On Choniates' acceptance of the popular selection of an emperor, see Kaldellis 2013: 45-46.

⁵⁶⁴ ... Ἐκ δὲ κλήρου τὸ πρωτεῖον εἰληφώς ὁ Λάσκαρις τὰ μὲν τῆς βασιλείας οὐ προσίεται σύμβολα, συνεξιών δὲ τῷ πατριάρχῃ κατὰ τὸ Μίλιον οὐκ ἀνίει παραινῶν τοῖς συνιοῦσι καὶ σφας ὑποθωπεύων εἰς ἀντιμάχησιν. 'Receiving the supreme office by lot, Laskaris refused the imperial insignia; escorted by the patriarch to the Milion, he continuously exhorted the assembled populace, cajoling them to put up a resistance.' Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 572 (trans. Magoulias 314).

refusal to accept, potentially a function of circumstance,⁵⁶⁵ may actually have been intended to provide legitimacy to Choniates' future patron Theodoros I, Constantine's brother.⁵⁶⁶ It offered a familial connection through which Theodoros could appear to have legitimately inherited the throne, from a brother who was reluctantly appointed emperor in the capital but refused a coronation due to his patriotic desire to defend the empire. Already, Theodoros had been named *despotes* under his father-in-law Alexios III and utilised that connection in order to establish his position in Asia Minor in 1203/1204.⁵⁶⁷ Only after Alexios' capture in 1205 did Theodoros cease claiming to be acting on his behalf, and actively seek his own coronation.⁵⁶⁸ In detailing Constantine's refusal of insignia, the validity of this connection was preserved by Choniates: the brothers had not acted against Alexios, who they evidently acknowledged as emperor and from whom Theodoros claimed dynastic pedigree and titulature. Constantine had been reluctantly declared emperor, but this was under extenuating circumstances in order to lead the defence of Constantinople, concurrently reinforcing the integrity of Laskarid patriotism.⁵⁶⁹ In (not so) subtle contrast, Alexios had fled for his life when the crusaders first appeared; the Laskarids may have been loyal to him, but they were also superior. The reluctant Constantine, who could have claimed the imperial title for

⁵⁶⁵ Presumably there would not have been sufficient time to stage an investiture ceremonial of any note given the presence of the crusader army in the city and Constantine's reported desire to lead the resistance against them.

⁵⁶⁶ The best account of Choniates' life and career, with bibliography, is that provided by Simpson 2013a: 11-67. He revised and expanded the manuscript of the *Historia* during his life in Nikaia under Theodoros I. Simpson 2006; Simpson 2009: 13-34; Simpson 2013a: 11-67.

⁵⁶⁷ Theodoros was the second husband of Alexios III's daughter, Anna. He, along with Alexios Palaiologos (second husband of Alexios III's daughter, Eirene) were married to Alexios' respective daughters in 1199 in a joint marriage ceremony. Theodoros was either named *despotes* with Palaiologos following these marriages (i.e. in 1199), or after the Palaiologos' death but before Alexios III's flight from Constantinople in July 1203. On the chronology, see Macrides 2007: 82; Cheynet 1990: 469; Grierson 1999: vol. 4.2. p.447. For the marriages and promotions, see Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 508 (trans. Magoulias 280).

⁵⁶⁸ Macrides has demonstrated Theodoros' use of the marriage connection to Alexios III in his efforts to establish a base of operations in Asia Minor. Theodoros' attempts to bring the cities of Bithynia into his domain was justified on the grounds that he was 'to rule over them as emperor in the place of his father-in-law Alexios.' This is confirmed by Geoffrey de Villehardouin's statement that Theodoros 'had as wife the daughter of the emperor whose land he claimed.' Discussed in Macrides 2005: 148; Akropolites, *Historia*, trans. Macrides 82, and §5.5, 6 (*Commentary*). See also, Angold 2008a: 733-734.

⁵⁶⁹ On 'nationalism' and anti-Latin patriotism in Nikaia and under the Laskarids, see Irscher 1972; Angold 1975b; Angold 1989; Angelov 2005: esp. 296-299.

himself and yet ceded authority to his brother and Alexios, afforded another means of promoting Theodoros' dynastic claims when Alexios' status as the 'legitimate' *basileus* after 1204 was questioned and the latter challenged Laskaris (c.1210/11).⁵⁷⁰ Choniates' description of events provided Theodoros with hereditary connections to two emperors who had been appointed in Constantinople, after 1204 which competitor could say the same?⁵⁷¹

The flexibility of the *topos* as a propaganda tool should now be discernible. Authors were able to rehabilitate wrongdoers, provide them with justifications for their actions, and make appeals to popular and divine elections and the dynastic principle in order to legitimise them. However, by raising the suspicion that reluctance was false, authors could also invalidate all of these functions and reveal a candidate to be illegitimate. Where Nikephoros II's partisan sources⁵⁷² describe a reluctant emperor who offered the insignia to Tzimiskes, and told the troops that he had never sought power but accepted it on pain of death and because of them, Skylitzes, dependent upon anti-Nikephorian sources for the period, swiftly deconstructs this image.⁵⁷³ He provides two potential explanations for Nikephoros' proclamation. The first, followed pro-Nikephorian sources. The second, the version that Skylitzes says he believes, claimed 'Phokas had long been labouring under the impression

⁵⁷⁰ Alexios III was a busy figure in the historiography: he fled Constantinople (17/18 July 1203) with his daughter Eirene, abandoning his other close relatives, and arrived in Thrace. He then attempted to establish himself at Adrianople and Mosynopolis, still claiming to be emperor. In April 1204 he was joined by Alexios V Doukas (who then became Angelos' son-in-law through his marriage to Eudokia Angelina) and the rest of his abandoned family. However, Doukas was soon blinded and left for the advancing Latins. Alexios, soon after, surrendered to Boniface of Montferrat. In 1205 he attempted to join Michael I Komnenos Doukas, but was prevented by Boniface. c.1209 Alexios was ransomed by Michael I and went to Asia Minor where his son-in-law, the former *despotes* and current *basileus* and *autokrator*, Theodoros I Laskaris had established himself. Alexios, with the aid of Sultan Kaykhusraw I, conspired against Theodoros and contested the imperial title once more – refusing to accept Theodoros' authority. He was captured by Theodoros in 1211 at the Battle of Antioch on the Maeander, blinded, and confined to a monastery where he later died. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 546-547, 556, 608, 620 (trans. Magoulias 299, 301, 304, 333-334, 339); Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 12-17 (trans. Macrides 123-124, 129-130, 131). See also, Macrides 2007: 79-81; Korobeinikov 2014: 148, n.236.

⁵⁷¹ It should be noted that there is no hard evidence that Theodoros ever did utilise his connection to Constantine in this manner. The argument presented here is a speculative one based upon the construction of Choniates' narrative and the historical uses of the reluctance *topos* in Byzantine historiography.

⁵⁷² For the favourable version, see Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 41-44 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 92-93); repeated by Psellos, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Aerts 99.

⁵⁷³ For Skylitzes' sources, see Kazhdan 1960; Morris 1988: 86; Holmes 2003: 187-199.

that he ought to be emperor... [and he] burned with desire for the empress Theophano.⁵⁷⁴ The pair supposedly contrived to have Nikephoros crowned, and soon after ‘[he dropped] all pretence and show by taking Theophano as his lawful wife.’⁵⁷⁵ Skylitzes’ staging of two possibilities creates a farce. The motif of forced investiture is undermined since who could believe that Nikephoros’ supporters would really kill him? Yet if the reader does accept this, Nikephoros was, like failed usurpers, a pitiable figure at the mercy of others, acting to save his own life and not for any honourable reason. This first story was not included to provide an objective view of the acclamation, but rather to undermine the pro-Nikephorian version. The reader ‘knows’ the true account was that favoured by Skylitzes; again, Nikephoros does not act for the benefit of the empire or another laudable reason but is motivated by lust and avarice, the desire for power, and for Theophano. The purity of his rebellion’s motive, his image as a reluctant individual, and his moral authority were shattered.

In the case of Andronikos I reluctance itself became a weapon. Eustathios recounts that Andronikos was enjoined to accept the status of co-emperor and, despite seeing his deepest desire about to be fulfilled, feigned unwillingness to accept. He struck himself and sought a means of escape. In reality, we are told, this was only to allow him an opportunity to laugh with joy unobserved.⁵⁷⁶ After attempting to hide within the Blachernai Palace, guards were called to contain him and the Patriarch bound him with a metaphorical stock and chain.⁵⁷⁷ Andronikos openly lamented his fate and kicked his feet to prevent the buskins being placed upon them.⁵⁷⁸ Choniates, who utilised Eustathios’ material in writing the

⁵⁷⁴ ...ὁ καὶ δοκῶν ἀληθέστερος, ὡς πολὺν ὥδινε χρόνον τὴν τῆς βασιλείας ἐπιθυμίαν, καὶ οὐ τοσοῦτον αὐτόν ὁ ταύτης ἔρωσ ἐξέφλεγεν, ὅσον ὁ τῆς βασιλίδος Θεοφανοῦς... Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 256-257 (trans. Wortley 247).

⁵⁷⁵ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 260 (trans. Wortley 250).

⁵⁷⁶ Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, Melville-Jones 48-51.

⁵⁷⁷ Beihammer 2013: 185, considers this to be a reference to a threat of excommunication.

⁵⁷⁸ ...καὶ περίθεσις παρασήμων τῇ βασιλείᾳ πεδύλων, ἐκείνου μὴ καθιστῶντος τοὺς πόδας... ‘...and they made him put on the sandals which are the distinguishing mark of imperial rank, although he would not keep his feet still...’ Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville-Jones 50-51. Eustathios’ description of Andronikos’ kicking feet raises an important question about intertextuality in twelfth-century Byzantium. It would appear that he borrowed and enhanced the motif from Anna Komnene’s account of her

Historia,⁵⁷⁹ reports a similar scene although he greatly reduces Andronikos' supposed reluctance: he was bade to accept co-emperorship, went to the Polytimos chamber of the Blachernai, was acclaimed, and his supporters restrained him by both arms to invest him with the insignia.⁵⁸⁰ Both works deconstructed Andronikos' virtue by distorting what was initially an effective display of legitimising propaganda into a demonstration of hypocrisy.⁵⁸¹ Eustathios ridiculed Andronikos' excessively dramatic display and revealed the emperor's true thoughts and desires.⁵⁸² Choniates condemned Andronikos' self-interested desires (Andronikos' recurring characteristic throughout the *Historia*),⁵⁸³ therefore reluctance was shown only at the moment of investiture, in a feigned struggle with his supporters. It was not real and it was barely perceptible. Consequently, Choniates assigned it only one line, in contrast to Eustathios' paragraphs. In both accounts, hypocrisy allowed a moral judgement to be made. He had not acceded in a self-sacrificing way, or for the common good. He reigned because he had schemed, deceived the people with charades of hesitance and loyalty,

father's proclamation, where Ioannes Komnenos similarly had to force the imperial footwear onto his brother's unwilling feet. To my knowledge, these two references to actively unwilling investiture with the red buskins are unique within the Byzantine historiographical record. Psellos does claim to have taken an active role in investing Constantine X with the red buskins, but the *Chronographia* is unclear as to how resistant Constantine was – indeed, the inference is that he was an apprehensive, but largely passive participant (Psellos took the lead during the coup, the docile Constantine followed) and there is no reference to his resisting the physical investiture. Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 74-75 (trans. Frankopan 67-68); Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 274-303; ed. Renault II, 129-136 (trans. Sewter 322-329).

⁵⁷⁹ On Choniates' use of Eustathios as a source for the *Historia*, see Simpson 2013: esp. 224-229.

⁵⁸⁰ ...τὸ δὲ τῆς Ἀνδρονίκου φατρίας θερμότερον καὶ ἀκκιζόμενον Ἀνδρόνικον καὶ τὴν συνεδρίαν εἰρωνευόμενον ἀμφοτέραις συσχόντες εἰς τὴν χρυσόπαστον κλίνην ἐφῆκαν, ἐφ' ἧς ὁ βασιλεὺς ἴζανεν. ἄλλοι δὲ τὴν καπνηρὰν καὶ πυραμιδοειδῆ ἐρέαν τῆς κεφαλῆς ἀφελόμενοι πυρσὴν αὐτῷ περιέθεντο καὶ στολὴν βασιλικὴν ἐνέδυσαν ἔτεροι. 'In apparent disregard of the assembly, Andronikos' most devoted supporters, *as though taking him by surprise, held him securely by both arms* and set him down on the gold-covered couch on which the emperor sat. Removing his dark-grey pyramidal hat made of wool, one group put a red one on him, and another dressed him in an imperial robe.' Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 270-271 (trans. Magoulias 150-151). Translation adapted. *Emphasis added*.

⁵⁸¹ Beihammer 2013: 185-186.

⁵⁸² Given that Andronikos is elsewhere described as akin to a Proteus figure, constantly changing his form and scheming to achieve power, we may view this scene as a continuation of that theme: καὶ μάλιστα ὁ Ἀνδρόνικος, παντοδανὸς ἐκεῖνος ἄνθρωπος καὶ παμπούκιλος, καὶ τοῦτο οὐ χαμαιλέοντος δίκην εἴτε πολύποδος, Πρωτέως δὲ μᾶλλον, καὶ μάλιστα κατὰ Ἐμπούσαν, ἢ φρικτὰ ἐφάνταζεν. '...a man of manifold and variegated qualities, though not in the manner of a chameleon or polyp, but rather of Proteus, and most of all of Empousa, who took on such awful forms.' Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville-Jones 13-17.

⁵⁸³ For example, Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 101, 104-106, 107-108, 129-132, 137-142 (trans. Magoulias 58, 59-60, 61, 73-75, 78-81, 129).

and then murdered Alexios II. His authority was built on falsehoods and misdeeds. A bitter note on the scale of this treachery, and an encapsulation of the *topos*, is provided by Eustathios' sardonic comment regarding Andronikos' duped supporters: 'It was, they said, better that he should suffer something that he did not want, namely being emperor, than that the world should be ruined.'⁵⁸⁴

Origins and parallels

Having explored the permutations of the *topos*, and the ability of Byzantine authors to manipulate its use in order to suit their ideological and political intentions, we should now seek to address its potential origins. As Weiler demonstrates, the reluctant ruler is a historically prevalent ruler, not unique to any one particular region of Medieval Europe.⁵⁸⁵ This ubiquity raises questions as to why seemingly independent traditions appear to parallel one another so closely. What exactly was the ideological source and what else might this tell us about reluctance's purpose?

In order to function effectively as a means of propaganda, the *topos* must successfully have exploited a mutually accepted set of beliefs and theories concerning rulership. Weiler focuses on the shared moral and theological traditions of medieval European societies in order to explain this 'origin' question. Accordingly, he identifies similarities between the *rex renitens* and the *nolle episcopari*, the 'reluctant bishop', in the West.⁵⁸⁶ The theme was a longstanding one in the hagiographical tradition. In Sulpicius Severus' fourth-fifth century *Vita*, St Martin was tricked into being elected as bishop by the citizenry of Tours who managed to lure him out of his monastery under the pretext of ministering to the sick. They

⁵⁸⁴ ...καὶ κάλλιον φασιν ὄν παθεῖν ἐκεῖνον ὃ μὴ βούλεται, τὸ βασιλεῦσαι δηλαδή, ἢ περ ἐξολέσθαι τὰ κοσμικά. Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville-Jones 44-45.

⁵⁸⁵ Weiler 2000: 7.

⁵⁸⁶ Weiler 2000: 18-39.

swiftly hauled him into the local church and elected him by popular consent.⁵⁸⁷ Describing the events of Saint Anselm of Bec's election as archbishop of Canterbury in 1093, the account of Eadmer, a monk of Canterbury Cathedral, written c.1093-1122, records how Anselm refused his own election. The assembled prelates forced the archiepiscopal staff into Anselm's hand and dragged him to the altar to partake in the consecration.⁵⁸⁸ Elsewhere, c.1200 Richard de Devizes recorded the circumstances of the election of a new prior by the monks of Cluny at Montacute, whereby a not-so-pious brother successfully manipulated his own election but then feigned reluctance to assume the office.⁵⁸⁹

The *nolle episcopari* can also be found in Byzantine histories, although less frequently than reluctant emperors.⁵⁹⁰ Theophanes' anti-iconoclastic account of the election of Patriarch Paulos IV (780) remarks that Paulos tried very hard to decline the promotion 'on account of the prevailing heresy.'⁵⁹¹ Paulos' virtue and orthodoxy implicitly contrasted with Leon V's supposed lack thereof. His resignation four years later,⁵⁹² from a position that he then lamented having even accepted, was presented as a result of the overwhelming oppression of heretical teachings causing him to fear divine punishment.⁵⁹³ The *topos* served

⁵⁸⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Vie de Saint Martin* 9.1, 270-271, 641-645; Weiler 2000: 19. Later tradition stated that the reluctant Martin even tried to hide in a barn where his presence was given away by the noise of the disturbed geese that had been sheltering inside.

⁵⁸⁸ Eadmer, *The Life of St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. and trans. Southern 63-66; for discussion, and references to the secondary literature of this event, see Ruud 1998: 1-13.

⁵⁸⁹ '...delaying a long time, so that he might appear to receive unwillingly what he had come to seize, he at last sat down in the seat and uttered a string of pious exclamations.' *The Chronicle of Richard de Devizes*, ed. Appleby §19. This unnamed brother had produced forged letters from the Abbot of Cluny instructing the existing prior to resign and the others to accept him as prelate. On the compilation of Richard's *Chronicle*, see Partner 1977: 143-181.

⁵⁹⁰ At least, this is true of the narrative histories. A separate study of patriarchal and ecclesiastic reluctance is surely needed, and would undoubtedly benefit from close reading of the hagiographical corpus where the *topos* of the reluctant ecclesiast likely predominates. Another consideration, regarding the relative popularity of the reluctant emperor versus the reluctant patriarch (in historiographical sources), is the interest that individual histories paid to the circumstances of patriarchal successions in comparison with imperial successions; in many cases we have but one or two lines devoted to those of the patriarchs but whole paragraphs or pages for the successions of emperors.

⁵⁹¹ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 453 (trans. Mango and Scott 625). For details on Paulos' election and his tenure of the patriarchate, see Efthymiadis 1998: 213; Treadgold 1988: 75.

⁵⁹² He retired to the Monastery of Saint Florus on 31 August 784. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 457 (trans. Mango and Scott 631).

⁵⁹³ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 457 (trans. Mango and Scott 631).

to exculpate him from blame for heretical teachings and implied his ‘true’ preference for strictly Orthodox beliefs.⁵⁹⁴

Theophanes’ account of the election of Tarasios (785), is more detailed. After Tarasios had unanimously been voted as Paulos’ successor,⁵⁹⁵ he attempted to recuse himself, offering this explanation:

I have pronounced myself unworthy of this... inasmuch as I was unable to carry out or bear the yoke of the burden... I am seized by fear to consent to this election and stand in terror before the visage of God to hasten to it unready, and without careful consideration, lest I be liable to terrible condemnation... ‘lest in preaching to others I prove myself unfit,’⁵⁹⁶ how can I... rush to the magnitude of the priesthood without examination and due circumspection?⁵⁹⁷

Tarasios’ public humility symbolically demonstrated his dispositional qualifications for office. He could not rush for fear of the consequences to himself and, more importantly, to the *oikoumene*. Although Tarasios had been chosen unanimously, he had to be certain that he possessed the necessary virtues to occupy such an important position. This was not an easy decision, pride and ambition had to be set aside and deep introspection adopted, or else

⁵⁹⁴ A similar ‘anti-heterodox’ or ‘rehabilitative’ function of the *topos* underscores Attaleiates’ later account of the election of Patriarch Xiphilinos (1064). Xiphilinos had enjoyed an ‘illustrious political career’ and served as the first *nomophylax*. Around 1050, a certain Ophrydas brought charges of heresy against him, prompting Xiphilinos’ adoption of the monastic lifestyle. However, Attaleiates conceals this charge, saying instead that ‘Xiphilinos was so deeply concerned for virtue that while he was still occupied with palace affairs... he embraced the monastic lifestyle.’ Having eschewed personal power and looking instead to spiritual wellbeing, when Constantine Leichoudes died Xiphilinos was reportedly considered the only worthy successor. Attaleiates states that Xiphilinos was ‘not willing’ and had to be ‘compelled to accept and become a beacon of the Great Church and ecumenical patriarch.’ The insistence on Xiphilinos’ reluctance seemingly mitigated potential controversy over his ‘heretical’ past, and excused possibly contentious acts performed under his administration (namely an attempted union with the Armenian Church, and the revocation of Patriarch Keroularios’ decision to allow metropolitans in Constantinople from electing new bishops for vacant sees). Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez-Martín 92-93 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 168-169). On these aspects of Xiphilinos’ career, see Angold 1995: esp. 35-37; Kazhdan et al 1991: 1054; Kazhdan and Epstein 1985: 126-127; Oikonomides 1960: 55-78. On the office of the *nomophylax* and its prominent role in Byzantine law in the eleventh century, see Kazhdan et al 1991: 1491-1492; Oikonomides 1986: 190. On the heresy charges, against which Psellos provided Xiphilinos with a defence, see Michael Psellos, *Orationes forenses*, ed. Dennis *orat.3*; Dennis 1994: 193; Kaldellis 1999: 4-5; Kaldellis and Polemis 2015. On the uneasy relationship between intellectuals, philosophy, and Orthodoxy, in this period, see Browning 1975; Gouillard 1976; Kazhdan and Epstein 1985: 126-133.

⁵⁹⁵ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 458 (trans. Mango and Scott 632). Tarasios was then the *protoasekritis*. Theophanes’ assertion that Tarasios held the position of *asekretis* is contested by the evidence of *La Vie de l’impératrice Sainte Irènes*, ed. Halkin p.12, and the *Vita Tarasii*, ed. Heikel 397-398 (ed. and trans. Efhymiadis 12-13) which claim he was, in fact, *protoasekritis*.

⁵⁹⁶ A quotation of Paul (I Corinthians 9:27).

⁵⁹⁷ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 458-460 (trans. Mango and Scott 632-633). Translation adapted.

risk divine displeasure. Tarasios' eventual acceptance of the patriarchate was accompanied by 'a request' for the reunion of the Eastern and Western Churches.⁵⁹⁸ In framing his acceptance in this manner, Tarasios' impeccable character and true concern for his spiritual flock were enhanced, and his promotion benefitted the *oikoumene*.

Theophanes' iterations of patriarchal reluctance display many of the legitimising concerns that were present in the imperial cases, suggesting that analogous ideologies were in operation. This conclusion gains support from two other cases which indicate that the full range of political-rhetorical uses for the *topos* applied equally to ecclesiastical politics. The election of Patriarch Euthymios (907)⁵⁹⁹ was provoked by the political controversy over the *Tetragamy* of Leon VI.⁶⁰⁰ Patriarch Nikolaos, Euthymios' predecessor, had been obdurately opposed to Leon's fourth marriage, excommunicated the emperor, refused him access to Hagia Sophia, and by February 907 had incited his own demise. Nikolaos was unseated and exiled.⁶⁰¹ The deposition contravened church canons and was considered especially scandalous given the political motivations responsible; it could even be argued that Leon and Euthymios had conspired to usurp the patriarchal throne.⁶⁰² Thus a defence was needed and we learn from Skylitzes that Euthymios, a close ally of Leon, held a 'high degree of godliness and virtue' and was rumoured to have 'at first refused the patriarchate... [but was] persuaded to accept it by divine revelation.'⁶⁰³

Vita Euthymii, composed c.920-925, is even more expansive in its presentation of

⁵⁹⁸ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 459-460 (trans. Mango and Scott 633).

⁵⁹⁹ The exact date of Euthymios assumption of the patriarchal throne is uncertain. Mid- to late- February 907 is the most likely period. The main source for Euthymios' career is *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter.

⁶⁰⁰ For an overview of events, see below, page 174.

⁶⁰¹ To the Galakrenai monastery - the very monastery he had founded - likely located on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphoros. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, trans. Wortley: 180 fn.100 (*Commentary*).

⁶⁰² For this atmosphere of scandal, see *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter p.99.

⁶⁰³ οὐ πολὺς παρήλθε καιρὸς, καὶ χειροτωνεῖται πατριάρχης ὁ σύγκελλος Εὐθύμιος, ἀνὴρ θεοσεβῆς καὶ ἀρετῆς ἥκων εἰς τὸ ἀκρότατον. φασὶ δ', ὅτι καὶ ἀπαναινόμενος τὴν ἱερωσύνην θεία ἀποκαλύψει ἐπέισθη αὐτὴν καταδέξασθαι... Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, ed. Thurn 185 (trans. Wortley 180). Skylitzes was modifying the account of his primary source for the period, *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 371: χειροτωνεῖται ὁ σύγκελλος Εὐθύμιος πατριάρχης, ἀνὴρ ἱεροπρεπῆς εγκρατῆς τε καὶ θεοσεβῆς, ὃν φασιν ἐκ θείας ἀποκαλύψεως τὴν ἀρχιερωσύνην καταδέξασθαι...

Euthymios' reluctance.⁶⁰⁴ Intended in part as an apologia for the election,⁶⁰⁵ the *Vita* claims that Euthymios was hesitant even to visit Constantinople. He had repeatedly declined or 'postponed' a visit previously, but Empress Theophano personally intervened to convince him to ensure that victims of injustice, and the very soul of the emperor, were safe.⁶⁰⁶ He was soon granted the title of *synkellos* by its previous holder, Patriarch Stephanos.⁶⁰⁷ Euthymios was asked to accept 'without making any objection,' and had the vocal support of Leon as well.⁶⁰⁸ Naturally, the promotion was presented as an unexpected honour thrust upon Euthymios. His sponsors even forestalled an expected refusal by asking him not to do so. Euthymios' utter disregard for personal power was then made apparent to the reader. He remained at Hagia Sophia for just three days before departing Constantinople and returning to his life of avoiding the court. His persistent absence from the nexus of power was described in words accredited to the antagonistic figure of the *basileiopator*, Stylianos Zaoutzes,⁶⁰⁹ as 'mocking the state with this prolonged retirement, showing your contempt for the rulers themselves.'⁶¹⁰ Thus Euthymios had to return and exercise his duties or else have his humility and disregard for personal glory deliberately misconstrued by his opponents as contempt for the structures of the state itself. However, his reluctance was again in evidence when he finally assumed the position of Patriarch. The assembled metropolitans, having unwillingly accepted the resignation of Nikolaos (excusing Euthymios from wrongdoing), were instructed by Leon to find a suitable replacement, 'but they all, as

⁶⁰⁴ On the date of composition of the *Vita*, see *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter p.9-10 (*General introduction*); de Boor 1888: 83-86.

⁶⁰⁵ *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter p.9 (*General introduction*).

⁶⁰⁶ ... τὴν τε τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος ψυχικὴν σωτηρίαν καὶ τὴν τῶν ἀδικουμένων προμήθειαν... *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter p.21.

⁶⁰⁷ *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter p.21.

⁶⁰⁸ *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter p.23.

⁶⁰⁹ On Zaoutzes' role as an antagonist to Euthymios, and as the prime source of the empire's maladministration, in the *Vita*, see Tougher 1997: 94, 97. See also, Sophianos 1971: 289-296.

⁶¹⁰ μήτε τῇ ἡσυχίᾳ ἐπὶ πολὺ προσκαρτερῶν καταπαίξις τῆς βασιλείας καταφρονῶν καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν βασιλευόντων. *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter p.23.

if by agreement, called for the great Euthymios'.⁶¹¹ He would be a figure above reproach, would unify the church, and was 'the one sought above all and by all.'⁶¹² Yet he rejected their calls, prompting Leon to intervene by 'urging', 'begging', and 'inviting' him to accept the position, and failing to persuade him.⁶¹³ Eventually, letters arrived from the Pope along with the patriarchs of Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria, enjoining Euthymios to accept the patriarchal throne, and acknowledged the emperor's repentance for the *Tetragamy* (removing another potential excuse for refusal). Once Euthymios no longer had a pretext for rejecting the office, and 'forced by the prayers of the emperor and the exhortations of the bishops...[the] representatives themselves...[and] yielding to the will of God and the unanimity of the Synod, he accepted the helm of the Church...[and] his virtues shone before all men.'⁶¹⁴ Once again, the *topos* was utilised in connection with supposedly virtuous individuals involved in a circumspect promotion. We see that the perceived will of God, who directly intervened to ensure the promotion of his favoured candidate, was revealed. The choice made by the people/metropolitans to elect the best candidate was also satisfied, and Euthymios proved his moral disposition through his disregard for personal advancement.

Finally, Akropolites' thirteenth-century account of Patriarch Arsenios' election (1254) invokes a reluctant alternative candidate to facilitate a political critique.⁶¹⁵ According to Akropolites, 'The opinion of many was in favour of Nikephoros Blemmydes...famous for his knowledge as well as his virtue even though the malice of some [prevented this from

⁶¹¹ ...οἱ δὲ ὡς ἐκ συνθήματος ἀπαντες τὸν μέγαν ἐπεζήτουν Εὐθύμιον... *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter p.93, 95.

⁶¹² οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ὑπὲρ πάντας καὶ πάρα πάντων ζητούμενος... *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter p.95, 97.

⁶¹³ *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter p.97, 99.

⁶¹⁴ Τοῖνυν ἐπικαμφθεῖς, μᾶλλον δὲ βιασθεῖς ταῖς τοῦ βασιλέως αἰτήσεσι καὶ ταῖς τῶν ἀρχιερέων παραονέσεσι, ναὶ μὴν καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν τοποτηρητῶν, ἐξαιρέτως τῶν Ῥώμης... ψήφῳ θεοῦ καὶ συνοδικῆ ὁμονοίᾳ τοὺς τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἀναδέχεται οἰακας. ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου τοῖνυν ἀναχθεῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς λυχωίας τεθεῖς πᾶσι ταῖς ἀρεταῖς κατέφαινε καὶ τοσοῦτον ἡδὺς τοῖς πᾶσι καὶ ἐπέραστος γέγονεν, ὡς οὐ παρὰ τῶν προσηκόντων μόνον... *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter p.101, 103.

⁶¹⁵ The date of Arsenios' assumption of the patriarchate is not certain. A date in 'late November' is suggested by Laurent 1969: 140. Macrides 2007: 280 n.15, notes that such a date seems especially late given Theodoros' desire to leave Nicaea as quickly as possible.

becoming apparent]...Yet Blemmydes, observing the character of the emperor, was rather reluctant concerning the matter...the emperor himself made a feeble attempt [to persuade him, but was unsuccessful].⁶¹⁶ Instead, Arsenios, an ‘unlettered’ and ‘unordained’ monk, was made deacon, priest, and patriarch in a single day.⁶¹⁷ Akropolites transformed the election into a function of political expediency rather than a deliberated choice. The haste of Arsenios’ promotion, necessitated by the absence of a patriarch to perform Theodoros II’s coronation,⁶¹⁸ cast patriarch and emperor in a negative light. Unlike Blemmydes, who was wrongly judged unqualified, Arsenios patently was unqualified for the role and yet was too arrogant to see it, as evidenced by his acceptance and haste. In accordance with Akropolites’ *Kaiserkritik*, Theodoros was apparently unconcerned that this imposter should oversee the spiritual needs of the *oikoumene*.⁶¹⁹ The association between reluctance and virtue, haste and incompetence, is retained. Akropolites’ use of the *topos* mimics the preference for an alternative candidate that we saw in some of the imperial cases. The reader infers that Blemmydes ‘should’ have been patriarch but was prevented.

There are obvious parallels between the use of imperial and ecclesiastical *topoi*. Perhaps this is not surprising since ‘Kings and bishops shared a phenomenology of office; they were subject to similar moral principles, and their duties were described in similar

⁶¹⁶ Blemmydes’ reluctance is seemingly corroborated by his own testimony, Blemmydes, *Autobiographia cive curriculum vitae necnom epistula universalior* 37-40. On Blemmydes’ life and activities, see Munitiz 1988: 14-28; Kladova 2013.

⁶¹⁷ ‘When he [Theodoros] learned that there was a monk on Lake Apollonias who had little experience of letters (he had reached only the level of grammar education), who was unordained and named Arsenios, as quickly as he could he sent people to fetch him. And he came.’ Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 105-107 (trans. Macrides 277-278).

⁶¹⁸ Note also Blemmydes’ comments on the need to anoint the emperor. *Autobiographia cive curriculum vitae necnom epistula universalior* 37. On Theodoros II’s accession, see Henty 1999: vol. 4.2, p. 514.

⁶¹⁹ Theodoros II and his father, Ioannes III, provided a contrast for Akropolites’ preferred Palaiologoi. In contrast to the evidence of Skoutariotes, Pachymeres, and Gregoras, both emperors were presented as ‘stingy’ and lacking the virtue of *philanthropia*; they were also poor administrators of the empire, and the people supposedly suffered under their rule. In describing an incident in which Theodoros II expressed serious concerns that he had been deceived by the Bulgarians over a recent treaty, Akropolites describes how he, Akropolites, was unjustly beaten at the behest of an irrational and highly irascible emperor. Theodoros’ instability was a sign of his unsuitability to exercise power, providing an excuse for the intrigues of Michael VIII. On these aspects of Akropolites’ *Kaiserkritik*, see Macrides 2007: 55-65; Macrides 2003: 71-72; Macrides 1994: 280-282.

terms.⁶²⁰ As in the west,⁶²¹ Byzantine notions of imperial and patriarchal power employed the rhetoric of divine origin. The functional duties of the patriarch and the emperor often overlapped. Both were perceived to have responsibilities to the *oikoumene*: patriarchs as spiritual leaders, emperors as God's administrative presence on earth.⁶²² This overlap even brought the two into conflict, and was partly responsible for the production of works seeking to define the quasi-legal functions of each.⁶²³ Therefore, Weiler's thesis explains how cross-cultural ideas of Christian rulership allowed the reluctant *topos* to be employed for ecclesiastics and rulers, although not unthinkingly, and not as an exact transposition between clerical and imperial models.⁶²⁴ However, where Weiler considers the *topos* to originate from Christian ideology, that ideology was actually grafted onto and worked in conjunction with a heavily politicised Roman expression of humility and the elective principle. The latter we have already seen acknowledged in the unanimous selection of the reluctant candidate as the best possible choice by representative groups of the army, the people, the metropolitans, and (implicitly) God. This was inextricably linked with the very creation of the empire.

As Wallace-Hadrill remarks, 'The Principate was established by an act of denial...

⁶²⁰ Weiler 2000: 25, 22-26.

⁶²¹ On conceptions of the 'divine origin' of ecclesiastical and royal power in the West, see Weiler 2000: esp. 24-39; Meens 1998; Schieffer 1998; Van Engen 1995.

⁶²² The emperor was responsible for 'bodies', the patriarch for 'souls'. Dagron 2003: ch. 3, esp. 231.

⁶²³ One understanding of the relationship between the patriarch and the emperor is described in the prooimion and titles of the *Eisagoge*, a 'legal manual', compiled c.879-886 that accompanied the more substantial legal codifications which formed the *Basilika*. The work, ascribed to Patriarch Photios, outlines the arrangement of the two powers before moving on to the more formal legal chapters. It defines the emperor as a 'legitimate authority', in contrast to the Hellenistic and Roman ideas of the emperor as 'above the law' or 'living law' - one who submitted to the authority of the law by choice. As Dagron notes, the *Eisagoge* was written at a time when Photios was most capable of making his ideas about the extent and purpose of imperial and patriarchal powers prevail. A council involving Constantinopolitan, papal, and other ecclesiastical representatives had just rehabilitated him as 'supreme pastor', and recognised his sphere of influence over the entire Christian community. Moreover, Basileios I, who had acceded to the throne through an act of murder, was embroiled in a dynastic dispute with his prospective heir, Leon VI. In contrast to the emperor's problematic public image, the patriarch was popular. However, if we compare *Eisagoge's* philosophy of the emperor-patriarch relationship with that expressed by Leon VI we find a very different picture. In Leon's works, the 'spiritual function of the emperor' and the 'dispensable state of the patriarch' are prominent. The political struggle over the nature and political status of emperor and patriarch with regard to one another remained unresolved throughout the history of the empire. Schminck 1985: 214, 227-229; Antonopoulou 1997: esp. 76-77; Dagron 2003:229-235. On the date of composition of the *Eisagoge*, see Schminck 1986: 1-15, who suggests the period 885-886 as most likely.

⁶²⁴ Weiler 2000: esp. 38.

ritually perpetuated from reign to reign'.⁶²⁵ In January 44 BCE Julius Caesar had been hailed as *Rex* by members of the Roman populace. He quickly dismissed the title by playing upon the name of the Marcius Rex family, 'I am not *King*, I am Caesar.'⁶²⁶ However, the ascription persisted and when a *diadem* was found upon a statue of Caesar it was quickly removed by two tribunes. When Caesar learned of this and complained that they had denied him the opportunity to properly reject kingship once again, he unlawfully dismissed them from office. In February, at the Lupercalia festival, he sat upon a gilded chair at the *rostra* of the Forum in Rome, wearing a purple toga and the red buskins of the Alban kings.⁶²⁷ Days earlier he had been named dictator for life,⁶²⁸ and he now staged another ceremonial rejection of kingship, a *recusatio imperii*. The *consul* Marcus Antonius, acting as a representative of the people by leading the priestly festivities, approached Caesar and placed upon his head a laurelled crown with a *diadem* threaded through it in Hellenistic fashion.⁶²⁹ The assembled crowd was initially torn between support for Caesar and apprehension about monarchy, but when Caesar threw the *diadem* aside, symbolically rejecting monarchy, they loudly approved. Antonius again tried to crown Caesar and was again refused. Caesar ended the struggle with the words 'Jupiter Optimus Maximus alone is king of the Romans', and ordered that the *diadem* be suspended in the Capitoline temple of Jupiter.⁶³⁰ The refusals have been viewed by recent scholarship as a concerted attempt by Caesar to publicly distance himself from anti-republican charges of *tyranny* and kingship. His power, already autocratic, was cautiously differentiated from a tyrant's through a carefully orchestrated rejection that

⁶²⁵ Wallace-Hadrill 1982: 36.

⁶²⁶ '... Caesarem se, non regem esse responderit...' Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars* I, ed. Rolfe I.79; "οὐκ εἰμι Βασιλεύς, ἀλλὰ Καῖσαρ," Appianus, *Roman History* III, *The Civil Wars*, ed. White II.16.108.

⁶²⁷ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars* I, ed. Rolfe I.79; Appianus, *Roman History* III, *The Civil Wars*, ed. White II.16.109. On Caesar's claimed descent from the Alban kings, see Sumi 2005: 69.

⁶²⁸ Appianus, *Roman History* III, *The Civil Wars*, ed. White II.16.106.

⁶²⁹ Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, *Caesar* 61.1-5. On the Hellenistic diadem, see Bardill 2012: 16-17.

⁶³⁰ For analysis of the event, see Billows 2009: 248-249; Canfora 2007: 282-283; Sumi 2005: 70-72; Fishwick 1993: 69-70; Gelzer 1968: 321. On the problems of the source material, see Balsdon 1958: 83, n.20

framed it as the will of the people.⁶³¹ However, the attempt proved unconvincing. Opponents read it as proof that Caesar desired kingship, had tested the waters, but had been frustrated by the crowd. His authority looked too much like tyranny and, when a prophecy circulated that only a king could conquer Parthia, his enemies struck, justifying his assassination as a preventative measure.⁶³²

Yet, Caesar's successors adopted his policy. Against the background of the civil wars, on 13 January 27 BCE Augustus appeared before the senate, renounced all of his powers, and declared his desire for a return to Republican governance.⁶³³ Again, the *recusatio* took the form of a well-choreographed ritual. Augustus appeared before a watching crowd, in a theatre, on his knees, tearing at his toga and begging to be excused.⁶³⁴ In response to his refusal, the senate desperately entreated him to change his mind and accept the powers they had granted. Their having forced (κατηνάγκασαν) him to do so,⁶³⁵ allowed the heretofore stigmatised assumption of power by a single man to be justified as 'the enthusiastic, unanimous and voluntary bestowal of absolute power.'⁶³⁶ Although contemporary sources wavered between admiration for Augustus' noble motives in rejecting power and criticism of a patently dishonest charade,⁶³⁷ the democratic overtones that the *recusatio* sought to provide were marked. The succession from Republic to Empire was achieved through a seemingly republican act, for the benefit of the *rei publicae causa*, against the will of Augustus. His unwillingness to allow the transition was witnessed

⁶³¹ Sumi 2005: 70-73.

⁶³² Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars* I, ed. Rolfe I.80.

⁶³³ ...ἀπολάβετε καὶ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν καὶ τὴν δημοκρατίαν, κομίσασθε καὶ τὰ ὄπλα καὶ τὰ ἔθνη τὰ ὑπήκοα, καὶ πολιτεύεσθε ὡσπερ εἰώθειτε. Dio 53.5, The best discussion of the event, with bibliography, is that provided by Huttner 2004: 81-106. See also, Gruen 2005; Cooley 2009: 127-128.

⁶³⁴ 'And when the people importuned him to accept the dictatorship, he bent down on one knee, with his toga thrown over his shoulders, and his breast exposed to view, begging to be excused.' Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars* I, ed. Rolfe II.52. 'As for the dictatorship, however, he did not accept the office, but went so far as to rend his garments when he found himself unable to restrain the people in any other way, either by argument or by entreaty; for, since he was superior to the dictators in the power and honour he already possessed, he properly guarded against the jealousy and hatred which the title would arouse.' Dio 54.1.

⁶³⁵ Dio 53.11.

⁶³⁶ Jakobson and Cotton 1985: 501.

⁶³⁷ Discussed in Huttner 2004: esp. 100ff.

publicly and permitted him to be dissociated with an act that was then accomplished by the senate. Reluctance became a republican expression.

Eder has demonstrated that Augustus' pseudo-foundational document, the *Res Gestae*,⁶³⁸ amounts to a list of 'deeds not done.'⁶³⁹ Its catalogue of the offices and honours that were turned down by Augustus⁶⁴⁰ presents him as 'the incorruptible guardian of tradition who took care, even against the will of the Senate and People, not to contradict the constitution of the fathers.'⁶⁴¹ His rebuffs of honours and titles, together with his historical staging of refusals of power, communicated his altruism and deference to the legal traditions of the Republic. He was not an individual who had self-servingly overstepped the bounds of the law in order to accrue personal power (charges levelled against Caesar). The *Res Gestae* instead portrayed him in the role of the receiver, passively accepting things offered to him by others.⁶⁴² Augustus' refusals exposed due caution in leading the state, turning down those things deemed unlawful and harmful to the common good. This humility and reverence for the established order showed 'him living up to his unprecedented name [and status].'⁶⁴³ Augustus' *auctoritas* was shown to have been earned through his deeds and virtue.⁶⁴⁴ He was an ideal ruler who had legitimised this status, in part, through his humble renunciations and deference to the law.

The ritual and its ideology remained of central importance to the imperial office throughout the Principate. Delays before assuming power were a recurring feature at the

⁶³⁸ The compilation and political ideology of *Res Gestae* are considered in the Introduction and extensive commentaries that accompany the Cooley 2009 edition and translation (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti*).

⁶³⁹ Eder 2005: 14. An early association with the concept of the emperor as the 'living law' might be suggested.

⁶⁴⁰ *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, §4-6.

⁶⁴¹ Eder 2005: 14.

⁶⁴² Freudenburg 2014: 107-108.

⁶⁴³ Freudenburg 2014: 107.

⁶⁴⁴ See in particular Dio's description of Augustus' rejection of power, and his possession already of abundant honour and virtue. Dio 54.1. On the links between Roman conceptions of moral leadership and *auctoritas*, see Galinsky 1996: esp. 12-14; Freudenburg 2014: 108.

commencement of a new emperor's reign.⁶⁴⁵ Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, and Vespasian each staged refusals.⁶⁴⁶ In March 37CE, Caligula's accession was forestalled by his deliberate staging of a renunciation of imperial power. It has been shown that he refused the senate's acclamation, and the formal offer of *imperium*, made on 18 March, and, instead, waited for ten days before publicly being persuaded to accept by the senate and people in an expression of *consensus*.⁶⁴⁷ His popularity and suitability to rule were at that time agreed upon by all. The *recusatii* of Claudius and Vespasian then introduced an overtly military gloss to the existing ritual.

The accession of Claudius (41CE) marked a turning point in imperial ceremonial. For the first time the praetorians used the acclamation not as a battlefield celebration of imperial victory but as a ritualised proclamation of a new *Princeps*.⁶⁴⁸ Caligula had just been assassinated in a conspiracy headed by the praetorians, and his nephew Claudius had conspicuously left the scene moments beforehand.⁶⁴⁹ Supposedly, Claudius was discovered hiding from the praetorians, forced out of the Palace, and taken by the praetorian 'Gratus' to the *area Palatina* to be proclaimed emperor. He was acclaimed and then proceeded to the

⁶⁴⁵ Huttner 2004: 151, goes as far as to say 'One could hardly be called an emperor, where you can safely assume that his reign was not initiated by a *recusatio*...'

⁶⁴⁶ Jakobson and Cotton 1985: 498, 501 n.35. For Caligula, Claudius, and Vespasian, see below (main text). For Nero, see Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars* II, ed. Rolfe VI.8. For Tiberius, see Tacitus, *Annals* 1.11-15.

⁶⁴⁷ Such a reading explains the inconsistencies in the sources regarding the dating of Caligula's accession: the *Acts of the Arval Brethren* record the 18 March 37, whereas Suetonius and Dio say the 28 March 37. For this argument see Jakobson and Cotton 1985. The suggestions of Balsdon 1934, and Brunt 1977: 98, that the senate needed ten days in order to vote Caligula the imperial powers, after *already* acclaiming him, can hardly be accurate and would be without precedent. On the ideological importance of *consensus*, and its role as an expression of the popular will see Lobur 2008; Ando 2000: 145-147; Jakobson and Cotton 1985: 499. See also, Béranger 1948: 178; Béranger 1953, who notes that '*consensus*' could (quite legitimately) imply the use of pressure to force a reluctant person to change their mind and accept the popular will.

⁶⁴⁸ Arena 2007: 329-331. On the historical development of Roman accession ceremonies, and for the ideas underpinning imperial succession, with bibliography, see Ensslin 1939; Ando 2000; Flaig 1992; Parsi 1963; Pani 2003.

⁶⁴⁹ The assassination of Caligula occurred on 24 January 41. The conspiracy was headed by the Praetorian commander Cassius Chaerea and had the support of numerous senators. It apparently intended to wipe out the rest of the imperial family: Caligula's wife and daughter were murdered along with several other family members, and noble individuals. For a detailed discussion of the assassination and background, with bibliography, see Major 1992; Levick 1990: 29-40.

castrum where he was acclaimed again.⁶⁵⁰ Claudius too, despite his probable involvement in the assassination of his predecessor,⁶⁵¹ was depicted as coming to power without seeking it. His ascent was a result of selection by the army and, yet again, reluctance was employed to conceal misdeeds and personal ambition, which denoted *tyranny*.

Vespasian's accession occurred in the context of the civil wars of 69CE.⁶⁵² Tacitus describes how Vespasian was proclaimed emperor by the troops in response to the elevation of Vitellius:

As Vespasian stepped from his quarters, a few soldiers who stood near... suddenly saluted him as emperor. Then the rest came up, calling him Caesar and Augustus... Their minds passed from apprehension to confidence of success... *The moment that he had dispelled the mist which his elevation... spread before his eyes*, he spoke as befitted a soldier...⁶⁵³

Vespasian was presented as an excellent and disbelieving candidate ambushed with new responsibilities. His character remained unchanged. Free of avarice, he had been chosen by fate and the soldiery, and it was feared that he might reject the elevation, hence his advocates' transition to 'confidence'. Josephus' narrative then enhanced the refusal through the drawing of swords after Vespasian had outlined his objections.⁶⁵⁴ Like Claudius, Vespasian's promotion was unsought, and justified as being for the wellbeing of Rome.⁶⁵⁵ Unlike Claudius (or his predecessors) the *recusatio* was wholly divorced from a civil locale. The entire sequence therefore held a uniquely martial aspect, providing a prototype for later performances 'in the field'.

⁶⁵⁰ Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* p.162, 216-217, 223-226; Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars* II, ed. Rolfe V.10.

⁶⁵¹ Major 1992.

⁶⁵² The proclamation occurred on 1 July 69 and was supported by the troops of Roman Egypt and Judea. For a detailed examination of the elevation, with bibliography, see Levick 1999: esp. 49. See also, Wellesley 1975; Morgan 2006.

⁶⁵³ Tacitus, *Historiae* 2.80. Translation adapted. *Emphasis added*.

⁶⁵⁴ Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 4.592-608. Translation adapted.

⁶⁵⁵ Hekster 2007: 99. At this time, emperors were increasing coming to be viewed as 'the body politic', hence fighting for them was seen as fighting for Rome itself. The presentation of personal interests as beneficial to the interests of the *res publica* was a consequence; and a means of ensuring one stayed in power. Ando 2000: 336-405; Benoist 2005; Hekster 2007: 100.

Recusatii have been termed ‘a uniquely Roman phenomenon’ in the ancient world, lacking parallels in any of the ‘monarchies of the East including the Hellenistic Kingdoms.’⁶⁵⁶ Caesar and Augustus’ staged rejections of power were born from the transition from Republic to Empire, yet refusals of office were not part of republican political practice where honours were hotly contested.⁶⁵⁷ However, philosophical and theoretical precedents did exist. Humility, a principal virtue in later Christian political ideology, received praise in the political philosophy of this period also.⁶⁵⁸ Further, the concept of assent to rule only under compulsion, or the threat of something worse, finds roots in Plato’s *Politeia*, in the ‘philosopher-king’.⁶⁵⁹ These politico-philosophical ideas later came to influence Roman intellectual conceptions of the relationship between the emperors and the people.⁶⁶⁰ Therefore, while *recusatii* may have been necessitated by political expedience, they echoed (and influenced) the traditions of political philosophy. We may add Huttner’s cautious identification of examples of *recusatii* in relation to the Sicilian tyrants:⁶⁶¹ it is quite possible that they attempted to legitimise and secure their positions of power by deference to the ‘public will’ and feigned reluctance.

In examining the history of the *topos* we see that the portrayal of reluctance was a normative aspect of the imperial position in times of dynastic conflict, and can be traced back to the establishment of the empire by Augustus, and to Caesar’s rejection of kingship.

⁶⁵⁶ Jakobson and Cotton 1985: 503. See also, Wallace-Hadrill 1982: 37.

⁶⁵⁷ Wallace-Hadrill 1982: 37 and n.41; Béranger 1953: 157-158. As Wallace-Hadrill has noted ‘Philosophy perhaps required that the electorate should invite the candidate, rather than letting him canvass them; but, as Cicero points out to Cato, this simply did not square with the facts of political life... Cato lost his consulship by this attitude according to Plutarch.’ Plutarch, *Parallel Lives, Cato the Younger*, 49.3-4: ‘...And besides this, he was not persuasive himself in canvassing for himself, but wished to preserve in his manners the dignity of his life, rather than to acquire that of the consulship by making the customary salutations; neither would he permit his friends to do the things by which the multitude is courted and captivated. He therefore failed to obtain the office.’

⁶⁵⁸ Xenophon’s praise of Spartan king Agesilaos II contrasts his active and modest style of rulership with that of the Persian king Cyrus. Agesilaos’ strict self-control, concern for friends, and affable nature, finds opposition in Persian self-indulgence and relaxed leadership. In short, Agesilaos’ was possessed of *tapeinotês* (humility).

⁶⁵⁹ Nichols 1984.

⁶⁶⁰ Rees 2012: esp. 198-200; Körner 2005. On the influence of these ideas of Kingship on Roman and Byzantine imperial ideology, see Goodenough 1928; Wallace-Hadrill 1982: 33-35; Hunger 1978: 139-170, esp. 156.

⁶⁶¹ Huttner 2004: 43-80.

The political role of reluctance in ancient Rome is similar to what we see in medieval Europe. Hesitancy to accept a position provided evidence of virtue, and thus morally legitimised an individual's future tenure of that position. We also see that there were shared performative aspects associated with its usage, including the use of force and *consensus* to prompt compliance. This emphasis on promotion through the consent of influential social groups easily coexisted with pre-existing philosophies of ideal rulership and alongside later Christian notions of divine favour that replaced 'fortune' and 'fate'.⁶⁶²

Rhetoric and ritual?

The sheer frequency with which the *topos* recurs in the histories, combined with an understanding of its origins and functions, raises two final questions. First, are we to interpret its usage in the later empire as solely a rhetorical device of politicising historiography? Second, if we are not, were there formalised historical procedures and rites concomitant with it?

The first question poses numerous problems. To begin, we are reliant upon the narrative accounts for our evidence. These works are not simply a lens through which historical fact can be reconstructed. As repeatedly established, they incorporate the political concerns of their authors and are works of literature too. The apparent exaggeration of elements of the descriptions⁶⁶³ and the mimesis of other features,⁶⁶⁴ in order to entertain the reader or demonstrate erudition, means that we must question their factual reliability.⁶⁶⁵ Furthermore, the politicised functions of the *topos* mean that its usage must always be

⁶⁶² For example, Ammianus, *Rerum Gestarum* 4.8-14 notes the role played by 'Fortune' in assuring Julian's promotion.

⁶⁶³ Theodosios III's absconsion to 'a mountain', or Andronikos I's farcical refusal in Eustathios of Thessalonike's narrative for example. See above, pages 102 and 117 respectively.

⁶⁶⁴ Eustathios of Thessalonike's apparent borrowing and enhancing of Anna Komnene's description of her father's investiture with the imperial footwear for example. See above, page 117 and footnote 578.

⁶⁶⁵ On these literary problems with Byzantine historical narratives as sources for reconstructing 'historical fact', see Lilie 2014: esp. 176-180.

suspected. However, a reasonable circumstantial argument may be proposed on the basis of established tradition and historical prevalence.

That Augustus staged a rejection of powers, and a reluctant acceptance of the imperial position, is not disputed. The exact circumstances may be distorted by the historical accounts, but the event itself occurred. Moreover, his successors under the *Principate* are reported to have done just the same at the outset of their reigns.⁶⁶⁶ The origin of the tradition therefore has its basis in historical practice, and numerous imperial aspirants over the course of fifteen centuries are reported to have mimicked it. An official panegyric for Constantine I and two official messages sent to Constantius by Julian attest to *recusatio imperii*-variants performed by these emperors. Anastasius' appearance in the Hippodrome in 512, without a crown, is evidently an example of the *recusatio* in action once again, in a form related to that of Caesar and Augustus'. The offers to cede power to others made by Phocas and Herakleios during their proclamations, and those connected with Alexios I and Isaakios II, are additional instances of a *recusatio*-variant being practised. Theodora's forced accession and assumption of imperial insignia is also potentially truthful since her overthrow of Michael was generally considered 'legitimate' (given her recognised ties to the throne) and reluctance was therefore unnecessary as a rhetorical justification for her involvement.⁶⁶⁷ The accounts of Andronikos I's theatrical acceptance of power, are also largely in agreement about the conditions, something we might not expect given their different treatments of his disinclination. Andronikos may also have attempted to make an Anastasian-style *recusatio* in the hours before his overthrow.⁶⁶⁸ In addition we have three sources, including the

⁶⁶⁶ Huttner 2004: 151.

⁶⁶⁷ Theodora's broken monastic vows might suggest a reason for her presentation as unwilling to accept the popular acclamation in Psellos' *Chronographia*. However, this use would be without precedent.

⁶⁶⁸ Choniates' clearly partisan account (imbued with later Angeloi propaganda and symbolism) of Andronikos' downfall includes a description of the emperor's attempts to mollify the riotous crowd supporting Isaakios II. We are told that, as the crowd surrounded the Great Palace and called for Isaakios' promotion, Andronikos appeared to them from the walls of the Palace. After a brief attempt at resistance, he dispatched a messenger advising them that he was willing to cede the throne to his older son, Manuel. The offer is curious for several reasons. First, it was Andronikos' second-born son (c.1159/1160) Ioannes, who was then his heir-designate.

emperor himself, attesting to Michael VIII's reluctance to claim the office, and his subsequent acceptance of what was 'offered'.

Additionally, we might tentatively adduce evidence from Genesios' account of Basileios I's coronation as co-emperor, which recalls elements of Andronikos'. Genesios alone records how Michael III contrived a 'ridiculous' plan. On the morning of Pentecost he asked two of his attendants to find Basileios and confine him in a room. Basileios was held by the arms and stripped. Michael then gave him 'thirty lashes with a double-whip, and told him that this would serve as a reminder of his own benevolent disposition toward him.'⁶⁶⁹ Basileios was crowned co-emperor in Hagia Sophia that very day. Obviously, the episode is loaded with homoerotic, cruel, and erratic overtones to further Genesios' *Kaiserkritik*, but if we look beyond these, it can be read as a display of humble reluctance before the acceptance of power. The lashes serve as a physical reinforcement of Michael's humbling statement, bear a resemblance to rituals of humility and penance known from the period,⁶⁷⁰ and integrate with other (threats of) violence against reluctant candidates. Just as Choniates

Ioannes had replaced Andronikos' son-in-law, Alexios (an illegitimate son of Manuel I with his niece, and husband to Andronikos' daughter Eirene) as the emperor's successor early in his reign. Ioannes appears to have been his father's favourite son, and to have gone along with (or have shared the blame for) Andronikos' misdeeds since he was reportedly slandered by Constantine Tripsychos. Manuel, by contrast, appears to have been somewhat estranged from his father, and both Eustathios and Choniates attempt to shield him from blame for the worst of Andronikos' crimes in their accounts – something they do not do for any other individual involved with Andronikos' regime. They even comment that Manuel had been horrified by his father's actions in killing Alexios II. Andronikos' final, desperate, change in successional order may be explained either by Ioannes' absence from Constantinople at the time, or by his brother's apparently superior reputation (which, it must be noted, did not spare him from Isaakios' purge). For the scene at the Great Palace, see Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 346 (trans. Magoulias 191). For Andronikos' plans for the succession, see Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 254-257, 315, 425-426 (trans. Magoulias 142-143, 174, 234). On the reputations of Ioannes and Manuel, see Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 315, 356 (trans. Magoulias 174, 197-198); Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessalonike*, ed. Melville-Jones 52-54.

⁶⁶⁹ '...he contrived the following plan, even though it was ridiculous... he locked Basileios in a room and ordered his attendants with a nod to strip him naked and stretch out his arms. When his orders were carried out, Basileios was shocked and surprised, but, since he possessed a vigorous spirit, he recovered his self-composure and remained calm before the emperor. The latter gave him thirty lashes with a double-whip, and told him that this would serve as a reminder of his own benevolent disposition toward him...' ...ἐπεφύη τούτῳ σκοπὸς κἄν γελοῖος, ὃν τῶν πρὸς αὐτὸν οὐ πᾶσιν ἐγνώπισεν... τινὶ κοιτώνων ἐγκλείσας Βασίλειον τοῖς σὺν αὐτῷ προστάττει ἐν νεύματι ἀπογυμνοῦν τοῦτον τῷ χειρὶ τε διατείνειν. Τοῦτου δὲ γινομένου κατὰ τὸ προσταχθέν, ὁ Βασίλειος καταπλήττεται, ἀλλ' ὁμως νεανικὸς ὢν τῆς ἐκπλήξεως ἀνακτάται, ἑαυτοῦ τε καὶ τοῦ βασιλέως καθίσταται, καὶ μαστίζεται παρ' αὐτοῦ διπλοῖς ἐν φραγελλίοις λ', μνήμην ἔχειν τοῦτον ἀνάγραπτον τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν φιλοστόργου προθέσεως. *Genesios*, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 79 (trans. Kaldellis 98-99). Translation modified.

⁶⁷⁰ For example: the whipping that occurred as part of Romanos I's penance. See above, page 179.

reports Andronikos was forcibly taken by the arms and divested of his old attire, Basileios was taken in hand and similarly divested. In both cases resistance was feared. In both cases a co-emperor was being appointed. In both cases he was crowned within twenty-four hours. Might this be evidence of a comparable procedure for expressing humility before assuming co-imperial status? If a senior emperor should appear humble, surely his colleagues should too.⁶⁷¹

The ‘providential loop’ cases of Leon V, Nikephoros II, and Constantine X are problematic given their overt political-rhetorical form. However, the speech reportedly made by Nikephoros following his proclamation in the field does seem likely to have an element of truth to it, especially given the propagandist benefits.⁶⁷² Skylitzes’ confirmation of the Nikephorian version of events is additionally suggestive. Testimonies of the *nolle episcopari* in Byzantium further reinforce the argument: a display of reluctant humility in the episcopal realm had obvious parallel benefits. Finally, we may cite Weiler’s evidence of comparable rituals performed by westerners.

On the basis of this collective evidence, it appears that displays of reluctance at the moment of proclamation were sometimes more than just a literary-rhetorical expression of legitimacy. This does not mean that we should trust the sources unquestioningly, or that every record of reluctance was actually enacted, only that rituals communicating reluctance existed in practice. The *topos* likely emerged as a result of historic displays in the ancient

⁶⁷¹ Kinnamos’ description of the accession of Manuel I Komnenos, although not an example of the reluctance *topos* per se, is possibly another instance of humility on display before the assumption of the throne. Accordingly, after Ioannes II’s speech citing his reasons for the elevation of his younger surviving son in place of the older (absent) Isaakios, Manuel knelt down and bathed the floor with tears. The nobles present were filled with joy and tears. After this display Manuel was invested with the general’s cloak, and the diadem. It is probable, given that the death of Ioannes, and Manuel’s grieving for him is dealt with *after* this scene (at the start of the second book), that this was a display of sincere humility prompted by his father’s decision to appoint him. This humility also would have been witnessed by those who Ioannes asked to confirm his decision (i.e. his electors), the nobles. Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 28-29 (trans. Brand 30-32).

⁶⁷² Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 41-44 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 92-93); Michael Psellos, *Historia Syntomos* ed. Aerts 99.

world, became particularly associated with contested successions in late antiquity,⁶⁷³ and later developed into a versatile rhetorical tool of propaganda concerning imperial ‘legitimacy’. Future studies might examine the particular ways in which authors employed the *topos* throughout their work(s), and its use within the specific literary and intellectual traditions in which these authors were writing. Its total absence from some works (i.e. Attaleiates),⁶⁷⁴ and relative abundance in others (Malalas and Theophanes in particular), must be a result of differences in textual traditions, and influence our understanding of intertextuality in Byzantium.

Regarding the form that these rituals took, we are better informed. We have examined numerous examples of individual reluctance and, although the particulars of each case vary, shared features abound. The ritual of reluctance, distinct from examples of Augustan-*recusatii*, can be broken down into discrete phases, with variations that could be exploited in order to suit the situation and enhance the communicative aspect. Naturally, these ritual elements were appended to the proclamation of a new emperor.

First, the unwilling individual had been pre-selected by a symbolically representative assemblage and his election by this group was essentially guaranteed. Usually, they were to accede without the permission of the reigning emperor, or under unusual circumstances.⁶⁷⁵ For a candidate in the field, it was at this point that the command position was surrounded by supporters who called for his elevation. A delegation of prominent figures would be dispatched to the proposed candidate in order to inform him of the decision that had been

⁶⁷³ When it stops being regularly reported at the outset of an emperor’s reign.

⁶⁷⁴ Who cites no examples of reluctant emperors, but uses the *topos* of the *nolle episcopari* in relation to Xiphilinos’ reluctant tenure of the patriarchal throne.

⁶⁷⁵ Basileios I, Andronikos I, Michael VIII, and Ioannes VI may be the sole exceptions to this rule in the period covered by this study (306-1453). Basileios I’s elevation to co-imperial status was at the behest of Michael III. Andronikos’ accession to the throne was surely verified, willingly or unwillingly, by the emperor Alexios II. Michael VIII’s accession was confirmed by Ioannes IV. Ioannes VI rejected the calls of Andronikos III to accept co-emperorship, but later cited this as a proximate source for his claims to the throne and regency.

made on his behalf.⁶⁷⁶ In the case of Andronikos, a candidate already in possession of Constantinople and hosted at the Blachernai Palace, this process was performed in the relatively more intimate setting of the imperial court: in the *Polytimos* chamber, and, most unusually, at the urging of Alexios II.⁶⁷⁷ If Genesisios' description of Basileios' promotion describes a comparable ritual, a similar process must have happened in the Great Palace.⁶⁷⁸

After the candidate had been selected a perfunctory conference was performed. Ostensibly, this was in order to debate the decision and to persuade the candidate to accept. He was therefore exhorted to assume the throne by his peers. At this stage in the process, the nominee displayed reluctance and repeatedly refused the honour. Typically, an excuse for his aversion was provided to his supporters: the candidate could not accept the offer either because of the great difficulty associated with overthrowing the reigning emperor and the oaths sworn to him (legality),⁶⁷⁹ for fear of the drastic consequences of plunging the empire into civil war (morality),⁶⁸⁰ or because he was unsure that he was truly qualified to rule (humility).⁶⁸¹

The reluctant ruler might then proffer the name of a co-conspirator or some other, in

⁶⁷⁶ For example Michael I, Leon V, Nikephoros II, Isaakios I, Nikoulitzas Delphinias, Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder, and Alexios I. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 5 (trans. Wortley 4); Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 502 (trans. Mango and Scott 685); Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 40 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 91); Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 487 (trans. Wortley 454-455); Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij p.70; Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 227-231; Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 74-75 (trans. Sewter 67-68).

⁶⁷⁷ Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville Jones 50-51, contradicts Choniates' later testimony and claims that the display of reluctant investiture was performed at the Church of the Savior in the Chalke.

⁶⁷⁸ *Genesisios*, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 79 (trans. Kaldellis 98-99). The Great Palace is not specifically named, but Genesisios records that Michael III had left the Palace at St Mamas and returned to Constantinople in order to carry out his 'ridiculous' plan. Since Basileios I was crowned later that day we may infer that the Great Palace was the setting for Genesisios' story.

⁶⁷⁹ See above, page 98.

⁶⁸⁰ Julian, Germanus, Bardas Tourkos, Leon V, Nikephoros II, Delphinias (implicitly). Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum*, 20.8.2-17; Theophylaktos Simokattes, *Historiae*, ed. de Boor 115-116 (trans. Whitby 74); Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Bidez and Parmentier 224-225 (trans. Whitby 294-296); Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 479, 502 (trans. Mango and Scott 657, 685); Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 40-44 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 91-93); Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij p.70.

⁶⁸¹ Salutius, Valentinian I, Michael I, Leon V, Ioannes I, and Isaakios I. Zosimus, *Histoire Nouvelle* 3.36; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum* 26.2.1-6; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 5, 7, 487, 489-491 (trans. Wortley 4, 6-7, 454, 456-457); Michael Psellos, *Historia Syntomos* ed. Aerts 99.

his opinion, worthier and better-qualified individual to be promoted instead. A potential, more theatrical, procedure might see him feign an attempt to hide from his backers. The candidate's suggested successor and attempts to resist promotion were quickly and publicly dismissed by his supporters. This served as a means of demonstrating the broad support enjoyed by a candidate and united participants behind the common cause, one of the primary functions of the ritual.

From this point, the opportunity to resist was denied. Either the individual was taken forcibly in hand and restrained, or else threatened with physical harm if he continued to resist.⁶⁸² The frequent mention of the drawing of swords and threats of bodily harm, may not be simple rhetoric: performative enactments of coercion would certainly communicate the intended message of forced promotion, and could help to unify supporters by generating an esprit de corps among participants and observers.

A final phase of the ritual occurred during the investiture with elements of the imperial insignia during the proclamation, never during the coronation. As a component of the insignia was offered⁶⁸³ the candidate would be seen to physically resist it being placed upon his person or handed over into his care. The reluctant emperor would shake his head and body, or kick his feet, in a symbolic display of resistance that would physically prevent the investiture from taking place and visually declare his unwillingness.⁶⁸⁴ As with Alexios I, the insignia were suitably forced upon him and his struggles henceforth ceased.

⁶⁸² Germanus, Michael I, Leon V, Nikoulitzas Delphinas, Nikephoros II. Theophylaktos Simokattes, *Historiae*, ed. de Boor 115-116 (trans. Whitby 74); Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Bidez and Parmentier 224-225 (trans. Whitby 294-296); Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 5 (trans. Wortley 4); *Genesios*, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 4 (trans. Kaldellis 6); Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij p.70; Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 40 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 91).

⁶⁸³ Other than Julius Caesar's *recusatio*, I am not aware of any references to a crown/diadem being rejected. Usually, it was the red/purple sandals or buskins, or the purple and gold embroidered *chlamys* or *loros* costumes that were refused. The case of Anastasius' appearance in the Hippodrome in 512 is assuredly not comparable.

⁶⁸⁴ Ioannes Doukas, Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder, Alexios I, and Andronikos I. Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 177, 227-231; Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, Reinsch and Kambylis 74-75 (trans. Sewter 67-68); Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, Melville-Jones 48-51; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 270-271 (trans. Magoulias 150-151).

With this forced investiture accomplished, ritual reluctance had served its purpose and the proclamation could continue. The new emperor had been selected, apparently against his humble protestations, as the best possible candidate for the role. His partisans had rejected all other potential contenders, including the reigning emperor in Constantinople. A symbolic affirmation of his ‘election’, and his suitability, was then immediately proffered through acclamations pronouncing him ‘Worthy!’⁶⁸⁵

Chapter Summary

The *topos*, and ritual, of the reluctant emperor clearly fulfilled numerous functions as a propagandist’s tool. Associated with contentious successions, authors employed it in order to provide a usurper, or one lacking direct claims of continuity with the previous regime, an alternative source of legitimacy with which to argue the ‘legality’ and ‘morality’ of their accession. These persons were humbly invited to express the elective will of the army, the people and, by extension, the divine will of God, and were thus acting for the common good of the empire. These justifications meant that they could not be considered individuals improperly aspiring to power, but could instead be presented as ‘rightful’ emperors all along. If successful, their conquest of the throne, and the deposition of the reigning emperor, merely marked the assumption of an imperial rule that was already morally theirs.⁶⁸⁶ In resisting them, opponents undermined their own suitability to rule. They simultaneously interfered with popular consensus, divine will, and the common good, and revealed themselves to be motivated by a desire to hold onto power when a better candidate was at hand.

Unchecked desires and thoughtless deeds were visible expressions of the fickle

⁶⁸⁵ “ἄξιός.” Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. Reiske I, 194 (trans. Moffatt and Tall I, 194).

⁶⁸⁶ Weiler 2000: 18.

character and moral deficiencies inherent within the ‘tyrant-emperor’ model.⁶⁸⁷ Reluctant emperors were the antithesis of this model. They were not motivated by a need to satiate personal pride or ambition. Nor had they acted in an arrogant fashion, thoughtlessly inciting civil war and spilling the blood of fellow Christians for no good reason. Instead, the *topos* presents them as having been forced into claiming *basileia* against their will. The decision was not rushed, but subject to the deepest of considerations. Personal misgivings had to be overcome and forced aside so that the reluctant individual may then truly act for the benefit of the empire. Their supporters did not question their qualification but, at the moment of proclamation and investiture, these individuals were filled with self-doubt. They repeatedly protested their unworthiness and were often dragged or otherwise compelled to accept the decision that had been made by their peers on their behalf. These expressions, not only endearing, further served to emphasise that the reluctant emperor was free from hubris, would listen to advice, and seriously contemplate his actions when in office. Moreover, he would not easily fall prey to temptation and succumb to the allure of power. He thus demonstrated himself to be genuinely humble and concerned with the well-being of his people. He would always want them to be governed by the best possible persons, and his reign, accordingly, was guaranteed to be a model of good rulership.

The qualities of the reluctant emperor were almost a recitation of those of the ideal emperor, a virtuous individual who recognised that the imperial position was a functional duty and an administrative role not lightly to be assumed. Where a tyrant was blind to this, the moral emperor governed with the empire’s best interests at heart, and mimicked the imperial virtues that were consistently expressed in advice literature. The reluctant ruler, one who sought advice rather than sole counsel, and who recognised the needs of the empire

⁶⁸⁷ On the historic presentation of tyranny in Byzantine literature, with particular reference to the *Historia* of Niketas Choniates, see Simpson 2013a: 163-164; Simpson 2013b; see also, Head 1972, on the portrayal of the ‘tyrant’ Justinian II.

before his own, was the best suited to such a role. The undermining of the *topos* involved the inversion of this model, revealing the reluctant ideal as a deceptive tyrant all along.

V. THE SOURCES OF GUILT

The preceding chapters have explored the mechanisms of usurpation from the espousal of justifications to the moment of coronation. We have seen that ‘moral’ and ‘elective’ conceptions of rulership were embedded in those mechanisms which allowed a usurper to justify and legitimise his rebellion. However, conspiracy and usurpation often connoted ‘guilty’ and ‘treasonous’ activities in the eyes of political opponents and even one’s supporters. The form and extent of one’s guilt was largely dependent upon the particular observer and circumstances, but three charges regularly recur in the histories: breaking oaths, spilling blood, and engaging in civil war. In order to better understand the perception of a usurper as a guilty figure, and to provide context for our study of imperial repentance, the present chapter examines the significance ascribed to these acts by contemporaries.

At the outset, some comments on the legal definition of treason will prove instructive. Roman treason laws underwent relatively few major revisions. The Republican-era *perduellio* interpretation was martial, designating citizens who took up arms against the *res publica* as ‘traitors’ devoid of legal rights.⁶⁸⁸ The *Twelve Tables* prescribed trial for those accused of conspiring with foreign enemies against the *res publica* or any citizen, and advocated execution of the guilty.⁶⁸⁹ In 48 BCE the *lex Iulia maiestatis* repeated the *perduellio* interpretation, safeguarding the *politeia* through prescriptions intended to preserve public and military order. However, the law now restricted the influence of military governors by tying crimes of *maiestas minuta populi Romani*,⁶⁹⁰ crimes deliberately ambiguous in interpretation, to those who refused to leave a province within thirty-days of

⁶⁸⁸ Harries 2007: 72-77.

⁶⁸⁹ *The Twelve Tables* 9.5.

⁶⁹⁰ ‘The diminution of the majesty/greatness of the Roman people’. Cicero, *De Inventione* 2.53, translated in Garnsey 1968: 145, n.17.

being replaced.⁶⁹¹ By the composition of the *Codex Theodosianus*, crimes of *maiestas* included those against the emperor as a crime against the *politeia* itself, and held quasi-sacrilegious connotations in concert with the strengthening of the imperial sacral charisma.⁶⁹² Threats against an emperor, his councillors, and members of the senate or administration, were now deemed punishable by death, *damnatio*, and confiscations.⁶⁹³ ‘Abuse’ of the emperor was also criminalised (something resisted by Augustus and his successors during the Principate) and punished on a discretionary basis.⁶⁹⁴ The threat from within had prompted an expansion of the laws, in order to secure the imperial position.⁶⁹⁵ However, treason was not now solely associated with crimes against an emperor, since treasonable activities against the *res publica* continued to be punished as a separate offense. In 469, the senate found Arvandus, the *praefectus* of Gaul, guilty of *maiestas* for conspiring with the Goths against the Roman people, and a contemporary pointedly asserted that Arvandus had ‘forgotten’ that treason was not restricted to misdeeds against the emperor alone.⁶⁹⁶

These interpretations remained essentially unchanged in Byzantium. The *Codex Iustinianus* reaffirmed the ultimate punishment as death and confiscation of assets and, as in the later *Ekloga* and commentaries of Balsamon, imperial discretion was advised in sentencing.⁶⁹⁷ Those guilty due to carelessness or insanity were considered deserving of contempt and pity, those with genuine grievances (recognised to have suffered injustices) were to apologise. Conspiracies against ‘the emperor’ or ‘the *oikoumene*’ were grouped

⁶⁹¹ Harries 2007: esp. 77.

⁶⁹² Harries 2007: esp. 77-81; Garnsey 1968: esp. 145.

⁶⁹³ *Codex Theodosianus* 9.8.1-8.

⁶⁹⁴ Garnsey 1968: 145-146.

⁶⁹⁵ As Harries 2007: 83, notes: ‘While the security of the empire was not... at risk from outside enemies, the application of the *perduellio* interpretation of treason mattered less than the emperor’s... obsession with his... own security and status.’ See also, Garnsey 1968.

⁶⁹⁶ Arvandus had negotiated a settlement in which he promised to cede territory to the Goths in exchange for their support. On this incident, see Harries 1994: 159-166; Harries 2007: 83.

⁶⁹⁷ Zachariä von Lingenthal 1892: 336-337, §78.

together, but distinguished, and had always necessitated death since in either case conspirators were said to be ‘aiming at the destruction of the entire community’.⁶⁹⁸ The *Ekloga* enumerated the penalty in its third statute, listing treason alongside violations of church sanctuaries (17.1), perjury on the bible (17.2), and assaults against priests (17.4). The hierarchy of penalties indicates that pseudo-sacrilegious connotations still applied, with treason considered second only to crimes against God. However, it is noteworthy that the laws were concerned less with the act of treason itself, than with its supposed effect on the wider community. The same emphasis underlies the narratives of guilt.

Oaths and loyalties

Oaths sworn to authority figures were a longstanding custom cementing fidelities in ancient Rome and Byzantium.⁶⁹⁹ Over centuries, their formulae expanded and new oaths were introduced to formally bind each socio-political group’s loyalties to the emperor. Roman military law had required that soldiers swear a sacred oath (*Sacramentum*) to their commanding general. Failure to swear the oath at levy, muster, or times of renewal, rendered one a deserter without legal protections.⁷⁰⁰ On the accession of a new emperor the army, officials, and civilians, swore allegiance to him. Augustus’ *Res Gestae* records the inaugural communal oath sworn before his campaign against Marcus Antonius in 32 BCE: ‘The whole of Italy *voluntarily* took an oath of allegiance to me and demanded me as its leader in the war which I afterwards won at Actium. The same oath was taken by the provinces of Gaul,

⁶⁹⁸ *Ekloga* 17.3: ‘Anyone who secretly plots or conspires against the emperor, or conspires with others against him, or [against] the *oikoumene*, shall from that hour be suitably put to death on the ground that he is aiming at the destruction of the entire community...’ On execution as the historic penalty for treason, see Garnsey 1968: 146; Zachariä von Lingenthal 1892: 337.

⁶⁹⁹ Svoronos 1951, remains the essential study of oaths of loyalty in Byzantium. For the period of late Antiquity, see Lee 2007: esp. 51-57. For the post-1204 period, see Angelov 2007: 324-347; Guran 2008; Rochette 2008. We await a comprehensive study of middle-Byzantine era oaths.

⁷⁰⁰ C.E. Brand 1968: 91-93; Southern 2007: 134; Homo 1950: 280-282.

Spain, Africa, Sicily, and Sardinia.⁷⁰¹ The oaths of Augustus' immediate successors may have been modelled on this formula.⁷⁰² In the fourth century, the military oath became Christianised. Soldiers now swore by God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the imperial majesty, to perform whatever tasks the emperor ordered, in service to the Roman state, without deserting.⁷⁰³ Similar oaths sworn by the soldierly, including the Varangians and other elite units, were ubiquitous throughout Byzantine history.⁷⁰⁴

Beginning in the fifth century, when the proclamation of Leo I (457) was accompanied by a pledge from assembled *archontes*, 'not to conspire against him or the *politeia*',⁷⁰⁵ an oath became mandatory for all officials before their investiture.⁷⁰⁶ The 'appointment' ceremonies that accompanied these oaths involved the new functionary receiving insignia corresponding to their rank. Oaths were renewed upon the accession of each new emperor and records were retained.⁷⁰⁷ Under the Palaiologoi, officials resigned *en-masse* upon the death of an emperor and resumed their office by swearing fidelity to his successor.⁷⁰⁸ Thus 'investiture oaths' sought to link personal loyalty to the *basileus* with the administrative apparatus of state. Duty to the state implied faithful service to the emperor.

In an attempt to further ensure hereditary-dynastic security, from the eighth century the formal oath was expanded to incorporate support for an emperor's heir-designate.⁷⁰⁹ According to Theophanes, Leon IV insisted upon a written oath that guaranteed his son Constantine's succession in the event of his own death, before the boy's coronation as co-

⁷⁰¹ 'Iuravit in mea verba tota Italia *sponte sua*, et me belli quo vici ad Actium ducem depoposcit; iuravent in eadem verba provinciae Galliae, Hispaniae, Africa, Sicilia, Sardinia.' *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, §25.2.

⁷⁰² Southern 2007: 134; Pagán 2004: 14. As the exact wording of these oaths is nowhere extant, this must remain a (generally accepted) conjecture.

⁷⁰³ Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* trans. Milner II.5. On the oaths of this period, see Southern 2007: 134; Lee 2007: 52-53.

⁷⁰⁴ On the Varangians' oaths of loyalty, and their especially well-known reputation for upholding these promises, see Blöndal 1978: 95, 115, 120.

⁷⁰⁵ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. Reiske I, 91 (trans. Moffatt and Tall I, 91).

⁷⁰⁶ Svoronos 1951: 108.

⁷⁰⁷ Usually deposited in the Great Palace or Hagia Sophia. Svoronos 1951: 106-108; Guillou 1997: 203-204.

⁷⁰⁸ Katakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen and Niebuhr I, 16 (trans. Fatouros and Krischer I, 21); Svoronos 1951: 108.

⁷⁰⁹ Nichanian 2008: esp. 83; Rapp 2016: 27-28.

emperor. Written copies were deposited in Hagia Sophia on Holy Saturday, and their terms recited.⁷¹⁰ Leon's reign also marks the earliest attested occasion of all Byzantine citizens having to swear fidelity to the emperor, but it is unclear if this practice continued uninterrupted thereafter.⁷¹¹ Similar episodes between the eighth and eleventh centuries have been identified by Guiland, and Svoronos proposes Manuel I's accession as the point at which this 'universal oath' became a regular, periodic, requirement.⁷¹² Oaths also constituted a fundamental component in all peace-settlements and reconciliations with rebels when individuals of questionable loyalty were encouraged to reaffirm fidelity, as Michael VIII was made to do after his treason trial (1253), and return from exile (1258).⁷¹³

Emperor-Patriarch relations became subject to comparable assurances. From 491 (at least), emperors were required to provide a written assurance/profession of Orthodoxy, representative of official teachings, before coronation by the patriarch.⁷¹⁴ In practice this meant very little since, as with Leon III's promulgation of Iconoclast policies, an emperor might later pursue an altogether different ideology that could still be considered 'Orthodox'.⁷¹⁵ In the period of Iconoclasm, probably under Leon IV, was innovated an oath from clergy to emperor that persisted thereafter.⁷¹⁶ Eventually, therefore, oaths existed to formally certify the loyalty of all potential internal sources of opposition, and clauses

⁷¹⁰ The day before Constantine's coronation on Easter Sunday, 24 April 775. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 449-450 (trans. Mango and Scott 620-621); Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 248-249.

⁷¹¹ Theophanes lists the *themata*, senators, Constantinopolitan *tagmata*, and the citizens and merchants of Constantinople amongst this group.

⁷¹² Guiland 1947: 146; Svoronos 1951: 110, followed by Angelov 2007: 327 and n.61, 62, citing the comments of Niketas Choniates regarding Manuel I's requests for such oaths in 1143 and 1171 being innovative. Histories written after 1204 repeatedly refer to it as a customary observance.

⁷¹³ Michael swore fidelity to Theodoros II and Ioannes IV. Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 92-100, 144 (trans. Macrides 259-263, 326); Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 37-39, 45; Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 59; Angold 1975a: 66; Nicol 1993: 30.

⁷¹⁴ The first attested instance of this practice relates to Anastasios I's coronation in 491. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 136 (trans. Mango and Scott 208). See also, *Pseudo-Kodinos*, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov 210-213; Rapp 2016: 28; Dölger 1950: 146-147.

⁷¹⁵ On Leon III's iconoclast politics, see Brubaker and Haldon 2011: esp. 69-155, with full bibliography.

⁷¹⁶ Svoronos 1951: 113-114.

forbidding aid to rival imperial claimants were found in each.⁷¹⁷ And since everyone had pledged loyalty, in theory, disloyalty was a concern for everyone.

But how was oath-breaking understood and explained? Guillou follows Svoronos in concluding that the swearing of oaths by officials (but generally applicable) ‘was a religious act that strengthened imperial authority and served as a symbolic recognition by the functionaries of the divine nature of imperial power.’⁷¹⁸ The sacral charisma of the imperial office necessitated loyalty and obedience, and the sacrality of the oath ensured its significance. The canons of Saint Basil, had prescribed a ten-year period of excommunication for one who broke fidelity, although through *oikonomia* this period might be reduced.⁷¹⁹ Analogies to baptism were commonplace,⁷²⁰ and eleventh- and twelfth-century monastic treatises often urged restraint in swearing oaths, even in trivial matters, for fear of the spiritual consequences of breaking them.⁷²¹

These spiritual concerns are apparent in episodes recounting conspiracies and usurpation, where broken oaths are especially prominent amongst the charges levelled against usurpers.⁷²² When in 790 the Armeniakon *themata* disavowed Eirene’s authority in a loyalist revolt on behalf of her son Constantine VI oaths were a contributing factor. Theophanes records that the troops declined to swear never to accept Constantine’s authority while Eirene lived, and pointedly refused to acclaim her before Constantine. They had supposedly forgotten that, fifteen-years previous, they had sworn exactly that. Therefore, when they later acclaimed Constantine as emperor, they were believed to have committed

⁷¹⁷ For example, the oath of Patriarch Autoreianos includes the clauses: ‘We will never foster ideas or plots which will go against you, your body, or your throne. We will not be partisans of any other, of an enemy of your majesty whoever it may be, Byzantine or barbarian, crowned or not, not even of the grandson of Kyr Andronikos’. *Cinq ctes inédits du patriarche Michel Autôreianos*, ed. Oikonomides 123.

⁷¹⁸ Guillou 1997: 203; Svoronos 1951: 107.

⁷¹⁹ *Syntagma IV*, ed. Rhalles and Potles 221; see also the fourteenth-century synopsis of the canons by Blastares, *Syntagma VI*, ed. Rhalles and Potles 290.

⁷²⁰ And especially so amongst early Christian writers. Lee 2007: 52.

⁷²¹ *The Anonymous Treatise on Asceticism*, ed. Krausmüller 101-124; Rapp 2016: 28.

⁷²² See above, page 98.

perjury and thus ‘denied God’.⁷²³ In 802, when Eirene was deposed by Nikephoros I, Theophanes condemned *patrikioi* including Leon of Sinope, Niketas and Sisinnios Triphilios, for betraying her after swearing ‘terrible oaths’ and declaring her goodwill foremost amongst their concerns.⁷²⁴ Eirene reportedly rebuked Nikephoros for oath-breaking, asserting that she had been too benevolent and could have executed him when rumours of his ambitions reached her, but that she had accepted God’s will.⁷²⁵ In Skylitzes’ *Synopsis*, the charge that Romanos I had perjured himself is recurrent. His promotion necessitated the breaking of oaths, and in demoting Constantine VII behind Christophoros Lekapenos ‘for ephemeral gains and a fleeting, corrupt reign, he distanced himself from God by perjury.’⁷²⁶ Later, Doukas even suggested that Michael VIII’s broken oaths led to the fall of the empire.⁷²⁷

These accounts emphasise disloyalty and the perceived scale of wrongdoing. Breaking an oath was perceived as an act of perjury and sacrilege, aligning it with the legal association of treason as a (quasi-)sacrilegious act. Oath-breaking was therefore a serious charge, a long-lasting source of guilt and sin believed to distance one from God. The use of the adjectives ‘terrible’ or ‘dreadful’ (often as superlatives) to describe the oaths further attests to their perceived magnitude. Given oaths’ ubiquity in daily life, as markers of designated social obligations in a multitude of contexts,⁷²⁸ the rending of sworn agreements

⁷²³ Οἱ δὲ οὐ κατεδέξαντο ὁμόσαι, ὅτι “οὐ βασιλευόμεθα ὑπὸ τοῦ υἱοῦ σου ἐν τῇ ζωῇ σου, οὐδὲ προτάσσομεν τὸ ὄνομα Εἰρήνης πρὸ Κωνσταντίνου, ἀλλὰ Κωνσταντίνου καὶ Εἰρήνης, ὡς ἐξ ἀρχῆς παρελάβομεν. ‘The latter [*Armeniakon themā*] did not consent to swear, “We shall not be ruled by your son as long as you are alive. We shall not even place the name of Eirene before that of Constantine, but shall keep Constantine and Eirene as we have accepted at the beginning.”’ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 466 (trans. Mango and Scott 640-641).

⁷²⁴ ὄρκων φρικτῶν. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 477 (trans. Mango and Scott 655).

⁷²⁵ ...αἷς εἰ συναπήχθην, ἀκωλύτως εἶχον τοῦ ἀνελεῖν σε. ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν τοῖς σοῖς ὄρκοις πειθομένη, τὸ δὲ φειδομένη σου πολλοὺς εὐνοήτορας παρελογισάμην, τῷ θεῷ καὶ τηνικαῦτα τὰ κατ’ ἐμαυτὴν ἀποδοῦσα, δι’ οὗ βασιλεῖς βασιλεύουσι καὶ δυνάσται κρατοῦσι γῆς. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 478 (trans. Mango and Scott 656).

⁷²⁶ ...διὰ πράγματα πρόσκαιρα καὶ βασιλείαν φθαρτὴν καὶ ἐπικηρον, ἐπιorkία περιπεσῶν καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ γενόμενος μήκοθεν. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 214-215 (trans. Wortley 208).

⁷²⁷ Doukas, *Historia Turco-Byzantina*, ed. Grecu 48-49 (trans. Magoulias 67).

⁷²⁸ Angelon 2007: 344, has pointed to Manuel Moschopoulos’ belief that the institution of the oath of loyalty served as a form of ‘social covenant’ that bound the empire together. See also, Rapp 2016.

(especially those to state institutions) undoubtedly connoted *ataxia* to some: a fundamental breakdown of social relations that harmed everyone by interrupting the idealised heavenly-harmony of state. Thus Leon Diakonos, who sympathised with Nikephoros II's rebellion against the *parakoimomenos* and regent-ascendant Ioseph Bringas, condemned Nikephoros for placing 'previous events second to his own safety, ascribing little importance to his oaths'.⁷²⁹ Since all were Roman and 'regulated' their lives '*according to divine commands*',⁷³⁰ Patriarch Polyeuktos had mediated a sworn settlement ratified by the senate, that titled Nikephoros ἀτοκράτωρ στρατηγός so that he might campaign in Asia Minor. It bound him to accept the successional rights of Romanos II's children, and forbade him to plan 'anything undesirable against the state and senate'.⁷³¹ His rebellion contravened this orderly settlement, provoked unrest, and was worthy of contempt. For most usurpers this was but an initial sin.

The Guillou-Svoronos reading is thus perfectly cogent in its essential explanation of oaths' religious significance, which is central to the condemnatory-dialogues of oath-breaking as a source of wrongdoing. Yet this reading misses an equally important conceptual function of Byzantine-Roman oaths. The ideological façade of divine sanction served to bolster the security and prestige of the imperial position, but it was expressed in conjunction with republican ideas that provided authorisation for, and duty-bound limits to, imperial power. The Augustinian oath, as succinctly presented in *Res Gestae*, betrays republican concerns: soldiers and citizens were compelled to swear loyalty but the latter did so 'voluntarily', rendering their oath extra-constitutional and beyond a strict obligation.⁷³² The people 'demanded' Octavian-Augustus as leader and *consensus* was espoused to provide

⁷²⁹ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 41 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 92).

⁷³⁰ ...δεῖ Ῥωμαίους ὄντας ἡμᾶς, καὶ θεῖοις ῥυθμιζομένων προστάγμασι... Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 33 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 86). Emphasis added.

⁷³¹ ... τοῦ κράτους καὶ τῆς βουλῆς... Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 33-34 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 86).

⁷³² Pagán 2004: 14.

him authority to administer the civil war on their behalf. Military oaths of the Republic and early Empire had also distinguished between loyalty to leaders and to the *politeia*. In addition to their commanders, Roman soldiers swore allegiance to symbols of the state.⁷³³ Vegetius' fourth-century summation of the Christianised military oath asserted that '[the soldiery will] do all that the Emperor may command, will never desert the service, nor refuse to die for the Roman state.'⁷³⁴ Again, loyalty to the emperor chosen by God, is differentiated from loyalty and duty to the state. They were not necessarily synonymous. In fact, Haldon, following Beck, notes that there was never an expectation for soldiers to die for emperors, rather than for Christian faith and the Roman state. Soldiers fought for faith and empire, not an individual emperor.⁷³⁵

Later, the Justinianic oath of the *praefectus praetorio per Illyricum* included the clause, 'I will willingly accept all pain and fatigue resulting from the office they [Justinian and Theodora] have conferred upon me in the interest of the empire and the politeia/republic.'⁷³⁶ The appointment was for the benefit of the state, not the emperor. Nikephoros II had sworn fidelity to the *basileis* and the 'state and senate'. Additionally, in practice, the oaths sworn by the clergy distinguished between institutional and political loyalties: a Synodal *praxis* of 1026 requiring anathematisation of clergy associated with a rebel was condemned and invalidated, as were similar measures attempted by Manuel I

⁷³³ This usually meant the legionary standards. C.E. Brand 1968: 92.

⁷³⁴ '...They swear by God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, and by the Majesty of the Emperor which second to God is to be loved and worshipped by the human race. For since the Emperor has received the name of the "August", faithful devotion should be given, unceasing homage paid him as if to a present and corporeal deity. For it is God whom a private citizen or a soldier serves, when he faithfully loves him who reigns by God's authority. The soldiers swear that they will strenuously do all that the Emperor may command, will never desert the service, nor refuse to die for the Roman state.' Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* trans. Milner II.5. Emphasis added.

⁷³⁵ Haldon 1995: 161; Beck 1970: 22-24; Kaldellis 2015: esp. 40-41.

⁷³⁶ Καὶ πάντα πόνον καὶ κάματον μετ' εὐνοίας ἀδόλως καὶ δίχα τέχνης τινὸς ἀναδέξομαι ἐπὶ τῇ δοθείῃ μοι παρ' αὐτῶν ἀρχῇ ὑπὲρ τῆς αὐτῶν βασιλείας καὶ πολιτείας. // ...et omnem laborem ac sudorem cum favour sine dolo et sine arte quacumque suspicion in commissa mihi ab eis administratione de eorum imperio atque republica. *Oath of Officials*, ed. Uspenskii 336-339. Author's translation. The oath is recorded in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, ed. Schöll and Kroll III, 89-91 (*Novellae*). It is also quoted in excerpted form in the tenth-century *Basilika*, ed. Scheltema 6.3.50.

(1171) and Andronikos II (1295).⁷³⁷

These distinctions appear to have been retained in late-Byzantine oaths as well. By the thirteenth century, imperial reciprocity was more pronounced, and benefits for the state more closely associated with the emperor.⁷³⁸ However, after affirming the fidelity of the judges, people, and army, of the ‘Roman state/territory’ to Theodoros I and his son and heir Nikolaos, the oath of Patriarch Michael IV and prelates asserted that this was to demonstrate support and ‘to encourage our powerful and holy *autokrator* in his many struggles against our arrogant enemies who now, more than ever before, invade our lands because of our sins.’⁷³⁹ Theodoros was thus expected to perform certain generic duties on behalf of those who empowered and swore loyalty to him and their common territory. In a treatise of his own composition, Theodoros II meditated on the mutual obligations of the emperor and his *οἰκεῖος*, finding that he owed subjects protection and munificence, and they owed him loyalty.⁷⁴⁰ Likewise, a fourteenth-century formulary required generic reciprocal duties from the emperor: ‘A true and faithful servant of the emperor, this I will be, if he reigns successfully according to the exact truth and in all honesty, just as Truth really asks of the servant to be true and honest with regard to his master.’⁷⁴¹ And Manuel Moschopoulos’ treatise on ‘political oaths’ (to the emperor) claimed that these safeguarded *basileia* from conspiracies and expressed the will of the populace.⁷⁴² He seemingly reaffirmed the

⁷³⁷ For the Synodal *praxis* of 1026, see *Syntagma III*, ed. Rhalles and Potles 97. For Manuel I’s attempted legislation, see *Les regestes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, ed. Grumel no. 830. For Andronikos II’s attempted legislation, see Pachymérès, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent III, 222-223. On the differentiation between institutional and political loyalties, see Beck 1970: 400; Dagron 2003: 308-309, concluding likewise.

⁷³⁸ Svoronos 1951: 138-140, and Angelov 2007: 324-347, link this with the influx of ‘feudal’ and ‘proto-feudal’ (respectively) ideas about oaths under the Komnenian and Nikaian emperors.

⁷³⁹ ...τοῦτο δὲ καὶ τὸν κράτιστον καὶ ἅγιον ἡμῶν αὐτοκράτορα ἐπιπλέον προθυμοποιούντες καὶ διανιστώντες πρὸς τοὺς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀπείρους καμάτους καὶ μεγάλους καὶ πολλοὺς ἀγῶνας κατὰ τῶν πολεμίων, τῶν νῦν εἴπερ ποτε βαρέως καθ’ ἡμῶν ἐπεισφρησάντων ἀλαζόνων ἐχθρῶν διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν. *Cinq ctes inédits du patriarche Michel Autôreianos*, ed. Oikonomides 121-124.

⁷⁴⁰ Theodoros II, *Opuscula*, ed. Tartaglia 119-140. See also the comments in Akropolites, *Historia*, trans. Macrides 327-328 n.9 (*Commentary*).

⁷⁴¹ Sathas, *MB*, VI, 652-653; quoted in translation in Guillou 1997: 204.

⁷⁴² Guran 2008; Rochette 2008; Rapp 2016: 27-28; Angelov 2007: 324-347, esp. 346-347.

Augustinian position, although via contemporary quasi-feudal notions of contractual obligation rather than republican ideology.⁷⁴³ Nevertheless, the concepts of loyalty to the state as an entity independent of the emperor, and duties to the *politeia* by emperor and populace, are common threads from Republic to Palaiologoi. All persons eventually swore loyalty to the emperor, but all persons, including the emperor, also served the wellbeing of the state. Ideologically, those taking the oath were not king's men, but served the *politeia*. Loyalty to the emperor was one means of service, as his personal interests were often conflated (or coincided) with those of the state.

Implicit within this ideological framework is the possibility that one could break fidelity with an emperor and yet remain loyal to the state. As Kaldellis notes, the sixth-century epitomator Jordanes claimed that the rebel Vitalianus was 'hostile not to the Republic, but to the emperor.'⁷⁴⁴ The distinction allowed Vitalianus' patriotism to be retained while questioning the emperor's. Might this distinction have provided an 'escape clause' for usurpers and conspirators?

Breaking oaths, in other contexts, was not always a bad thing, sometimes it served the greater good. Ioannes Moschos preserves a didactic tale of how a brother was persuaded by a spiritual father to break an oath, in order to reconcile with another. The father inveighed that it was occasionally morally prudent to break oaths that led to damnation, but later to overcome this through repentance.⁷⁴⁵ And Byzantine prayer-books offered prayers of pardon for oath breaking.⁷⁴⁶ Although sin was unavoidable, breaking an oath was not morally inconceivable. Eudokia Makrembolitissa, for example, was released from an oath to her

⁷⁴³ Moschopoulos asserts the belief that kingship lessened the risk of aristocratic infighting innate in other systems of governance. On Moschopoulos' ideological conceptions, see Angelov 2007: 346-347; Beck 1970: 392-394.

⁷⁴⁴ '*non rei publica sed regi infestus*': Jordanes, *Romana et Getica (Romana)*, ed. Mommsen 357; Kaldellis 2015: 40.

⁷⁴⁵ Ioannes Moschos, *Pratum Spirituale*, ed. Migne 216 (trans. Wortley 192-193).

⁷⁴⁶ Rapp 2016: 28.

deceased husband, Michael VII, in order to marry Romanos IV for the benefit of the empire, which was threatened by Turkish incursions.⁷⁴⁷

Regarding treasonable activities, we have suggestions of similar exemptions and excuses. Theophylaktos of Ochrid writes of individuals taking oaths under duress, afraid to say that they reviled the emperor, and who then broke into revolt at the first opportunity.⁷⁴⁸ The law recognised that wrongdoing could originate from genuine injustices, and on numerous occasions reconciliations were affected between emperors and conspirators: imperial assurance granted, a rebel's fidelity renewed.⁷⁴⁹ These persons had often feared personal harm and their excuse was obviously acceptable since loyalty could be reaffirmed. Elsewhere, when an emperor broke the terms of an assurance, conspiracy might be perceived as a reasonable response.⁷⁵⁰ Furthermore, in 1182/3, notwithstanding his best efforts, Andronikos I was reportedly 'bound not to distort the words [of his oath to Alexios II] by false interpretations', suggesting that innovative re-readings were not uncommon. He used the oath's terms to position himself as the young emperor's protector, and when Alexios was finally assassinated Andronikos and his supporters were deemed in breach.⁷⁵¹ Patriarch Kamateros and the synod intervened to publish decrees of amnesty (1183) releasing

⁷⁴⁷ The circumstances and events of Eudokia's controversial release from the oath are considered by Oikonomides 1963: 124-127; followed by Cheynet 2008b: 67; Cheynet 1990: 345-346.

⁷⁴⁸ Theophylaktos, *Opera*, ed. Gautier 202-203.

⁷⁴⁹ According to *Theophanes Continuatus* the general Theophobos was forgiven and made to renew his oath to Theophilos after engaging in rebellion (838). Roussel swore an oath of loyalty to the emperor before being released from imprisonment in Constantinople and leading the attack against Bryennios the Elder's besieging loyalists. Choniates records three occasions on which Andronikos I broke oaths of loyalty an emperor, twice having to renew them after reconciliations (1166 and 1180). And, as already mentioned, Michael VIII twice renewed his oath of loyalty after involvement in seditious acts. *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 124, 135-136; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 178-179, 194-195; Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 253 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 462-463); Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 137-138, 226-227 (trans. Magoulias 78, 128-129); Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 92-100, 144 (trans. Macrides 259-263, 326); Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 37-39, 45.

⁷⁵⁰ For example: according to Skylitzes, Leon Phokas considered himself perfectly justified when he undertook to move against Constantine VII's regent, Patriarch Nikolaos, after the latter broke the terms of his oath to Leon (that Leon's relatives would remain in command of the palace guard). Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 208 (trans. Wortley 201).

⁷⁵¹ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 228 (trans. Magoulias 129).

Andronikos from sin.⁷⁵² Given the content of Andronikos' populist propaganda it is hard to believe that this amnesty would not have been accompanied by justifications that Alexios' death served greater good of the empire, rendering the oath immoral and contrary to Andronikos' sworn duty to the state, or suggesting that Alexios had already contravened it. The official story of the deposition of Alexios' corpse at sea, a fate reserved for the most contemptible state enemies, may imply such a narrative.⁷⁵³

The frequent recording of oaths between conspirators should also be considered suggestive.⁷⁵⁴ Beyond secrecy and mutual fidelity their formulae are not recorded, yet they were sworn at the outset of a conspiracy and by all those who bore witness to a usurper's proclamation or joined his cause.⁷⁵⁵ The wording employed after a proclamation undoubtedly resembled official oaths. This imitated official practice, and (presumably) superseded pre-existing oaths to the emperor at Constantinople. Therefore, from their perspective, conspirators had not broken fidelity with the *politeia*, merely with an emperor who no longer fulfilled his duties. The reigning emperor became the guilty party in accordance with the underlying elective-administrative and reciprocal-duty principles expressed in the oaths: he had already broken them. Oath-breaking was contentious but relatively commonplace. It meant contravening an agreement sworn before God and accruing sin as a result, but could prove morally justified, beneficial to the state, and

⁷⁵² Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 276 (trans. Magoulias 153).

⁷⁵³ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 275-276 (trans. Magoulias 152-153): who also claims that Andronikos requested to be released from his oath to 'Manuel and his wretched son (ταλαιπώρω παιδί)', Alexios. This request is suggestive of an anti-Alexios narrative being propounded at court: what exactly was the source of Alexios' 'wretched' status in Andronikos' rhetoric? Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 267 (trans. Magoulias 148-149), uses the same term (ταλαιπώρον) to describe Empress Maria during her trial for treason. A semantic link to accusations of treason may be suggested, although it is equally possible that Choniates is using the term to comment on the manner of their deaths.

⁷⁵⁴ Cheynet 1990: 159-160, noting that the oaths sworn between conspirators could also include 'assurances' to foreign supporters, and individuals of differing religions: for example, those between Bardas Skleros and the Emirs of Amida and Martyropolis; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 316 (trans. Wortley 301).

⁷⁵⁵ The histories are replete with examples: Leon Phokas with Romanos I, Isaakios I with his co-conspirators, Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder and his supporters at Traianoupolis; Theodoros Mangaphas and the populace of Philadelphia. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 208, 487 (trans. Wortley 201, 454); Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 247 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 450-451); Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 399 (trans. Magoulias 219).

eventually be overcome.

Bloodshed versus the ideology of peace

After a rebel had broken fidelity circumstances might then necessitate the more serious charge of bloodguilt. Successfully contesting a succession typically necessitated violence against one's opponents, either on a small-scale or through civil war where casualties rapidly accrued. Consequently, ideological stances towards bloodshed and conflict influence the narratives.

To a great extent, bloodshed was antithetical to Byzantium's Christian and military ideologies. Christians were entreated to avoid roles that might lead to the deaths of others.⁷⁵⁶ Unlike later Western practice, Orthodox clergymen were never permitted to fight.⁷⁵⁷ The fourth-century Saint Basil classified 'murders' committed even in self-defence as sinful. To keep the church and state aware of their ideal 'moral duties' he re-emphasised that all wars and killings were sinful acts, and prescribed a three-year period of excommunication for soldiers who were not 'clean-handed'.⁷⁵⁸ Saint Athanasius' earlier contrary *Epistle*, permitting defensive killings as an unfortunate inevitability, did lead to a cleavage of thought. The twelfth-century canonists Zonaras and Balsamon, writing at times of encroaching Latin, Turkish, and Balkan foes, counselled against Basil; the fourteenth-century Blastares advocated for.⁷⁵⁹ In terms of the legal penalties for killings, the

⁷⁵⁶ Cheynet 2013b: 63.

⁷⁵⁷ Laurent 1946. The Latin custom of 'warrior priests' found its way into 'Latin error books' compiled by the Byzantines (i.e. Stilbes' *Against the Latins*): Angold 2008a: 735-736. Patriarch Keroularios was chastised for supposedly arming clerics. Psellos, *Scripta minora*, ed. Kurtz and Drexel I, 285-288. Anna Komnene disdained the 'barbarian Latin' custom of 'warrior priests'. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 306-307 (trans. Frankopan 283). And in 1306, a certain monk, Hilarion stood trial for taking up arms in defence of the empire. Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent IV, 656-657; Nicol 1979: 69. Cheynet 2013b: 64-65, however, has noted several instances where tonsured individuals turned away from their vows to resume military commands or fight in times of strife.

⁷⁵⁸ Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, ed. DeFerrari III, 42-45 (*Letter 188, Canon 13*). For analysis, see Simion 2015: 199-200; Treadgold 2006: 210.

⁷⁵⁹ The positions of all three canonists are analysed by Viscuso 1995.

codifications lead to a deceptively straightforward conclusion that these were measured according to criteria of intent and object or weapon used, and then prescribed a capital punishment.⁷⁶⁰ However, in practice the response to murder appears to have been softened by Christian ideology with canon-law contesting civil-law, and the church repeatedly offering sanctuary and rehabilitation to guilty individuals.⁷⁶¹ It was generally believed that killing inevitably damaged the immortal soul, and should happen only as a last resort in defence of life.

In regard to warfare, Haldon has argued that the Byzantines considered themselves to be ‘fighting for peace’ and war was universally seen as an evil.⁷⁶² As Cheynet notes, this quasi-pacifist defensive-war ideology was actually well-suited to the conditions on the ground.⁷⁶³ From the seventh century the army saw a shortage of recruits and had to avoid wasting resources. In general practice, large-scale wars of reconquest and decisive battles were avoided.⁷⁶⁴ Instead, counter-insurgency and skirmishing tactics were employed as a last resort when tribute or diplomacy failed.⁷⁶⁵ When external wars of aggression were fought, as in the tenth and eleventh centuries against the Bulgars and Rus, they were vindicated as ‘defensive’ and ‘just’ in nature.⁷⁶⁶ And even as the imperial image acquired

⁷⁶⁰ A false impression noted by Troianos 1980: 6-10; Macrides 1988: 509.

⁷⁶¹ Macrides 1988.

⁷⁶² Haldon 1999: 13-33, 280. See also Stouraitis 2012; and the edited volume *Peace and War in Byzantium*, Miller and Nesbitt 1995. Treadgold 2006: 212 and n.8, has taken exception to the idea of ‘fighting for peace’ as Haldon applies it to the Byzantine context, on the basis of its use as a Stalinist slogan, the Byzantine tolerance of raiding, the many civil wars fought throughout the empire’s history, and occasions when wars were fought against enemies most likely to want peace. Treadgold nevertheless accepts that warfare was universally considered an evil. Although generally well-reasoned, Treadgold’s argument appears to negate or minimise the possibility of cognitive dissonance between what Byzantine ideology said about warfare, and how Byzantines actually executed warfare. It should also be noted that the use of the phrase ‘fighting for peace’ in Stalinist propaganda in no way constitutes an argument against its relative applicability to Byzantine thought as Haldon employs it.

⁷⁶³ Cheynet 2013b: 66.

⁷⁶⁴ Haldon 1999; Haldon 2003: esp. 42; Treadgold 2006.

⁷⁶⁵ Haldon 1999: esp. 38, 60-62; Haldon 2003: 34-46; Treadgold 2006; Haldon 2007: 77, 260; Haldon 2013; Kyriakidis 2011: 37.

⁷⁶⁶ Basileios II actually offered terms of peace to the Bulgars on several occasions if they would cede their conquests and become a client state. Treadgold 2006: 219; Treadgold 1997: 514-528. On Byzantine conceptions of ‘just wars’, see Laiou 1993, concluding that ‘self-defence’, ‘recovery of territory’, ‘breach of agreement’, ‘averting a greater evil’, and ‘pursuit of peace’ were the permitted criteria.

an unprecedented militarism in compositions under late eleventh-century military emperors and the Komnenoi (when the ideal of peace was not so prominently promoted and Roman triumphalism in ‘just wars’ became the dominant theme), peace was not neglected.⁷⁶⁷ Ioannes II and Manuel I were commended for bloodless victories and having ‘persuaded the enemy to live in peace’.⁷⁶⁸

Consequently, peaceful and humanitarian resolutions to any problem were deemed most praiseworthy. Respect for the sanctity of life defined imperial *philanthropia* and clemency, in emulation of Christ. Emperors who exemplified these qualities were widely praised, especially in connection with their handling of political adversaries. Constantine X was renowned for his mild treatment of opponents: ‘No one was ever put to death by him, even when the most terrible crimes had been committed. No one suffered mutilation at his command. He rarely uttered threats and even these were soon forgotten, for he was more inclined to tears than to resort to cruelty.’⁷⁶⁹ In the next century Ioannes II was lauded for, ‘depriving no one of life nor inflicting bodily injury of any kind throughout his entire reign, he has been deemed praiseworthy by all... and one might well say that he equalled some of the best emperors of the past and surpassed the others.’⁷⁷⁰ Isaakios II ordered that nobody

⁷⁶⁷ Although they had always been judged on their military accomplishments, emperors’ personal abilities as soldiers and warriors then became increasingly prominent topics for these assessments. On this development in imperial rhetoric and the aristocratic ideal, see Kazhdan 1984: 43-57; Morris 1988: 86-87; Magdalino 1993: esp. 418-430; Munitiz 1995: 57-61; Dennis 1997: 135-137; Kaldellis 1999: 183, n.369; Stephenson 2003: 86-90.

⁷⁶⁸ Magdalino 1993: 419. Jeffreys and Jeffreys 2015: esp. p.89 and p.99, lines. 154-165, (an edited composition of Manganeios Prodromos, praising Manuel I as a new Solomon, a bringer of peace, who persuaded the empire’s enemies to live in peace, and who ascended the throne uncontested in a peaceful manner): ‘...it is right for you alone to be named Solomon, / for you proved another Solomon as emperor of peace / and you overwhelm the enemy, persuading them to live in peace; / having in a peaceful way become emperor of the Romans, / having put on the golden diadem, the symbol of power, / without incident, from your father’s right hand / (154-159) ...you win most of your triumphs peacefully, / rarely using your sword too for victory / over those against whose obstinacy the sword is provoked...’ (161-164).

⁷⁶⁹ ...καὶ οὐτε ψυχὴν ἀφείλετό τινος κἄν τὰ ἔσχατα τῶν κακῶν ἐπεπράξει, οὐτε τινὰ τῶν ἀκρωτηρίων ἐστέρησεν, ἀλλὰ τῇ ἀπειλῇ βραχὺ τι χρησάμενος, μετ’ οὐ πολὺ καὶ ταύτην διέλυε, δάκρυα μᾶλλον ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἀφίεις ἢ ὠμότητι χρώμενος. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 296-297; ed. Renauld II, 140 (trans. Sewter 333). Translation adapted.

⁷⁷⁰ More fully: ...καὶ μηδένα διὰ ξυμπάσης αὐτῷ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἢ ψυχῆς στέρησας ἢ ἐς τὸ σῶμα ὀσονοῦν λυμηνάμενος ἐπαινετὸς ἐς δεῦρο παρὰ πᾶσι λελόγισται καὶ κορωνίς ὡς εἶπεν τῶν ὅσοι Ῥωμαίων ἐκ τοῦ τῶν Κομνηνῶν γένους ὑπερεκάθισαν, ἵνα μὴ λέγοιμι ὡς καὶ πολλοῖς τῶν ἀνόπιν ἀρίστων τοῖς μὲν ἡμιλλήσατο, τοὺς δὲ καὶ παρήνεγκεν. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 47 (trans. Magoulias 27). Translation adapted.

ever be mutilated, even for plotting against him, and then ignored the pronouncement.⁷⁷¹ And Choniates extolled Alexios III for having avoided killing or mutilating opponents during his reign at Constantinople:⁷⁷² blatantly disregarding several such acts.⁷⁷³ Of course, rhetoric did not have to reflect reality but an emperor who successfully communicated this image embodied aspects of the imperial ideal and enhanced his legitimacy by morally differentiating himself from others.

The moral ideals applied equally to the circumstances of successions, meaning that emperors and usurpers were also judged on how they had come to power. As Theophylaktos of Ochrid asserted, '[an emperor] does not acquire authority by force, or steep his robes in blood: his basis is the good will of the masses and the concurrence of the people, with his own moderation and mercy.'⁷⁷⁴ Imperial missives addressed to rebels during the early stages of a rebellion often exploited this belief by emphasising the emperor's concern for peace, and reminding them of the temporal and eternal penalties awaiting them for oath-breaking and bloodshed, advising them to refrain from that course.⁷⁷⁵ Nikephoros III, for example, reproached Nikephoros Bryennios for ignoring 'peace and happiness' and choosing instead 'the slaughter of Christians'. He claimed that power had been given to him by God and the

⁷⁷¹ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 366-367 (trans. Magoulias 203). Choniates' narrative chronology (which is not necessarily trustworthy) indicates that the pronouncement was made *after* the execution and blindings of Andronikos I and his sons Ioannes and Manuel (September/October 1185), and the blinding of Alexios Komnenos 'the pinkernes' (November 1185). Yet, after these mutilations/executions, Isaakios II was responsible for the executions of two Pseudo-Alexios II's, Alexios Branas' beheading, the blindings of Basileios Chotzas, Constantine Tatikios, an unnamed Komnenos, Andronikos Komnenos (the grandson of Anna Komnene), Constantine Aspietes, a great-grandson of Anna Komnene, and his own cousin Constantine Angelos-Doukas.

⁷⁷² Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 548 (trans. Magoulias 300). Most likely recording an official panegyric.

⁷⁷³ Choniates' statement ignores: Alexios' blinding of Isaakios II, assassination of a Pseudo-Alexios II at Tzoungra, ordering the execution and beheading of the general Vatatzes, and the mutilation of the corpse of Ioannes Komnenos(-Axouchos). Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 452, 463, 486, 527-528 (trans. Magoulias 248, 254, 266-267, 289-290).

⁷⁷⁴ Theophylaktos, *Opera*, ed. Gautier 198-201 (*Paideia basilike*). The translation is that of Barker 1957: 146-147.

⁷⁷⁵ For example: Ioannes I, writing to Leon Phokas: Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 115-116 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 164-165). Michael VII, addressing Nikephoros III Botaneiates (outlined by Psellos): Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 384-391; ed. Renauld II, 182-185 (trans. Sewter 377-380). Or Nikephoros III, directly addressing Nikephoros Bryennios: Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 292 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 532-533). See also, Dagron 1990: 170.

acknowledgement of the people, that Bryennios had made himself an enemy of the God and the people and would be held to account.⁷⁷⁶ In return usurpers would emphasise their unwillingness to engage in violence against their co-religionists and countrymen. Thus we read that in 838, Theophobos, ‘being a pious man, in a God-fearing manner hesitated to piously initiate hostilities that would lead to the spilling of Christian blood.’ He instead surrendered Amastris to Theophilos after receiving an oath of amnesty.⁷⁷⁷ And Ioannes VI’s propagandists repeatedly asserted his preference not to ‘spill Christian blood’ in civil war.⁷⁷⁸

The narratives of the accessions of Leon V and Isaakios I incorporate positive and negative judgements in order to contrast violence with moral rulership. In the Macedonian narrative tradition, Michael I was widely commended for ceding the throne to Leon. Although his advisors had encouraged him to resist the ‘tyrant’, Michael did not wish to ‘spill Christian blood’ on his own account. He was ‘a man of peace... [and] ordered those who were saying such things not to incite him to engage in a murderous civil war.’ When Empress Prokopia reportedly objected to her husband meekly relinquishing power to Leon, the narratives emphasise Michael’s piety, for he assured her, ‘It is good for events to conform to the will of the Lord.’ Michael dispatched the imperial insignia to Leon, and ordered the senate to welcome the new emperor into Constantinople. Essentially, Michael arranged that Leon’s succession would be free of violence. By contrast, although in the common source of Genesisios and *Theophanes Continuatus* Leon was moved to spare Michael and his family and ‘generously’ provide them with a stipend, the details of Leon’s ensuing mutilation of Michael’s children exposed his use of unnecessary force, implying his illegitimacy. Moreover, Skylitzes revised the tradition to remove any reference to Leon’s ‘generosity’,

⁷⁷⁶ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 292 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 532-533).

⁷⁷⁷ Genesisios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 43 (trans. Kaldellis 57); *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 136; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 194-195. See the opposing views of Gregoire 1934: 192-198, and Treadgold 1979: 189-190, on the role of later iconophile hagiographical traditions in shaping the accounts of Theophobos’ revolt and treatment by Theophilos.

⁷⁷⁸ Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen II, 776.

emphasising instead the violence of his takeover, which now also took place before Leon's proclamation by the senate, allowing the designation 'tyrannos' to be retained. The revision, which is directly followed by a prophecy predicting the usurpation, served to draw attention to the immorality and illegitimacy of the usurpations of Leon and his immediate successors.⁷⁷⁹

Later, Michael VI's abdication to Isaakios I became the only point at which Michael received praise in the narrative of Attaleiates, and in a form following closely that of Michael I. His partisans and palace guard assured him that they would fight, but Michael 'could not accept this course, saying it would be a selfish and even misanthropic thing to allow the Great City to be polluted with murder and the slaughter of others just for his own sake.' Throwing aside his purple boots, 'Michael said, "I will not forsake my religion for the sake of these."' ⁷⁸⁰ His pious resignation on behalf of the Constantinopolitans was then subtly contrasted with Keroularios' implied impious desire for power.⁷⁸¹ Michael's final words in the *Historia*, bitterly directed to Keroularios upon receiving the Kiss of Peace post-tonsure, confirm the belief in the sinfulness of conspiracy and the potential consequences for the soul, "May God reward you in a fitting way for this embrace, archbishop."⁷⁸² By contrast, Skylitzes engaged in Komnenian apologetic by querying Michael's eternal salvation in not abdicating sooner, and thereby avoiding the bloodshed at Nikaia.⁷⁸³ Skylitzes' inversion of responsibility for the violence points to the long-lasting criticism of Isaakios' accession through civil war: its stain was felt and could not easily be overcome, so blame had to be

⁷⁷⁹ Genesios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 5 (trans. Kaldellis 7); *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 18; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 30-31. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 8-9 (trans. Wortley 8-9), repeating Prokopia's objections but omitting Michael's response.

⁷⁸⁰ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 58-59 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 104-107).

⁷⁸¹ This implied desire for power relates to the fact that, in addition to aiding Michael's overthrow, Keroularios infamously appropriated the imperial footwear under Isaakios I, prompting calls for his removal from the patriarchal office. On this event, see Dagron 2003: 235-240, with references.

⁷⁸² Θεός σε ἀξίως, ἀρχιερεῦ, ἀνταπάσαιτο. Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 59 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 106-107).

⁷⁸³ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 500 (trans. Wortley 464).

reassigned. In both episodes the image of an emperor acting as a moral ideal drew attention to the usurper's wrongdoing, establishing who the guilty party was.

Elsewhere, those successions achieved by peaceful means were presented as being divinely sanctioned and provided an ethical defence of usurpation, even when the route to power was more tendentious in reality. Constantine X's accession was celebrated in Psellos' *Chronographia* for avoiding usurpation and instead allowing God's will to peacefully unfold.⁷⁸⁴ Similarly, Attaleiates praised Nikephoros III's elevation because, 'everything was accomplished without bloodshed or destruction.... which is a definitive and fitting sign of his faith in God and of his appointment by him.'⁷⁸⁵ The palace coup that had raised Constantine, and skirmishes as Nikephoros marched on Constantinople, were concealed by the authors in order to preserve these emperors' moral and divine authorisations. There is also some evidence that 'guilt' arising from accessional violence was considered to be transmissible. Psellos, expressed his surprise at the continued favour enjoyed by the Macedonian family which had been elevated through 'murder and bloodshed';⁷⁸⁶ Choniates expressed similar sentiments about the Komnenoi; and Doukas about the Palaiologoi.⁷⁸⁷ The possibility of transmissible guilt further emphasises the disrepute associated with successions achieved through violence.

Civil War

This brief survey of Byzantine reactions to bloodshed and peace highlights that there was an ideological aversion to violence. The development of 'just war' philosophies⁷⁸⁸ provided

⁷⁸⁴ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 288-289; ed. Renauld II, 136 (trans. Sewter 329).

⁷⁸⁵ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 271 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 492-493).

⁷⁸⁶ ...φόνους καὶ αἵμασιν. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 246-247; ed. Renauld I, 117 (trans. Sewter 155).

⁷⁸⁷ For Choniates: see below, page 198. For Doukas: *Historia Turco-Byzantina*, ed. Grecu 48-49 (trans. Magoulias 67).

⁷⁸⁸ These had developed under the early empire: on the Roman concept of *bellum iustum*, see Rampazzo 2005.

routes around this impediment to external conflicts. However, internal warfare was far more difficult to justify and always relied on a variant of ‘the greater good’. Wrongdoing was innate to the very premise and it was for this reason that so many claimants of *basileia* officially denounced and abhorred engaging in civil wars. In reality, practice bore little resemblance to theory and the Byzantines fought more wars against their fellows than external foes.⁷⁸⁹ But what were the perceived effects of civil war and usurpation on the *politeia*, and who was to blame?

As Stouraitis has outlined, the Christian view of civil wars was extremely negative.⁷⁹⁰ Pseudo-Damascene’s *Letter* to Emperor Theophilos, ranked them among the greatest of the calamities that might occur on account of divine anger.⁷⁹¹ Theodoros Stoudites reiterated this belief in divine origin and ascribed them a didactic function.⁷⁹² He determined that there was nothing worse, for they turned brother against brother, and father against son.⁷⁹³ Theophanes believed them to be instigated by the Devil,⁷⁹⁴ and, in a *Letter* to Tsar Symeon, Nikolaos Mystikos espoused that they were worse than regular conflicts: ‘Bad are the wars against foreign enemies; but what can be said about those wars against father, brother, friends, and co-religionists, against those with the same God, Lord, Ruler, and Saviour?’⁷⁹⁵

Identical reactions and statements are to be found in the histories. *Theophanes Continuatus* remarked of the revolt of Thomas the Slav:

At this time a civil war broke out in the east and filled the world with all manner of evils, reducing from many, to few, the number of men: fathers

⁷⁸⁹ Treadgold 2006.

⁷⁹⁰ Stouraitis 2010: esp. 152-153.

⁷⁹¹ Κατὰ μὲν δὴ τούτων πλείονα καὶ θρήνων ἄξια δι’ ἃ ἦλθεν ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν λαὸν τῆς ἀπειθείας ὡς ἀνωτέρω δεδήλωται, καὶ πᾶσιν ἡμῖν πρόδηλα νεύονασι: λιμοί, λοιμοί, σεισμοί, καταποντισμοί, θάνατοι ἐξαισίοι, πόλεμοι ἐμφύλιοι, ἐθνῶν ἐπαναστάσεις, ἐμπρησμοὶ ἐκκλησιῶν, ἐρημώσεις χωρῶν καὶ πόλεων, αἰγμάλωσάι λαῶν. *The Letter of the Three Patriarchs to Emperor Theophilos and Related Texts*, (Pseudo-Damascene, *Letter to Emperor Theophilos on the Holy and Venerated Icons*), ed. Munitiz et al. p.191.

⁷⁹² *Theodoros Studitae Epistolae*, ed. Fatouros II, 696.

⁷⁹³ Theodoros Stoudites quoted, with German translation, in Stouraitis 2010: 153.

⁷⁹⁴ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 418 (trans. Mango and Scott 578).

⁷⁹⁵ Κακοὶ γὰρ καὶ οἱ πρὸς τοὺς ἕξωθεν ἐχθροὺς πόλεμοι, ὅσοι δὲ πρὸς ἀδελφούς, πρὸς φίλους, πρὸς ὁμοπίστους, πρὸς τοὺς ἕνα θεὸν ἐπιγραφόμενους, ἕνα κύριον καὶ δεσπότην καὶ σωτήρα, τί ἂν τις εἴποι. Nikolaos Mystikos, *Letters*, ed. Jenkins and Westerink p.212 (*Letter 31*). Author’s translation.

took up arms against their sons, brothers against those born of the same womb, and finally friends against those who loved them the most.⁷⁹⁶

Attaleiates⁷⁹⁷ and Gregoras⁷⁹⁸ used comparable expressions for contemporary conflicts.

These formulations were not employed unthinkingly, nor was their use a mere rhetorical flourish. Instead, the phrasing represented a sincere lament identifying the breakdown of the most fundamental institution, the *oikos*, which characterised social and economic structures from the sixth century onward.⁷⁹⁹ Authors recognised that civil war engendered disintegration at the most basic level, something so terrible that even familial ties were rendered irrelevant, purest *ataxia*.⁸⁰⁰ As the laws on treason implied, to engage in civil war, no matter the pretext, was to undermine the *politeia*, society itself. From this ideological perspective victory always came at the expense of one's compatriots and family.

The cost to the wellbeing and governance of the state was also realised. Patriarch

⁷⁹⁶ Κατὰ γὰρ τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον ἀρχὴν λαβὼν ἐμφύλιος πόλεμος ἐξ ἀνατολῆς παντοίων ἐνέπλησε τὴν οἰκουμένην κακῶν καὶ ἐκ πολλῶν ὀλίγους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους εἰργάσατο, πατέρων δηλονότι τὰς δεξιὰς κατὰ τῶν υἱῶν ὀπλισάντων, καὶ ἀδελφῶν κατὰ τῶν ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς φύντων γαστρός, καὶ φίλου τὸ τέλος κατὰ τοῦ φιλοῦντος τὰ μάλιστα. *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 49-50; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 76-77.

⁷⁹⁷ Attaleiates, narrating the rebellion of Isaakios I, remarked of the Battle of Petroe (also known as the Battle of Hades, or occasionally the Battle of Nikaia) the decisive battle between the troops of Isaakios I and the loyalists of Michael VI, fought on 20 August 1057: Τότε τοίνυν πατήρ μὲν καὶ υἱός, τῆς φύσεως ὡσπερ ἐπιλαθόμενοι, πρὸς σφαγὴν ὄργαν ἀλλήλων οὐκ εὐλαβοῦντο καὶ δεξιὰν παῖς πατρικῶ χραίνει φόνω καὶ ἀδελφὸς ἀδελφῶ καιρίαν ἐλαύνει καὶ συγγενείας ἢ συμφυῖας εἶτε τῶν ὁμοφύλων ἔλεος οὐδε διάκρισις ἦν, ἕως τοῦ θυμοῦ καὶ τῆς βακχικῆς μανίας ληξάντων, τῆς συμφορᾶς ἤσθοντο καὶ κωκυτὸν αἰθέριον ἤγειραν. 'And then father and son, as if forgetting their natural bonds, showed no restraint in eagerly slaughtering each other. Hands of sons were stained with the blood of fathers; brother struck down brother; and there was no pity or distinction made for close relations or common blood. When this rage and evil frenzy subsided, they understood the extent of the tragedy and raised their laments to the heavens.' Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 55 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 98-101).

⁷⁹⁸ Gregoras said of the civil wars between Andronikos II and Andronikos III, that: ...ἡ γὰρ τῶν δυοῖν βασιλείων διαφορὰ διαφόρους ὡς τὸ εἶκος καὶ τοὺς ὑπηκόους ποιήσασα κατ' ἀλλήλων ἐξέμηνε: τέκνα κατὰ γονέων, φημί, καὶ γονέας κατὰ τέκνων, ἀδελφοὺς κατ' ἀδελφῶν καὶ κατὰ γειτόνων γείτονας: τὸ δὲ μείζον, ἐπισκόπους καὶ πρεσβυτέρους κατ' ἐπισκόπων καὶ πρεσβυτέρων καὶ μοναχοὺς κατὰ μοναχῶν. '...[in the course of] the dispute between the two emperors, the people argued and were incited against one another: I mean, children against parents, and parents against children, brothers against brothers and neighbours against neighbours. And, even worse, bishops and priests against bishops and priests, and monks against monks.' Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 426. Author's translation.

⁷⁹⁹ On the importance and functions of the *oikos* as an institution of Byzantine society, see Hunger 1967; Kazhdan 1982; Kazhdan and Epstein 1985: 100-101; Kazhdan and Constable 1982: 33-34; Macrides 1990; Smythe 2006: 128-129; Angelidi 2013: esp. 158-159; Brubaker and Tougher 2013.

⁸⁰⁰ As Demetrios Kydones summarised the civil war between Ioannes V and Andronikos IV in 1385: 'To the foreign wars there has now been added civil strife, which formerly spread destruction everywhere and which the fault of all of us has now pushed us to a point beyond repair. Nature is disregarded; family ties are merely a name; the one means of life is to betray one's own race and fellow citizens.' Kydones, ed. Loenertz II, §309, trans. Dennis 1960: 111.

Nikephoros' *Historia Syntomos* offers a typical reading:

On account of the frequent assumptions of imperial power and the prevalence of tyranny, the affairs of the empire and of the city were being neglected and declined; furthermore, education was being destroyed and military organisation crumbled...the enemy were able to overrun the Roman *politeia* with impunity [causing] much slaughter, abduction, and the capture of cities.⁸⁰¹

It was not just that social relations had disintegrated, the political institutions of state also crumbled during these conflicts. Order was disrupted on all levels, and the damage to 'education' symbolised a deeper loss, for it was always a source of cultural pride that separated 'Roman' from 'barbarian'. In addition, the destruction of land and property in the course of a conflict represented a serious charge. Confiscations and loss were common accusations against emperors during peacetime as well, typically indicating alleged extra-legal and 'deplorable' activities against citizens.⁸⁰² Therefore, the descent of the state due to usurpation constitutes another leitmotif in the histories and another source of wrongdoing.

In a sign of Byzantine ideological propensities for peace, those blamed by the histories for these problems were almost universally the aggressors, the rebels, and in particular their leaders. In the words of Leon Diakonos, 'After the death of the emperor Ioannes [I], the *magistros* Bardas [Skleros]... deceived and misled the common people, and prepared a terrible revolt against the emperors...' ⁸⁰³ Despite the involvement of the military and the 'common people', Skleros was assigned sole blame for the revolt. Leon adopted a dynastic-legitimist stance, recognising as emperors Basileios II and Constantine VIII. The perspective of those who had proclaimed Skleros their emperor was irrelevant because he was the aggressor and had engaged in sinful behaviour. Concerning the rebellion of

⁸⁰¹ Ἐπεὶ οὖν πυκναὶ τῶν βασιλέων ἐπαναστάσεις ἐγένοντο καὶ ἡ τυραννὶς ἐκράτει τὰ τε τῆς βασιλείας καὶ τῆς πόλεως κατημελεῖτο καὶ διέπιπτε πράγματα, ἔτι μὴν καὶ ἡ τῶν λόγων ἠφανίζετο παιδεία καὶ τὰ τακτικὰ διελέετο. ἐξ ὧν συνέβαινε καὶ τοὺς πολεμίους τῆς τῶν Ῥωμαίων κατατρέχειν ἀδεῶς πολιτείας, φόνου τε πολλοὶ καὶ ἀπαγωγὰ καὶ πόλεων ἀλώσεις. Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 120-121. Translation adapted. Emphasis added.

⁸⁰² Kazhdan 1994: 214-216; Cheynet 1990: 166-167.

⁸⁰³ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 169 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 212). Translation adapted.

Konstantios Doukas in 1079, Attaleiates displays identical biases in writing, ‘Fearing neither divine justice, as he was the cause of so many evils for the world... he rebelled against the emperor and inducted the soldiers into his most evil mutiny... who also incited the civilian populace...’⁸⁰⁴ Although it is evident that a portion of the military and the public supported Konstantios, he was to blame for their subsequent actions. The mutiny was his not theirs. He ‘inducted’ the troops, and they the civilians. All consequent misdeeds were the result of Konstantios’ initial action. Later, when reconciliation was effected by Nikephoros III, and the soldiery had renewed fidelity, they reportedly ‘admitted that they had been unreliable and deranged, that they had used improper words and veered dangerously away from reason...’⁸⁰⁵ Attaleiates strongly implied that they were fooled into joining Konstantios’ revolt because of their credulity, mimicking Leon’s comments that those who had supported Skleros were ‘deceived and misled’. In framing the revolts in this fashion the justifications for rebellion were ignored, ridiculed, or minimised. Moreover, true *consensus* was denied to the rebel: a common movement was presented as a lie, since it was really the work of a single man. Consequently, a usurper’s supporters were chastened for their foolishness but not completely alienated from the community. They had been ‘exploited’ by the real guilty party.

This method of attributing guilt primarily to a single individual was also used against Andronikos I. Choniates espoused that, ‘Not only did brother ignore brother and father neglect son, if such was to Andronikos’ liking, but they also cooperated with the informers in bringing about the utter ruin of their families...’⁸⁰⁶ Once again, social disintegration was blamed on the person who ultimately had encouraged it, not those who ‘betrayed’ their compatriots and perpetuated it. The internecine nature of Andronikos’ usurpation was replicated by all levels of society because this was to his liking: the (usurper-)emperor acted

⁸⁰⁴ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 307 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 560-561).

⁸⁰⁵ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 308 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 562-563). Emphasis added.

⁸⁰⁶ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 258 (trans. Magoulias 144). Emphasis added.

as a model.

Wrongdoing could additionally be explained in ways that distanced it rhetorically from stereotypically ‘Roman’ behaviour, and which ‘othered’ participants. A letter of Ioannes I proposing reconciliation with the rebel Bardas Phokas (c.970), that Leon Diakonon purports to reproduce, states ‘When we heard about the rebellion... we thought that this was not so much the result of your initiative, but was rather a consequence of the folly and *barbarous character* of your supporters, who were completely struck by divine madness.’⁸⁰⁷ This association of a usurpation with ‘barbarian’ characteristics can be seen elsewhere. Writing in the context of the rapid turnover of emperors before the Fourth Crusade, Choniates disparaged the actions of Alexios III in deposing Isaakios II. He noted that:

[Some men had] risen up against one another, disregarding the noble gifts of nature because of evil-mindedness and the love for greater glory. It is for this reason that the barbarian nations regard the Romans with contempt. This they reckoned to be the consequence of all the deplorable events which had gone before by which administrations were constantly overthrown and one emperor replaced by another.⁸⁰⁸

Choniates also asserted that citizens had fled the empire in favour of the stability of barbarian nations, and suggested that the Komnenoi and Angeloi usurpers were implementing behaviours that they had learned from the barbarian peoples they had dwelled amongst.⁸⁰⁹

Traditionally, authors had characterised the dichotomy between ethnic or proto-national ‘Romans’ and antagonistic ‘outsider’ groups along moral-behavioural lines: stereotyping foreigners as bloodthirsty and violent, prone to infighting and civil wars.⁸¹⁰ This served as a contrast to the idealised peaceful *taxis* of the empire; hence Theophylaktos,

⁸⁰⁷ Leon Diakonon, *Historia*, ed. Hase 115 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 164). Emphasis added.

⁸⁰⁸ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 453-454 (trans. Magoulias 249).

⁸⁰⁹ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 353, 495-496, 529 (trans. Magoulias 195, 273, 290), ‘...such practice [mutilation and execution] he [Andronikos I] copied from the barbarous nations with whom he associated when, above all men, he was compelled to wonder far and long.’; ‘These Komnenoi, who sojourned among the barbarian nations hostile to the Romans, were the utter ruin of their country...’.

⁸¹⁰ See, for example, Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 368-369 (trans. Magoulias 204). Hinterberger 2011, on the depiction of Latins in Byzantine hagiography in accordance with these stereotypes. Cheynet 2013b: 68-69, on this stereotype with regard to the depiction of Muslims and Islam in Byzantine texts.

praising Alexios I's military exploits against the 'barbarians', counterintuitively characterised Alexios' *andreia* in terms of 'humanity' - emphasising Prudence, Philanthropy, and Mildness, which were typical of the moral superiority of the *Rhomaioi*.⁸¹¹ By introducing 'bloodthirsty-barbarian' paradigms in order to explain the behaviour of rebellious Roman citizens, the wrongdoing and *ataxia* affecting the empire were made apparent. Civil war and usurpation, the reader is to infer, simply were not Roman. By extension, those involved in these misdeeds must have been infected by barbarism.⁸¹²

These expressions of the political 'othering' of opponents were not usually intended to connote a permanent 'outsider' status. Instead, conflicts and disputes were presented as temporary problems. After the civil wars, Constantine I had claimed to be 'eager to restore and rejoin the body of our common empire which had been stricken as if with a terrible wound.'⁸¹³ Elsewhere, Skylitzes made a distinction between the 'healthy' (*ὕγιαῖνον*) section of the army supporting Basileios II, and the implied 'unhealthy' units following Bardas Skleros from 976-979.⁸¹⁴ Aside from the moral-legitimist ascription of the loyalist troops as the healthy element, by presenting civil war as a sickness Skylitzes' formulation implies that it was something that could be made well. Those who were acting unlawfully, and had distanced themselves from the Romano-Christian community by acting against God's will, nevertheless could be re-joined with that community. They were a rebellious element of the *politeia*, acting like barbarians, but they could be 'healed' through reconciliation; it was only when the aforementioned Bardas Phokas rejected a reconciliation that Ioannes declared him 'incurably ill' and dispatched troops against him.⁸¹⁵ In outlining disputes as temporary evils

⁸¹¹ Theophylaktos, *Opera*, ed. Gautier 214-243, esp. 216-219. For this interpretation, see Magdalino 1993: 419. See also, Frankopan 2008, on some possible criticisms of Alexios' military record and handling of the eastern campaigns in Theophylaktos' discourse.

⁸¹² On this implication, see Lefort 1976: 286. Cheynet 1990: 180;

⁸¹³ Thus Constantine explained his accession to sole rule, and the period of the civil wars, to Arius of Alexandria. Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, ed. Winkelmann 2.65 (p.516). Author's translation.

⁸¹⁴ The distinction is noticed by Stouraitis 2010: 156. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 493 (trans. Wortley 301). Translation adapted.

⁸¹⁵ (*ἀνίατα νοσεῖν*): Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 116 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 165).

the severity of the danger to the state and dynasty was masked because the problem would assuredly be overcome, peaceful resolution was made possible, and rebels might be prompted to acknowledge their error.

Considerations

Modern sociological approaches to civil wars and coups highlight that social disintegration is an inevitable by-product, undermining communal-cohesion and actively working against traditional strategies employed to affect peaceful resolutions. A unifying foreign enemy, the source of bloodshed and blame, is absent and divisions deepen as each side indicts the other. Resolution involves the re-establishment of 'legitimate authority', a (perceived) cessation of the long-term processes that sparked the conflict, and the reintegration of disparate communities.⁸¹⁶ In Byzantium blame was apportioned to the figurehead on whose behalf misdeeds were understood to have been performed, the aggressor. These individuals became the cause of all current and subsequent wrongdoing, accruing guilt and sin as a result. The misdeeds of this person were reprehensible: he had distanced himself from God through bloodshed and perjury, caused physical damage to the state, and undermined the institutions of society itself. Oaths of fidelity and social obligations were broken. Families were torn apart because they were no longer able to trust one another. By its very nature civil war was antithetical to the imperial ideal, which established that peaceful and humane behaviour were signs of virtue. In official rhetoric, supporters went along with a usurper because they had been misled or were credulous. Therefore, the attribution of *consensus* for the usurper's actions was denied, denoting the illegitimacy of his revolt. Real power had always ensured that a usurper could accede, but the negative perception of bloodshed affected emperors' public images, making moral leadership harder to espouse and even allowing his accessional

⁸¹⁶ Fearon 2004; Börm 2016: 1-5.

guilt to be transmitted to his successors.

Barring the indiscriminate destruction of all opponents, after the cessation of violence a means of reintegration needed to be affected. The need to justify oneself was undoubtedly strong, especially during civil wars where the 'wronged' party was not an individual, but a significant percentage of one's countrymen; and when the very acts undertaken to assume power undermined one's claims to deserve it. Revolutions were presented as sacrilegious until successful, at which point, success could be explained as a product of changes in 'divine favour'.⁸¹⁷ This might offer a rhetorical mask with which to justify the accession, but it was a weak defence and guilt could not be so easily discharged. Communicative acts of repentance, reconciliation, and degradation were at the forefront of what followed.

⁸¹⁷ Fögen 1993: 72-78, 81-82; Stouraitis 2010; Alexander 1962: esp. 339.

VI. REPENTANT EMPERORS

Imperial repentance (μετάνοια) emerges as a recurring, if inconsistent, theme in the historical narratives of Byzantium and the West.⁸¹⁸ Public displays and rhetorical allusions allowed rulers associated with transgressions to appear to atone for their sins. The histories unambiguously attribute public acts of atonement, or espousals of remorse, to at least eleven Byzantine usurper-emperors or their successors, for misdeeds committed in seizing the throne. Five other figures were associated with acts that may have been considered expressions of remorse.⁸¹⁹ To this number must surely be added further episodes that went unrecorded. As Dagron revealed, the models that these rulers embraced were provided by Christian ideology.⁸²⁰

Penitential models and theology

For Byzantium, world history was biblical. The chronicle tradition relied upon the biblical framework, opening with accounts of the creation of the world, and then progressing through the histories of the four kingdoms prophesied in the Book of Daniel, and emphasising the ‘Roman’.⁸²¹ Within this framework, the principal example of a ruler seeking to expiate his sins was King David who, in the Old Testament, faced rebuke from the prophet Nathan for the crime of murdering Uriah and taking his wife Bathsheba as his own. After being informed that his firstborn son with Bathsheba would die as a result of divine retribution for this crime, David made a confession of guilt and humbled himself before the Lord. Attempting to

⁸¹⁸ Schieffer’s influential study of royal penance in the West remains an invaluable starting point for the topic: Schieffer 1972: esp. 333-370. See also, de Jong 2011; Hamilton 2001; de Jong 1992; Noble 1980.

⁸¹⁹ See Table 3.

⁸²⁰ Dagron 2003: 104-124.

⁸²¹ On Byzantine conceptions of the past, and the chronicle tradition, see Markopoulos 2006; Macrides and Magdalino 1992; Jeffreys 1979.

supplicate God through acts of penance, he prayed, fasted, and slept upon the ground, but on the seventh day of his entreaties the boy died and David's penance was paid. When the King later fathered a second son, Solomon, with Bathsheba the child was said to be loved by the Lord and the dynasty continued.⁸²²

The story of David's rebuke and penance was well known throughout late antique and medieval Europe, and was just one iteration of David as a penitent. Through his entreaties before God, David expressed the source of his power and demonstrated humility: acknowledging guilt, allowing him to be forgiven for his crimes, and his rule to continue.⁸²³ Humility was David's foremost virtue in Byzantine thought.⁸²⁴ He was cited by monastic teachers as a penitential model 'for the disciplining of the monastic self',⁸²⁵ and Maximos the Confessor's seventh-century *Chapters on Love*, quoted David as a verse model for penitence that a monk should often repeat.⁸²⁶ Humility and repentance thus provided a means of expiating guilt. This model of atonement, although usually without the Old Testament ideology of blood for blood, was embraced by numerous emperors in order to redress their sins.

As Dagron noted, although in the work of Zosimus and the mid-tenth-century Constantinopolitan *Patria* Constantine I assumed the guise of a penitent emperor and turned to Christianity in order to excise his guilt over the executions of his wife and son,⁸²⁷ wider Christian historiography exculpated him of this sin. It named him as a persecuting emperor who was suitably punished by God with leprosy and successfully repented for his misdeeds

⁸²² 2 Samuel 11-12. David's repentance is further enumerated in the lines of Psalm 51.

⁸²³ On supplication as an acknowledgement of the source of imperial/royal power, see Hamilton 2001: 181.

⁸²⁴ The *Apophthegmata Patrum*, John the Persian 4, ed. Migne 165 (trans. Ward 108) records a saying of abba John the Persian cataloguing the virtues of the biblical figures and confirming this view of David.

⁸²⁵ Krueger 2010: 204.

⁸²⁶ 'Look upon my humility and my trouble and forgive all my sins.' Maximos the Confessor, *Chapters on Love*, ed. Cerasa-Gastaldo I.76 (trans. Berthold 43); Krueger 2010: 204.

⁸²⁷ Zosimus, *Histoire Nouvelle* 2.29; *Patria*, ed. Preger (trans. Berger 114-117); Dagron 1984: 93; Dagron 2003: 120. The *Augusta* Fausta and the *Caesar* Crispus who were executed in unusual circumstances in 326. Accusations of intrigue on Fausta's part, or an affair between Crispus and his stepmother, have overwhelmingly influenced the subsequent historiography. Drijvers 1992: 60-63; Barnes 1981: 220; Guthrie 1966.

through baptism, prostration, and supplication, echoing David.⁸²⁸ Yet Constantine did not become synonymous with the figure of the repentant emperor in later historical thought.

While sojourning in Rome in 390,⁸²⁹ Theodosius I learned that the populace of Thessalonike had broken into revolt killing at least one public official.⁸³⁰ Having recently faced a series of domestic crises,⁸³¹ the emperor's response was swift and ended in a massacre that Christian historical tradition ascribed to 'imperial wrath'.⁸³² In reply, Ambrose of Milan penned a missive rebuking the emperor, accusing him of being responsible for the bloodshed, denying him the right to partake in the Eucharist until he had shown remorse for the crime, and summoning him to perform his penance *in the manner of David*.⁸³³ Theodosius initially resisted Ambrose's demands, but after several months of continued criticism he acquiesced. Around Christmas 390, Theodosius appeared outside the Episcopal Church in Milan and, after being denied entry by Ambrose, publicly humbled himself by weeping and asking to be 'loosed' of his sins. He also introduced a law providing a thirty-day suspension of punishment for those accused of a crime and sentenced to corporal punishment.⁸³⁴ With his penance performed Theodosius was welcomed back into the

⁸²⁸ *Life of Silvester*, ed. Combefis p.279, cited in Dagron 2003: 119 fn.91; Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 7. On the introduction of the story of Constantine's leprosy to the Constantine legend, see Fowden 1994: 153-158.

⁸²⁹ Vecchio 1992, proposed a date of 389 on the basis of the chronology of near contemporaneous events. However, Spring/Summer 390 remains the general consensus. For the principal arguments, see Washburn 2006: 215, with references to secondary literature.

⁸³⁰ Although the reliability of this version of events has been questioned, the general had supposedly ordered the arrest of a popular charioteer on charges of homosexuality and the attempted rape of a male cupbearer in the days preceding a race. The population of Thessalonike grew discontent with the extended detainment of the charioteer and called for his release. Eventually the misunderstanding grew into hostile revolt, the populace rioted, and the *magister militum* Butheric was killed. Butheric's status as a prominent Gothic general in the military has also suggested an ethnic component to the uprising - as discontent with the position of Germans within the army was rife. On this, see Gregory 2010: 95; Frakes 2010, replete with references to the substantial corpus of secondary literature on this episode.

⁸³¹ The usurpation of Magnus Maximus from 383-388, upheaval in Antioch in 387, and Callinicum and Constantinople in 388. On the influence of these earlier crises on Theodosius' response to the events in Thessalonike, see McLynn 1994: 291-315. On events in Antioch, see Browning 1952.

⁸³² Washburn 2006: 216, n.5.

⁸³³ Ambrose, *Letter on the Massacre at Thessalonica* (*Letter* 51) trans. Liebeschuetz and Hill 263-269.

⁸³⁴ *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. Mommsen and Meyer 9.40.13.

Christian congregation.⁸³⁵

The historicity of this event has long proved problematic,⁸³⁶ and it is interesting to note that no extant contemporary pagan source discussed either the massacre or the incident that sparked it.⁸³⁷ Nevertheless, the story of Theodosius' penance entered into the cultural memory of the Christian world where, like King David, Theodosius became a prominent model of royal repentance. When the Carolingian emperor Louis I prostrated himself and confessed his sins before the assembled secular and ecclesiastic dignitaries at Attigny (822), the *Astronomer* recorded that he was imitating Theodosius.⁸³⁸ In twelfth-century Byzantium, Attaleiates, noted how 'the extremely merciful' Nikephoros III restored Theodosius' law requiring a thirty-day halt of punishment, and included a reiteration of 'the blessed emperor' Theodosius' penance.⁸³⁹ Although there was no suggestion that Nikephoros himself had done anything wrong, the association with Theodosius the Great, as also for Louis, can only have enhanced his prestige. By then, the *Life of Ambrose*, replete with Davidic comparisons for Theodosius' repentance, had been integrated into Byzantine *menologia*.⁸⁴⁰

Five centuries after Theodosius, Leon VI found himself in a similar position. The sin on this occasion was not bloodshed, but *tetragamy*. After Leon's marriages to Theophano

⁸³⁵ Sozomen, *Histoire Ecclésiastique* ed. Bidez 7.25; Theodoret, *Histoire Ecclésiastique* ed. Parmentier and Hansen 5.17-18; Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn 268-269 (trans. Jeffreys 188); Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 72-73 (trans. Mango and Scott 111); Georgios Kedrenos, *Compendium Historiarum*, ed. Bekker I, 559.

⁸³⁶ Scholarship has been divided between two principal schools: one, accepting the source materials largely at face value; the other, recognising the highly partial nature of these materials and which has attempted a reconstruction of events. Moorhead 1999: 192-196; McLynn 1994: 317-330; Kolb 1980; Schieffer 1972: 333-370. See also, Larson 1970: 297-301, who suggests that the sources have *no* historical reliability.

⁸³⁷ Frakes 2010: 53, 59 n.59, noting that as there is no mention of the events at Thessalonike in Zosimus it was unlikely that his source, Eunapius, recorded the event either, and that Ammianus Marcellinus' allusions to later events include praise for Theodosius, but no mention of the massacre.

⁸³⁸ *Anonymi vita Hludovici*, ed. Rau p.314; de Jong 1992: 31-32. Louis was atoning for causing the blinding and subsequent death of his nephew. He was reconciled with his brothers after the ceremony.

⁸³⁹ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 313-314 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 570-573). See also Kedrenos, *Historiarum Compendium*, ed. Bekker I, 559.

⁸⁴⁰ For recitation on 7 December. *Life of Saint Ambrose*, ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus 55; Dagron 2003: 120.

Martiniake,⁸⁴¹ Zoe Zaoutzaina,⁸⁴² and Eudokia Baïna,⁸⁴³ there was still no living son to succeed him. Therefore, when his mistress, Zoe Karbonopsina,⁸⁴⁴ gave birth to the future emperor Constantine VII, Leon contravened canon law, taking Karbonopsina as his fourth wife in order to legitimise the boy's future claims to the throne.⁸⁴⁵ Even after Constantine's baptism, he refused to separate from her.⁸⁴⁶ Patriarch Mystikos⁸⁴⁷ excommunicated Leon and, at the Imperial Doors, denied him access to Hagia Sophia for the Christmas celebrations (906) and Epiphany (January 907). On both occasions the emperor appeared humbled before the doors of the Church, performed *proskynesis* and shed tears.⁸⁴⁸ On both occasions he was granted access to the *metatorion*⁸⁴⁹ rather than the nave, and via the right-hand aisle. A church council convened to attempt to reach an economy over the marriage. After meetings with various metropolitans during which Leon displayed his remorse, only Mystikos' opposition remained to prevent it.⁸⁵⁰ Leon acted decisively by accusing him of conspiring with the rebel Andronikos Doukas,⁸⁵¹ and Mystikos resigned himself to confinement at the Galakrenai monastery. Thereafter, Leon returned to Hagia Sophia, but always as a humbled penitent, standing and weeping at the holy railings of the chancel.⁸⁵²

⁸⁴¹ Tougher 1997: 134-140; Alexakis 1995; Rydén 1986: 545-546; Karlin-Hayter 1969.

⁸⁴² Tougher 1997: 140-145; Karlin-Hayter 1969: 13.

⁸⁴³ Tougher 1997: 149-152; Schreiner 1991: 190.

⁸⁴⁴ Garland 1999: 118-123; Tougher 1997: 152-153.

⁸⁴⁵ Leon's marriage to Karbonopsina was clearly delayed until after the birth of a son. The sources claim that Zoe lived with Leon, but remained uncrowned until the birth of an heir. Leon was evidently unwilling to risk another unpopular marriage for no practical political benefit. Tougher 1997: 152-153. The marriage took place in April 906 and, in place of the patriarch, was solemnised by the priest 'Thomas'. On the background to the marriage, see Dagron et al 1993: 188-194; Tougher 1997: ch.6, and esp. pp.152-153.

⁸⁴⁶ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 185 (trans. Wortley 179). As Tougher 1997: 157 points out, the baptism of Constantine VII was a *de facto* declaration of his legitimacy, but Leon may have been compelled to remain married to Karbonopsina in order to secure her legitimacy also, to avoid potential charges against her from importuning Constantine. Magdalino 1988b: 114, suggests that Leon's refusal to separate was a result of his sincere love for Karbonopsina and, more importantly, his own belief that he was above canon law.

⁸⁴⁷ With the urging of the metropolitans led by Arethas of Caesarea. On Arethas' role as a leading voice of opposition to the marriage, see Tougher 1997: 158, 160.

⁸⁴⁸ *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter pp.70-71, 78-79, 84-85.

⁸⁴⁹ The small chamber in the southern aisle of the church where the emperor changed his robes for ceremonials. Kazhdan et al 1991: 1353.

⁸⁵⁰ *Vita Euthymii CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter pp.78-84.

⁸⁵¹ *Vita Euthymii CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter pp. 90-91. On Doukas' revolt, see Karlin-Hayter 1966.

⁸⁵² *Vita Euthymii CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter pp. 104-105.

Leon's repentance may even have occasioned the addition of the mosaic above the Imperial Doors of Hagia Sophia. This mosaic, late ninth- or early tenth-century in style, depicts an unidentified emperor performing *proskynesis* before an enthroned Christ. Figures of the Virgin and an archangel in military garb accompany those of Christ and the emperor. The composition is deliberately dissonant. A large space remains unoccupied on the right, and was not subjected to modification.⁸⁵³ As Dagron noted, the lack of identification for the emperor transformed the scene into a generic portrayal of imperial humility. Moreover, the positions of the Virgin and Archangel in relation to Christ invoke a *Deesis* scene, with the Theotokos intervening on behalf of the imperial supplicant, so that the archangel (Michael?) will waive his punishment.⁸⁵⁴ The imperial figure mimics that of David in Byzantine Psalters, again evoking a biblical precedent that emperors might choose to emulate.⁸⁵⁵ It visually memorialised a ritual of imperial penitence at the ceremonial heart of Constantinople.

Yet expressions of imperial remorse and penance were not restricted to this format alone. Dagron's examination of imperial repentance is limited by its focus on emperor-patriarch relations, and the strict ceremonial format in which he viewed it. Cases that did not comply with the Davidic/Theodosian penitential exemplar, a *public* display of prostration and confession to an intercessory figure like the patriarch, were not considered. However, contemporary Byzantines noticed and attributed expressions of imperial repentance to other acts as well.

The Orthodox theological position on penance remained unclear throughout the

⁸⁵³ Mango 1962: 24-25; Hawkins 1968: 151-166; Cormack 1981: 138-141. The suggestion of Schminck 1985: 211-234, that the emperor is Basileios I, and that he was originally accompanied by a figure of Patriarch Photios that was removed in a later *damnatio*, cannot be supported by the material evidence. This does not rule out an identification with Basileios, but Photios certainly was not shown.

⁸⁵⁴ Dagron 2003: 115.

⁸⁵⁵ Oikonomides 1976.

history of the empire.⁸⁵⁶ Originally a public act, after the fourth century, penance generally took the form of a private confession followed by a prayer of absolution pronounced by a priest. However, churchmen hesitated to define its status among the church *mysteria*, and frequently associated it with monastic tonsure or the anointing of the sick.⁸⁵⁷ The practice connoted a form of ascetic spiritual direction, and monasticism was associated with the penitential lifestyle.⁸⁵⁸ Sacramental penance, a formal reconciliation with the church, was only necessary when an excommunication had occurred.⁸⁵⁹ Ascetic and canonical literature frequently mentioned penitential punishments, periods of excommunication, prostration, and charitable works in this category. Absolution was only required when mortal sins (murder, apostasy, adultery) had been committed, and even non-ordained monks could absolve sinners. In *euchologia* absolutions usually took the form of a prayer of remission.⁸⁶⁰ Sin was never reduced to a strictly legal crime to be judged and punished.⁸⁶¹ The continual role of the church in providing asylum and penitential rehabilitation to killers, in contravention of Roman law, has been well documented.⁸⁶² Christian salvation-ideology ‘healed’ the sinner through the performance of any of a variety of penitential practices. Offenders therefore had recourse to numerous pathways to forgiveness and reconciliation with God. Formal public absolutions from a representative of the church, the Theodosian model, were just one format.⁸⁶³

In the early fifteenth century, Manuel II reiterated much of this theological stance in

⁸⁵⁶ Meyendorff 1983: 195-196; Pargoire 1932: 347.

⁸⁵⁷ Meyendorff 1983: 196.

⁸⁵⁸ Meyendorff 1983: 195.

⁸⁵⁹ Meyendorff 1983: 195.

⁸⁶⁰ Pargoire 1932: 348; Meyendorff 1983: 196.

⁸⁶¹ Meyendorff 1983: 196.

⁸⁶² Macrides 1988. On the disparate views of church and state towards punishment and sin see the twelfth-century commentaries of Balsamon. *Syntagma I*, ed. Rhalles and Potles 188-191.

⁸⁶³ Meyendorff 1983: 195, has noted that, in his nine sermons tackling the subject of ‘Repentance’, John Chrysostom only refers to the church as a direct source of absolution via confession on one occasion. John Chrysostom, *De Penitentia III*, ed. Migne 292.

his sixth *Ethico-Political Oration* composed for his son.⁸⁶⁴ He established that sin and repentance were innate to the human experience and affected all people regardless of social status. An emperor, like anybody else, could commit a sin and find himself in need of repentance. Manuel asserted that human law was not the same as God's law, and, therefore, sinners were not lost causes. God, because of His *philanthropia*, forgave all those who confessed and sought atonement. All that was required for salvation was an acknowledgement of self-responsibility, and repentance. Emulating the divine example by performing acts of *philanthropia* provided a means of curing one's sins.⁸⁶⁵ In expressing this sentiment Manuel evoked long-held associations of *philanthropia*, moral rulership, and imperial worthiness in classical Greek and Byzantine thought.⁸⁶⁶ Ostensibly both public and private acts might be considered expressions of imperial worthiness in emulation of classical and divine example, but also proofs of atonement.

In her analysis of *Oration VI*, Kakkoura identifies several instances in which Manuel alluded to the usurpation of his brother, Andronikos IV. After asserting that he had 'seen some people hated by their parents' (Andronikos), Manuel reaffirmed that God never deserted those who sinned, but kept trying to secure their salvation.⁸⁶⁷ Considering persons deemed 'disgraceful vessels', another probable reference to Andronikos' usurpation,⁸⁶⁸ Manuel again emphasised that all misdeeds could be overcome through repentance. Niketas Choniates espoused a similar sentiment in relation to Anna Komnene's second failed-attempt to secure the throne for her husband. Ioannes II uncovered his sister's conspiracy and lamented her disloyalty, intending to disinherit her. This was prevented when the *meGas*

⁸⁶⁴ Manuel II, *Seven Ethico-Political Orations*, (Oration VI), ed. Migne pp. 484-528; ed. Kakkoura 404-443, hereafter references are to Kakkoura's recent critical edition.

⁸⁶⁵ Manuel invokes the *topos* of the 'medication of repentance' (*φαρμάκον τῆς μετανοίας*). Manuel II, *Seven Ethico-Political Orations*, (Oration VI), ed. Kakkoura 406.

⁸⁶⁶ Constantelos 1992: esp. 33-42, 69-101; McGuckin 2010.

⁸⁶⁷ Manuel II, *Seven Ethico-Political Orations*, (Oration VI), ed. Kakkoura 427 (*Text*); 144-145 (*Commentary*).

⁸⁶⁸ Manuel II, *Seven Ethico-Political Orations*, (Oration VI), ed. Kakkoura 431 (*Text*); 147 (*Commentary*).

domestikos, Ioannes Axouchos, reminded him that '[she remains] the sister of a virtuous emperor and by repentance will recover'.⁸⁶⁹ Theoretically, the sins accrued in usurping the throne were not insurmountable. In adopting the guise of a repentant emperor a usurper could exploit a historically and theologically established means of atonement for wrongdoing.

Four cases, those of Romanos I, Ioannes I, Michael IV, and Alexios I, typify the varied strategies and perceptions of imperial repentance in Byzantium, and allow us to examine the political importance of usurpers' repentance in contemporary society and the histories.

Romanos I

The final section of *Theophanes Continuatus*, early in the narrative of Constantine VII's reign, gives a dramatic report of the circumstances of Romanos' final atonement. We are told that the former emperor, then living as an exiled monk on the island of Prote, was visited one night by a prophetic dream that took the form of a 'Last Judgment'. Romanos saw himself naked, being dragged towards a vast fire that occupied the *Tzykanisterion* of the Great Palace and which was tended by a number of demons. A representation of hell.⁸⁷⁰ Romanos witnessed two figures being burned alive: his son Constantine, and Bishop Anastasios of Herakleia. Romanos was ushered ever closer to the conflagration, but was saved at the last moment through the intervention of the Theotokos who stopped his escorts, entreated them to show mercy, and then clothed his naked figure.⁸⁷¹ According to the

⁸⁶⁹ ...ἀγαθοῦ τοίνυν βασιλέως καὶ εἰσέτι κασιγνήτος μένουσα ἐκ μετανοίας τὸ φίλτρον αὐθις ἀνακαλέσεται... Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 11 (trans. Magoulias 8). Emphasis added. The exact date is unclear but the attempted coup on behalf of Nikephoros Bryennios the Younger was uncovered early in Ioannes' reign, and probably very soon after his accession while still securing his position. Cheynet 1990: 103.

⁸⁷⁰ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 438-439. For a similar scene of sinners being thrown into hellfire, and a last-minute intervention by 'Mercy', see *The Life of Saint Basil the Younger*, ed. Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath 434-699. On middle-Byzantine descriptions of hell more broadly, including a brief account of Romanos' dream sequence, see Ševčenko 2009.

⁸⁷¹ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 439.

Continuator, when Romanos awoke the next day, he learned the truth of this dream. The bishop had died, and Constantine had been killed in a failed attempt to escape from prison.⁸⁷²

The *Continuator* asserts that this premonitory dream shocked Romanos so greatly that he performed acts of penance in order to save his soul. On Maundy Thursday 947,⁸⁷³ he appeared before three hundred monks, including representatives from Rome, and performed a ritual humiliation. He appeared naked, and read his sins from a book one by one, asking forgiveness for each. The assembled monks wept for him and chanted the ‘Kyrie Eleison’.⁸⁷⁴ The climax of this ceremony was a whipping session before the Communion table, where Romanos was insulted by a neophyte and then received absolution.⁸⁷⁵ With the ceremonial repentance completed, he then dispatched the book listing his sins, together with a suitable donative, to the monk Dermokaites of Olympus, receiving in exchange a fortnight of prayers for his soul. The latter reportedly proved effective when Dermokaites heard a voice chant three times ‘God’s mercy has conquered’, and found Romanos’ book of sins miraculously blank. Upon Romanos’ death the book was buried with him.⁸⁷⁶

The story is unique to the *Continuation* and, as a product of Constantine’s court, has nakedly propagandist overtones. As Calofonos notes, ‘the dream suitably marks the rebirth of the Macedonian dynasty with the accession of Constantine VII... [and reaffirms the] divine sanction of the dynasty’s legitimacy.’⁸⁷⁷ In other works produced at Constantine’s behest, his low opinion of Romanos was made evident. The burial places of the Lekapenoi were brazenly omitted from the imperial list of the *Catalogus sepulchrorum*.⁸⁷⁸ *On*

⁸⁷² *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 438; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 236 (trans. Wortley 228), confirming the cause of Constantine’s death.

⁸⁷³ The exact year is not given, however, as the alleged dream happened after Constantine Lekapenos’ death (c.946-948), before the attempted coup to restore Romanos (c.947) and Romanos’ death (948), 947 is the most likely period. On the chronology, see Runciman 1929: 236.

⁸⁷⁴ ‘Lord, have mercy.’ Derived from 1 Chronicles 16:34 ‘...give thanks to the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endures forever...’, and Luke 18:9-14 ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

⁸⁷⁵ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 439-440.

⁸⁷⁶ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 440.

⁸⁷⁷ Calofonos 2014: 116.

⁸⁷⁸ Grierson, Mango and Ševčenko 1962: 28.

Administration, intended as a guide to governance for Constantine's son, included far more overt criticism⁸⁷⁹ and even alluded to Romanos' fate, '...the end which came upon him... through these headstrong acts is sufficient warning to restrain anyone thinking to emulate his evil deeds.'⁸⁸⁰ The exact nature of the sins for which Romanos atoned were not listed by the *Continuator*, however, a reader would have little difficulty inferring what they were. Romanos had been divested of imperial attire in the dream: suggestive in itself, but when coupled with his son and co-emperor's death, a co-emperor who had usurped his father's throne and had been displaced by Constantine VII in turn, the sin of usurpation becomes more distinct. The 'official' tale was a warning also, and Romanos' opportunity to repent served multiple purposes. The grandfather of Romanos II, and father of the Empress Helena, could not brazenly be accused of usurpation and condemned to eternal damnation. To do so could have brought Helena and Romanos II's legitimacy into question. Therefore, through an acknowledgement of wrongdoing and a return to correct, Macedonian led, order, Romanos was spared and his lesson was learned. He humbly accepted exile and tonsure in marked contrast to his unrepentant son, Constantine, whose attempted escape upset order and resulted in his death. The contrasting fates of father and son reinforced the core lesson.

Skylitzes also gave details of Romanos' attempts at atonement, although his narrative bears little resemblance to that of the *Continuator*. The emperor received no mention after his unwilling tonsure until his death (June 948), and even then only a single line records the event.⁸⁸¹ Instead, in the final pages concerning Romanos' reign we are told that, 'To propitiate the divinity for the oaths he had broken and in repentance of his misdeeds in

⁸⁷⁹ 'Ο κύρις Ῥωμανός, ὁ βασιλεύς, ιδιώτης καὶ ἀγράμματος ἄνθρωπος ἦν καὶ οὔτε τῶν ἄνωθεν ἐν βασιλείῳ τετραμμένων, οὔτε τῶν παρηκολουθηκόντων ἐξ ἀρχῆς τοῖς Ῥωμαϊκοῖς ἔθισμοις, οὔτε ἀπὸ γένους βασιλείου καὶ εὐενοῦς, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο αὐθαδέστερον καὶ ἐξουσιαστικώτερον τὰ πολλὰ κατεπράττετο... 'The lord Romanos, the emperor, was a common and illiterate man, and not from among those who have been raised in the palace, and have followed the Roman customs from the beginning; nor was he of imperial and noble lineage, and for this reason in most of his actions he was too arrogant and despotic...' *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. Moravcsik and Jenkins 72-73. Author's translation.

⁸⁸⁰ *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. Moravcsik and Jenkins 74-77.

⁸⁸¹ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 237 (trans. Wortley 228).

breaking pacts, the emperor Romanos undertook a number of good works which it would be a severe task to list.⁸⁸² By this point in Romanos' reign, and Skylitzes' narrative, the emperor's favoured son and heir, Christophoros, had died.⁸⁸³ His death appears to have greatly affected Romanos, and we know from *solidi* minted at this time (but Skylitzes does not report this) that Constantine VII replaced Christophoros in precedence. The class X issue depicted a beardless Constantine, now returned to the coinage, standing beside Romanos.⁸⁸⁴ The broken oaths and pacts that Skylitzes referred to may be a reference to his promises to Constantine VII that were broken in the process of supplanting him. Skylitzes essentially confirms this reading in the opening chapter of Constantine's reign, which recalls that '[Romanos] broke his oaths (and he had bound himself with most awesome oaths that he would never aspire to be emperor) and proclaimed himself emperor'.⁸⁸⁵ The choice of Constantine rather than another of his own sons might suggest that Romanos then felt remorse for these actions. However, the closest the narrative comes to a gathering of three hundred monks is to tell us later that 'he held all monks in high honour, and especially Sergios [the grand-nephew] of Photios.'⁸⁸⁶ In Skylitzes, Romanos' penance was not ritual, but a collection of public works and acts of *philanthropia*. He paid the debts of rich and poor, 'burnt the promissory notes at the porphyry *omphalos* of the Chalke', paid the rents of many, and provided for the monastery of the Myrelaion where his tomb had been prepared.⁸⁸⁷

It is interesting too that, in *his* description of the Myrelaion, the *Continuator* noted

⁸⁸² 'Ιλασκόμενος δὲ τὸν θεὸν ὁ βασιλεὺς 'Ρωμανὸς διὰ τὴν τῶν ὀρκῶν παράβασιν, καὶ μετανοῶν ἐφ' οἷς κακῶς παρεσπόνδησεν, ἐποίει μὲν καὶ ἄλλας εὐποιίας, ἅς καταλέγειν ἔργον... Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 231 (trans. Wortley 222-223).

⁸⁸³ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 420; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 226 (trans. Wortley 219).

⁸⁸⁴ Grierson 1973: III.2, 534-535.

⁸⁸⁵ ... ἀλλὰ τοὺς δεδομένους ἀθετήσας ὀρκους (ἦν γὰρ φρικωδεστάταις ὀρκωμοσίαις ἑαυτὸν καταδεσμήσας, μὴ ἂν ποτε βασιλείας ἔφεσιν ἐσχηκέναι) ἑαυτὸν τε ἀνηγόρευσε βασιλέα... Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 233 (trans. Wortley 225). Author's translation.

⁸⁸⁶ 'Ο δὲ βασιλεὺς 'Ρωμανὸς καὶ πάντας μὲν ἐτίμα τοὺς μοναχοὺς, διαφερόντως δὲ τὸν μοναχὸν Σέργιον τὸν ἀνεπιτὸν Φωτίου τοῦ πατριάρχου... Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 232 (trans. Wortley 224); following Symeon Magister, ed. Wahlgren 339; Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 327.

⁸⁸⁷ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 231 (trans. Wortley 223). *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 415-417, offers a much more complete accounting of Romanos' charitable works (forty lines versus six).

that Romanos moved the remains of the emperor Maurice and his family to the new construction.⁸⁸⁸ No motive was provided, but in suggesting the memory of Maurice, including the executions of Maurice's sons before his own eyes, allusions to Romanos' own circumstances may have been evoked. The reburial itself may have been another act of atonement for usurpation.

Nevertheless, we have two accounts that agree that Romanos was remorseful near the end of his life, but which diverge in their descriptions of his expiation. Since Holmes has demonstrated Skylitzes' reliance upon the *Continuator's* account for this period, and given the provocative nature of Romanos' penitence in the *Continuator's* version, the dream's omission is particularly circumspect.⁸⁸⁹ Its legitimist propaganda and *Continuatus'* circulation in court circles⁸⁹⁰ might suggest that the entire story was concocted. Political sympathies were already divided between loyalists of Constantine VII, Romanos I, and Stephanos Lekapenos.⁸⁹¹ The story invited sympathy for the repentant ex-emperor, but would have served as a humbling exemplar for his more troublesome adherents. This conclusion is problematic, however, since the invention would have been great, and the ritualised penance, although probably exaggerated by contempt, is not exceptional. Humiliation through prostration, the confession of sins, begging for mercy, and finally being granted forgiveness and reconciliation with the Christian community, was fundamental to penitential rituals of the wider medieval world. It was precisely through these acts that the

⁸⁸⁸ ... ἐν οἷς φασὶ συναποκεῖσθαι Μαυρίκιον σὺν τοῖς παισίν· ἃ καὶ ἀπετέθη ἐν τῇ τοῦ βασιλέως Ῥωμανοῦ μονῇ ἤτοι εἰς τὸ Μυρέλαιον. *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 404. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 231 (trans. Wortley 223), does not mention the translation of the remains in his account of the Myrelaion.

⁸⁸⁹ Holmes 2005: esp. 126-128 and n.6. See also the conclusions of Flusin and Cheynet reprinted in translation in the introduction to Wortley 2010: xxii-xxiii.

⁸⁹⁰ Calofonos 2014: 98-101 and esp. 116-117 n.90.

⁸⁹¹ An attempted coup, with the aim of restoring Romanos to power, was thwarted in its early stages c.947/948. The *parakoimomenos* Theophanes was implicated and the conspirators exiled. A second, more serious, attempted coup with the aim of establishing Stephanos Lekapenos was then uncovered; Leon Kladon, Gregoras of Macedonia, a certain Theodosios, Stephanos Lekapenos' chief attendant, Ioannes the *Rhaiktor*, and the informer Michael Diabolinos, were implicated in the attempt. Their properties were seized and their persons subjected to rhinotomy before being sentenced to exile. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 238-239 (trans. Wortley 230-231); Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 309.

sinner was brought to reconciliation with God.⁸⁹² The solution to the lacuna instead appears to be Skylitzes' own narrative voice. The story was deliberately ignored in order to attack Romanos' historical image and frame the Lekapenoi as historic wrongdoers. Holmes has identified other redactions by Skylitzes of the *Continuator's* narrative that serve to omit praise for Romanos.⁸⁹³ An excessive display of remorse, possibly evoking pity, would detract from the damaging image Skylitzes cultivated. By contrast, the maltreated Constantine VII, who had elevated Lekapenos 'with a most unwilling heart',⁸⁹⁴ could emerge morally superior from his struggle against him. Both accounts were propaganda pieces on behalf of Constantine and the question of remorse was a crucial consideration in their construction, albeit exploited in very different ways.

Ioannes I

In the immediate aftermath of the assassination of Nikephoros II in 969,⁸⁹⁵ Ioannes Tzimiskes sought to solidify his position. According to Leon Diakonos and Skylitzes, after securing the Great Palace and promoting his supporters, Tzimiskes relieved the former emperor's devotees of their commands and ordered the exile of Nikephoros' relatives.⁸⁹⁶ The same night, as his supporters continued proclaiming him throughout the city,⁸⁹⁷ he proceeded to Hagia Sophia with a few of his men in order to be crowned with the imperial diadem by

⁸⁹² Dalewski 2008: esp. 47-48, 90 n.12; Hamilton 2001; de Jong 1992: 29.

⁸⁹³ Holmes 2005: esp. 136-138.

⁸⁹⁴ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 233 (trans. Wortley 225), a quotation of Homer's *Iliad*, 4.43.

⁸⁹⁵ Nikephoros was assassinated in a coup involving disaffected military officials: Ioannes I, Michael Bourtzes, Isaakios Brachamios, Leon Balantes, Leon Pediasimos, and Atzypotheodoros. On the factors that likely motivated their involvement in Ioannes' coup, and an overview of their careers, see McGrath 1996: esp. 89-90; Morris 1994: 212; Cheynet 1990: 227-328;

⁸⁹⁶ Nikephoros' brother, Leon the *kouropalates*, and the *patrikios* Nikephoros (Leon's son) were exiled to Methymne on Lesbos. The *patrikios* and *doux*, Bardas the Younger was relieved of command and exiled to Amaseia, capital of the Armeniakon theme, where Tzimiskes' loyalists were particularly influential. Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 95-96 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 144-146); Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 284-285 (trans. Wortley 271-272). On these individuals, see Cheynet 1986: 307-309.

⁸⁹⁷ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 94 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 144).

the patriarch's hand.⁸⁹⁸ However, Polyeuktos refused him access to the Church, saying in the *Synopsis* that 'a person whose hands were wet from the freshly spilled and still warm blood of a kinsman was unworthy to enter a church of God, but he must show deeds of repentance without delay, and only then gain permission to tread the ground of the house of the Lord.' Skylitzes further noted how, 'Ioannes humbly accepted the punishment and promised that he would perform it all. He did, however, give the justification that it was not through him that Nikephoros had been killed, but by Balantes and Atzypothodoros, and at the urging of the Empress.'⁸⁹⁹ Tzimiskes' association with bloodguilt was clear.

Leon, although praising the minimal blood spilled, remarked that the murder of Nikephoros was an 'unholy and abominable deed, loathsome to God', and his opening lines on Tzimiskes' reign stated simply that 'Nikephoros was murdered'.⁹⁰⁰ He was also clearly shocked by the desecration of the emperor's corpse, taking care to name those responsible for its mutilation⁹⁰¹ and noting that it remained unattended outside the palace for an entire day before being hastily transported to the *heroon* of the Holy Apostles.⁹⁰² In Skylitzes, the vivid charge of bloodguilt, first openly proclaimed by Polyeuktos, was then subtly worked into the narrative in other ways. A story of the virtuous monk, and later patriarch of Antioch,

⁸⁹⁸ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 95-99 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 144-148); Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 284-285 (trans. Wortley 271-272).

⁸⁹⁹ ...μη ἄξιον εἶναι φήσας ἐπιβῆναι θείου ναοῦ νεαρῶ καὶ ἀτμίζοντι ἔτι τῷ συγγενικῷ αἵματι σταζομένας τὰς χεῖρας ἔχοντα, ἀλλὰ σπεῦσαι ἔργα μετανοίας ἐνδείξασθαι, καὶ οὕτως ἐφίεσθαι πατεῖν ἔδαφος οἴκου κυρίου. τοῦ δὲ Ἰωάννου ἠπίως δεξαμένου τὴν ἐπιτίμησιν καὶ πάντα πρᾶζαι μετ' εὐπειθείας ἐπαγγελιαμένου, ἀπολογησαμένου δ', ὅτι καὶ αὐτόχειρ οὐκ αὐτὸς ἐγένετο τοῦ Νικηφόρου, ἀλλ' ὁ Βαλάντης καὶ ὁ Ἀτζυποθεόδωρος ἐπιτροπῆ τῆς δεσποίνης... Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 285 (trans. Wortley 272). Translation adapted. Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 98-99 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 147-148), offers a slightly different account in which Balantes' name alone is volunteered, and only *after* Polyeuktos had asked Tzimiskes to point out the emperor's murderer.

⁹⁰⁰ ...Ὁ δὲ γε Ἰωάννης, ἐπεὶ τὸ τοιοῦτον θεοστυγὲς καὶ ἀνόσιον μῦθος εἰργάσατο... Τοῦ δὲ αὐτοκράτορος Νικηφόρου τὸν τρόπον, ὃν εἰρηταί μοι, ἀναιρεθέντος ...ἐν γὰρ ταῖς μεγίσταις τῶν πραγμάτων μεταβολαῖς, πολλῆς, ὡς εἰκὸς, στάσεως ἀναρριζομένης καὶ ταραχῆς, τότε, οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως, παρατυχὸν εὐκοσμία τις καὶ βαθεῖα σιγὴ τὸν δῆμον κατέσχε, τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος Νικηφόρου ἀναιρεθέντος, καὶ τινος ἐνὸς τῶν ὑπασπιστῶν ἐτέρου μηδενὸς κἂν ἐπὶ κόβρης εἰληφόντος κόνδυλον... Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 90, 93, 98 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 140, 143, 147).

⁹⁰¹ Leon names Atzypothodoros as the individual responsible. Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 91 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 140).

⁹⁰² Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 91 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 140-141).

Thomas, foretold the proclamation of Tzimiskes ‘but warned him not to be in a hurry, as God was going to raise him up to imperial heights... [and to] beware lest by foolishly rushing to possess the throne he destroy his own soul.’⁹⁰³ The prophetic nature of the warning was evidently intended to reveal that this was exactly what had happened to Tzimiskes through Nikephoros’ murder. Skylitzes’ later comment that ‘[the Romans knew] they had God on their side, He who has no wish to come to the aid of princes with unclean hands, but always helps the victims of injustice...’,⁹⁰⁴ may be read as comparison rebuking the Rus prince Sviatoslav, who had just needlessly killed three hundred Bulgars on the basis of a ‘suspicion’, but praising Tzimiskes who was leading the Roman forces and had now successfully repented for his own bloodguilt to win them divine favour.

The terms of the penance (ἐπιτίμησιν) that Polyeuktos imposed, as reported by Leon and Skylitzes, shows signs of the emperor’s early efforts to minimise his association with this bloodguilt. Empress Theophano, named by Tzimiskes as the instigator of the crime, was to be removed from the palace and exiled along with Nikephoros’ actual murderers now that they had been named.⁹⁰⁵

The stated motives for Theophano’s involvement vary between sources and betray the efforts of Tzimiskes’ propagandists to further shift the burden of guilt onto her. Psellos’ *Historia Syntomos* and the *Epitome* of Zonaras inveigh that Nikephoros had intended to break his agreement with her and have Basileios and Constantine castrated in order that he might subvert the succession.⁹⁰⁶ Others, including Skylitzes, propose that the empress had

⁹⁰³ ...καὶ παρεγγυησάμενον μὴ ἐπισπεῦσαι, ὡς τοῦ θεοῦ μέλλοντος αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ τῆς βασιλείας ὕψος ἀναβιβάσαι, ἢ μὴν γινώσκειν, ὡς, εἰ ὀλιγώρως διατεθεὶς ἐπιταχύνει τὴν τῆς βασιλείας κατάσχεσιν, τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῆς ἐπίβουλος ἔσεται... Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 286 (trans. Wortley 273).

⁹⁰⁴ οἱ δὲ Ῥωμαῖοι ταῖς ἐξ ὑπογούου νίκαις γαυρούμενοι καὶ τὴν τὰ πάντα κρῖναι μέλλουσαν μάχην προσεκδεχόμενοι, εἰδότες δ’, ὅτι καὶ θεὸν συλλήτορα ἔξουσιν, οὐ τοῖς ἀδίκων χειρῶν ἄρχουσι φιλοῦντα, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἀδικουμένοις διὰ παντὸς ἐπαρήγειν... Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 299 (trans. Wortley 285).

⁹⁰⁵ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 98-99 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 147-148); Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 285 (trans. Wortley 272).

⁹⁰⁶ Psellos, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Aerts 100-101; Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 516-517; Yahya of Antioch, *Histoire*, ed. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev II, 827; Duffy and Papaioannou 2003. The

grown impatient with Nikephoros' celibacy and endeavoured to manoeuvre Tzimiskes (whom she had intended to marry before Nikephoros) into power.⁹⁰⁷ In the latter version, Theophano was motivated by desire, she was to be perceived as an adulteress and politically treacherous. Skylitzes' narrative even extended these characteristics into her past. Rather than reporting Theophano's links to the (aristocratic) Krateros family,⁹⁰⁸ he asserted that she was the daughter of an innkeeper, that she had helped Romanos II to poison his father and then urged him to expel his mother from the palace in order to secure her own position,⁹⁰⁹ and that she had been instrumental in procuring the death of the former co-emperor Stephanos Lekapenos, then exiled in Methymne, Lesbos.⁹¹⁰ Strugnell shows that these accusations cast Theophano as the archetypal 'Eve' figure corrupting the men around her, and that it was for this reason that Skylitzes avoided reporting the rumour that Nikephoros intended to harm her sons, so that she would not be pitied nor her deeds excused.⁹¹¹ The success of this image can be read in the words of Ioannes of Melitene's epitaph for Nikephoros, in which the emperor 'Is victim of a woman and sword... Nikephoros who conquered all but Eve.'⁹¹²

Tzimiskes complied with the patriarch's terms. Theophano was expelled from the palace. Balantes, Nikephoros' killer, and Atzypotheodoros, the corpse's beheader, were also exiled.⁹¹³ Despite Leon's statement that 'Justice' later pursued all of those involved in the

removal of the *basileis* from Nikephoros' coinage may have contributed to this belief. On the coins, see Morrisson 2013: 75.

⁹⁰⁷ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 279 (trans. Wortley 268); Michael Psellos, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Aerts 100-103.

⁹⁰⁸ Cheynet 2006: 17.

⁹⁰⁹ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 246, 252 (trans. Wortley 237, 243); Strugnell 2006: 126.

⁹¹⁰ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 255 (trans. Wortley 246), who links the murder with Theophano's efforts to secure the throne against potential intrigues.

⁹¹¹ Strugnell 2006: 126-127 and n.48.

⁹¹² ... πάρεργον οὗτος καὶ γυναικὸς καὶ ζίφους... ὃ πλὴν γυναικὸς τὰ δ' ἄλλα Νικηφόρος. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 282-283 (trans. Wortley 270). Translation adapted.

⁹¹³ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 285-286 (trans. Wortley 272-273); Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 98-99 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 147-148), offers a slightly different account in which Balantes' name alone is volunteered, and only *after* Polyeyktos asks Tzimiskes to point out the emperor's murderer.

murder, none of the other participants were named as suffering as a result.⁹¹⁴ Instead, the exiles bore the majority of the blame, and Tzimiskes was able to retain much of his political base. Polyeuktos' legitimist stance, confirmed through his willingness to accept the change in regime,⁹¹⁵ was courted through concessions to the church. Tzimiskes repealed Nikephoros' unpopular reforms to monastic endowments, permitted the return of exiled bishops, and allowed the church to elect and consecrate bishops without the need for imperial approval, a concession Nikephoros had resisted.⁹¹⁶ He also appeased the monastic communities of the Holy Mountain in order to silence their objections to his reign.⁹¹⁷ With Tzimiskes' penance performed, and these concessions granted, Polyeuktos allowed his coronation a week later, on Christmas Day.⁹¹⁸ The symbolic anointing of the emperor as part of the ceremony was declared to have cleared the guilt of Nikephoros' murder, just as baptism eliminated sin.⁹¹⁹ This Synodal *praxis* was later cited in Theodoros Balsamon's twelfth-century canonical commentaries, in connection with the cleansing of an emperor's pre-accession sins through his anointment with imperial power.⁹²⁰

A cynical reading of these events reveals the obvious political motivations behind Tzimiskes' repentance. The speed with which he acquiesced speaks to his tenuous position at that point and the role played by the church in securing his authority and moral-legitimacy. Tzimiskes' speech to Skamandrenos in 970, acknowledging the division of the two earthly authorities in terms that conjured the ideological precepts of Photios' *Eisagoge* chapters,⁹²¹ suggests its continued role in the face of charges of immorality that were being levelled

⁹¹⁴ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 91 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 141). On the fates of those involved in Tzimiskes' conspiracy, and this strange statement, see Morris 1994: 212.

⁹¹⁵ Cheynet 1990: 313-315.

⁹¹⁶ Morris 1988: 88.

⁹¹⁷ Morris 1988: 113.

⁹¹⁸ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 99 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 148); Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 286 (trans. Wortley 273).

⁹¹⁹ *Les registres du patriarcat de Constantinople*, ed. Grumel II, no.794.

⁹²⁰ *Syntagma III*, ed. Rhalles and Potles 44-45; Dagron 2003: 267-271; Angelov 2006: 204 n.46.

⁹²¹ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 101-102 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 151); the comparison with *Eisagoge* has been noted by Dagron 1993: 207-208; Barker 1957: 96.

against Tzimiskes by Nikephoros' loyalists.⁹²² Yet divine unction proved an insufficient defence and Tzimiskes' humbling before Hagia Sophia, and concessions to the church were not his only attempts at repentance. We may question whether his remorse was purely political.

In his description of Tzimiskes' death, Leon provided details of the emperor's final atonement. Aware that he was not long for the world, Tzimiskes called upon the bishop of Adrianople and 'confessed to him his sins of omission in the course of his life'. He cried streams of tears that washed away 'the shame and filth of his sins', and he entreated the Mother of God to intercede on his behalf on the Day of Judgement. Leon established the sincerity of Tzimiskes' remorse, commenting that, 'After the emperor made such a confession *with unhesitating purpose and contrite soul*, he departed this world and went to his repose in the next...'⁹²³ The unusual phrasing 'sins of omission' is highly suggestive that this was no ordinary deathbed confession. The murder of Nikephoros, for which Tzimiskes had never admitted his own culpability and had instead blamed others, was seemingly being invoked.⁹²⁴

To accompany this confession Tzimiskes⁹²⁵ drew lavishly on the imperial treasuries in order to distribute alms to the poor. He was especially generous in his donatives to lepers,

⁹²² Bardas Phokas, in reply to a letter from Tzimiskes advising him to abandon his rebellion of 970, rejected the advice of the 'impious and accursed Ioannes, who had mercilessly killed a sleeping lion' and 'cruelly and inhumanely blinded' his [Bardas'] father and brother 'for no good reason.' He concluded by saying, 'either I will attain imperial glory and will exact complete vengeance from the murderers, or I will bravely accept my fate, and be delivered from an accursed and impious tyrant.' Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 119 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 167-168). On Phokas' career, see Cheynet 1986: 307-308.

⁹²³ ... τὰ κατὰ τὸν βίον αὐτῷ ἀνεκάλυψεν ἀγνοήματα, κρουναὺς τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν δακρῦων ἐπαφίεις, καὶ τῷ τούτων λουτῆρι τὰ αἴσχη καὶ τὰ ῥυπάσματα τῶν ἐσφαλμένων ῥυπτόμενος, καὶ τὴν Θεοτόκον ἐπιβούμενος... τοιαύτην ἐξ ἀδιστάκτου γνώμης καὶ συντετριμμένης ψυχῆς τὴν ἐξομολόγησιν ὁ βασιλεὺς ποιησάμενος, τῶν τῆ δε μεθίσταται, καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἐκεῖσε μεταβαίνει κατάπαθσιν... Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 178 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 220). Emphasis added.

⁹²⁴ Talbot and Sullivan, in the notes to their translation, agree with this assessment of the phrasing. Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, trans. Talbot and Sullivan 220 n.116.

⁹²⁵ A detailed accounting of what may be termed Tzimiskes' 'penitential' activities is provided in an MPhil. Thesis presented to the University of Birmingham which discusses aspects of Tzimiskes' reign: Sinclair 2009. Although I do not always agree with the author's particular interpretations of the evidence, the work supports the arguments proposed here. (I am indebted to the author for providing a digital copy of the completed work, and for discussing several of his conclusions with me.)

‘whom he treated more generously than other poor people’.⁹²⁶ Immediately after his coronation, Tzimiskes had divided the funds from the sale of his properties amongst needy causes,⁹²⁷ and Leon reports that almost half of these were given to the leprosarium of St Zotikos which Tzimiskes re-founded.⁹²⁸ He even volunteered his time to visit the patients and distribute largess.⁹²⁹ Leon took special care to emphasise the emperor’s compassion and sympathy for the patients, whose ravaged and ulcerated limbs he endeavoured to treat, even causing him to turn away from the ‘majesty’ and ‘splendour’ associated with wearing the imperial purple.⁹³⁰ Tzimiskes’ humility was clearly emphasised, and his affinity for helping lepers was politically astute. Leprosy was widely considered a ‘Holy Disease’.⁹³¹ The example of Lazarus provided the association of leprosy with spiritual purity; after his death he was warmly embraced by Abraham in contrast to the rich man, who suffered torment.⁹³² Through the association of Tzimiskes’ repentance with his humble attention to these figures, the emperor’s piety and morality were strengthened. He was seen working to atone for his accessional bloodguilt even after the patriarch had washed it away.

Tzimiskes’ coinage also bears signs of this atonement. As Skylitzes noted, his copper *folles* were exceptional: ‘He also ordered that the image of the Saviour be inscribed... and on one of the sides there was written Roman letters saying, “Jesus Christ, king of kings...”’⁹³³ The inscription and the image of Christ replaced the traditional bust of the

⁹²⁶ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 178 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 220).

⁹²⁷ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 286 (trans. Wortley 273), records that Ioannes had promised Patriarch Polyeuktos to distribute all of his holdings as a private citizen to the poor.

⁹²⁸ The existing hospital was greatly expanded as a result. Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 99 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 148-149). On the history of the leprosarium, established in the fourth century outside the walls of Constantinople, see Miller 1994; Miller and Nesbitt 2014: esp. 34, 36.

⁹²⁹ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 100 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 149).

⁹³⁰ ...τόν τε τῆς βασιλείας ὄγκον καὶ τὸν ἐκ τῆς ἀλοθργίδος ἀποτικτόμενον τῦφον τιθείς. Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 100 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 149).

⁹³¹ The sufferer had not been punished by God for their sins, but was instead being purified and made holy in preparation for heaven. Miller and Nesbitt 2014: esp. 28, 38ff. This interpretation was not exclusive however.

⁹³² Luke 16:22-25. Spencer-Hall 2015: 404.

⁹³³ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 311 (trans. Wortley 294-295), Skylitzes was seemingly incorrect in also associating Tzimiskes’ gold coinage with the image of Christ as no coins of this type are known. Only on the copper issues is this iconography present.

emperor and his titles, making the coin anonymous. Skylitzes claims this was out of gratitude to Christ for the emperor's military successes, but Grierson concludes that the iconography was introduced early in Tzimiskes' reign, possibly as an act of contrition for murder that all could see;⁹³⁴ certainly, humility was implied. A bust of the Virgin shown crowning the emperor, a detail that was reintroduced by Nikephoros, was retained on the gold *nomismata*.⁹³⁵ Tzimiskes' issues reversed the positions of the Virgin and emperor, however, so that she was shown crowning Tzimiskes with her *right* hand as a *Manus Dei* blessed him from above, increasing his favour.⁹³⁶ Under Nikephoros the type was intended to strengthen his image as a pious emperor who enjoyed the protection of the Theotokos.⁹³⁷ Tzimiskes' association with the Theotokos also extended to his seals,⁹³⁸ and her favour allegedly prompted the favourable intercession of St Theodoros Stratelates⁹³⁹ at the Battle of Dorostolon.⁹⁴⁰ The role of the Virgin as Tzimiskes' intercessor, and Leon's assertion that Tzimiskes invoked her aid upon his deathbed, may suggest that this type was intended, at least in part, to confirm Tzimiskes' penance, invoking the Virgin's aid to save his soul. In retaining Nikephoros' iconography Tzimiskes simultaneously honoured his divine benefactress and alluded to his remorse for Nikephoros' murder.⁹⁴¹

Michael IV

In 1034, the next usurper of the Macedonian dynasty, Michael IV allegedly suffered from

⁹³⁴ Grierson 1973: III.2, p.589.

⁹³⁵ Grierson 1973: III.2, p.580.

⁹³⁶ Grierson 1973: III.2, p.589.

⁹³⁷ It also imitated the form of Romanos I's coinage (although replacing the figure of Christ). Grierson 1973: III.2, p.534-535.

⁹³⁸ Nesbit 2009: 104-105.

⁹³⁹ Tzimiskes was devoted to the cult of his local, Eastern military saint. Cheynet 2008a: 307-322; Cotsonis 2005.

⁹⁴⁰ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 154 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 197-198); Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 308-309 (trans. Wortley 292). The Battle was fought in 979 against the Kievan Rus. Tzimiskes' victory prompted a peace treaty favourable to the empire.

⁹⁴¹ Tzimiskes' iconographic innovations had proven that he was not beholden to existing precedent.

guilt over his involvement in the assassination of Romanos III. Whilst Yahya of Antioch attributed ‘consumption’ as the cause of Romanos’ death, both Psellos and Skylitzes described a clandestine love-affair between Michael and the empress Zoe which culminated in Romanos’ murder.⁹⁴² Skylitzes even ascribed the usurpation as the cause of natural disasters early in Michael’s reign.⁹⁴³

As with Tzimiskes, an attempt was made to minimise Michael’s guilt. The account of Psellos’ *Chronographia* therefore proves familiar. The aged Romanos had reportedly withdrawn his affections for Zoe, abstaining from intercourse, sexual or otherwise.⁹⁴⁴ The young and handsome Michael was introduced to the empress by his brother, Ioannes the Orphanotrophos, and commenced an affair.⁹⁴⁵ Zoe became increasingly infatuated and was observed lovingly seating Michael upon the throne and investing him.⁹⁴⁶ Finally, when Romanos became sick and went to bathe in preparation for the Easter ceremonies, his attendants drowned him, with the empress making a brief appearance to check that he was indeed dying.⁹⁴⁷ Psellos’ opening lines on Michael’s reign, make it clear that Zoe did not intend to take the throne for herself, but for Michael.⁹⁴⁸ Skylitzes’ *Synopsis*, largely hostile to Michael, provides an abbreviated version of these events but adds that the cause of Romanos’ illness was poison administered at Zoe’s behest.⁹⁴⁹ It also relates Zoe’s belief that

⁹⁴² Yahya of Antioch, *Histoire*, ed. Kratchkovsky III, 536.

⁹⁴³ These included hailstorms, plagues, and food shortages. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 393-395, 405, 409 (trans. Wortley 371-372, 381, 384).

⁹⁴⁴ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 74-75, 96-97; ed. Renauld I, 34-35, 44 (trans. Sewter 65, 75).

⁹⁴⁵ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 96-101; ed. Renauld I, 44-46 (trans. Sewter 75-77).

⁹⁴⁶ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 100-103; ed. Renauld I, 46 (trans. Sewter 77-78). Psellos maintains that Romanos turned a blind eye to the affair, even when his sister Pulcheria had brought his attention to a plot being hatched against his life which involved Michael. Michael was interrogated by the emperor but no punishment appears to have followed, and Psellos reports that the emperor believed him innocent. The entire sequence should be read as part of Psellos’ portrayal of Romanos as an excessively trusting and incompetent emperor.

⁹⁴⁷ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 110-113; ed. Renauld I, 50-52 (trans. Sewter 81-83). On the death of Romanos III, see Efthymiadis 2005.

⁹⁴⁸ ...μᾶλλον δὲ τοῦ προεστάναι βραχὺ φροντίσασα, ὅπως ἂν παραδῶ τὴν προστασίαν τῷ Μιχαήλ... Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 114-115; ed. Renauld I, 53 (trans. Sewter 87).

⁹⁴⁹ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 390-391 (trans. Wortley 368-369). Psellos does report a rumour then in circulation that poison may have been used, but does not clarify whether this was true or not. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 110; ed. Renauld I, 50 (trans. Sewter 81).

she would have a ‘slave and servant’ in Michael.⁹⁵⁰ The ‘Eve’ typology was invoked in order to importune Zoe. Her treacherous image was then extended into Michael’s reign: Psellos praised him for his fear of her in light of Romanos’ fate,⁹⁵¹ Michael’s relatives dreaded the ‘Lioness’ empress,⁹⁵² and Skylitzes names her as the head of a conspiracy to poison Ioannes the Orphanotrophos.⁹⁵³

The Orphanotrophos shared the blame since he had maneuvered the pair together. Psellos provides an excursus on Ioannes’ continued influence and scheming under Romanos and Michael, and Skylitzes commented in relation to Romanos’ murder that ‘many laid that fault at the door of the Orphanotrophos’.⁹⁵⁴ Michael’s liability for the assassination was therefore partly subordinated through a wider redistribution of guilt. He was involved, but only indirectly.

Both authors enumerated Michael’s efforts to repent for this misdeed. Psellos was particularly expansive, associating eleven chapters with the subject,⁹⁵⁵ Skylitzes, just one.⁹⁵⁶ Even their contemporary Kekaumenos mentioned it.⁹⁵⁷ Michael performed no penance before Hagia Sophia since none was asked of him, and officially no crime had been committed. According to Skylitzes, Patriarch Alexios’ support had been bought with fifty-pounds of gold, the clergy with another fifty, the pair swiftly married, and a story spread that Romanos had proclaimed Michael on his deathbed.⁹⁵⁸ Michael, ‘To the very end lamented

⁹⁵⁰ δουλων καὶ διάκονον. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 392 (trans. Wortley 370).

⁹⁵¹ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 120-121; ed. Renauld I, 56 (trans. Sewter 89).

⁹⁵² Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 134-135; ed. Renauld I, 62 (trans. Sewter 96).

⁹⁵³ The conspiracy dates to c.1037. Zoe reportedly acted through one of her eunuch attendants, Sgouritzes. The *protospatharios* Constantine Moukoupeles, who had prepared the poison, was summarily exiled. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 403 (trans. Wortley 380).

⁹⁵⁴ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 415 (trans. Wortley 390).

⁹⁵⁵ These are chapters 16, 31-32, 34-38, 52-54. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 132-135, 152-155, 156-163, 176-181; ed. Renauld I, 62, 71, 73-76, 83-85 (trans. Sewter 96, 105-109, 116-118).

⁹⁵⁶ That is chapter 7. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 397-398 (trans. Wortley 375).

⁹⁵⁷ ‘...when he died, in peace and in a good state of repentance...’ Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij p.99 (trans. Roueché).

⁹⁵⁸ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 391-392 (trans. Wortley 368-370). Psellos reports nothing of this, instead describing deliberations by the empress and senate as to whom would succeed the deceased emperor - the senate naming prominent individuals and Zoe continually supporting Michael. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 114-117; ed. Renauld I, 53-54 (trans. Sewter 87-88). Laiou 1992: 170-172,

the offence he had committed against the emperor Romanos, propitiating the Divinity by doing good works, distributing alms to the poor, erecting new monasteries and installing monks in them...⁹⁵⁹ Among these philanthropic works were additions to the Church of the Saints Anargyroi,⁹⁶⁰ the construction of numerous monasteries and nunneries, the *Ptochotropheion*, a leprosarium,⁹⁶¹ and a sanctuary for the salvation of former prostitutes.⁹⁶² Psellos reports that Michael also sought to associate himself with ascetic monks. He often embraced them and adopted monastic clothing as his own in demonstration of his humility. Having sought their advice regarding his repentance, he also received intercessory prayers on his behalf from some.⁹⁶³ The monk Kosmas Tzintziloukios, from whom Michael eventually accepted the tonsure, was reportedly among his closest advisors throughout his reign.⁹⁶⁴ In targeting his works towards the healing saints, monks, lepers, and prostitutes, he associated himself with the charitable tradition and presented the image of a ruler concerned not only with his own salvation, but that of society's neediest.

Psellos and Skylitzes were divided over Michael's own success. Psellos was content to end his account of Michael's reign with an assessment of accomplishments and failures; finding the former more prominent, he asserted that Michael had attained a 'better life'.⁹⁶⁵

has suggested that the negative presentation of Skylitzes narrative on these events is due to his using an ecclesiastic source (Demetrios of Kyzikos); canon law on second marriages required a delay. See also Kalavrezou 1994: 247-248.

⁹⁵⁹ ἀποκλαιόμενος δὲ καὶ τὴν εἰς τὸν βασιλέα Ῥωμανὸν ἄχρι τέλους διετέλεσεν ἀμαρτάδα, τὸν θεὸν ἰλασκόμενος δι' ἁγιοεργιῶν καὶ τῶν εἰς τοὺς πένητας μεταδόσεων, μοναστήριά τε ἐκ καινῆς ἀνεγείρων καὶ μοναχοὺς ἐγκατοικίζων... Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 397 (trans. Wortley 375).

⁹⁶⁰ The healing saints Cosmas and Damian to whose cult Michael IV, a known sufferer of epilepsy, belonged. On the Church, see Janin 1969: 287. On the cult of the healing saints, see Mango 1994; Csepregi 2002.

⁹⁶¹ The suggestion of Connor 2004: 220, that Michael was a sufferer of the disease is an intriguing possibility, but cannot be confirmed. He would in any case be following an established precedent in tending to lepers.

⁹⁶² Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 158-161; ed. Renauld I, 74-76 (trans. Sewter 107-108); Zonaras, *Epitome*, III, 603-604. The precedents for such sanctuaries had long existed: Justinian I and Theodora reportedly founded such an institution, the 'Convent of Repentance'. For Justinian and Theodora's convent, see Brubaker 2005: 432; Kaldellis 2010: 150-152. On Michael's foundation, see Constantelos 1991: 197.

⁹⁶³ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 158-161; ed. Renauld I, 74-76 (trans. Sewter 107-109).

⁹⁶⁴ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 415 (trans. Wortley 389-390); Laurent 1981: II, no. 1271. We may wonder if the choice of Kosmas as Michael's advisor was related to his sharing the name of the healing saint.

⁹⁶⁵ ἃ δὴ καὶ αὐτὸς ἀντεξετάζων καὶ παράλληλα κρίνων, πλείω τὰ κατωρθωμένα τῶν διημαρτημένων εὕρισκω· καὶ οὐ μοι δοκεῖ τὸν ἄνδρα ἐκεῖνον καὶ τῆς κρείττονος διημαρτηκέναι, ἀλλ' ἀμείνονος ἐπιτυχεῖν λήξεως. 'When I examine his deeds and compare successes with failures, I find the former more numerous, and I do

Skylitzes' final summation is also positive: '[Michael] died repentant and confessed, deeply regretting the wrong he had done the emperor Romanos', and was a decent and honest man in every other regard.⁹⁶⁶ However, earlier, Skylitzes was critical of Michael's recourse to financing these penitential works 'out of the common and public purse, expecting to receive absolution as though... repentance could be purchased with the money of others...', and was unconvinced.⁹⁶⁷ He asserted that these efforts may have succeeded had Michael 'renounced the imperial purple... rejected the adulteress and wept for his sin, alone.'⁹⁶⁸ But he did not. For Skylitzes, Michael's attempts to cleanse his soul at the expense of the state, involve others in his penance, and remain in power, was incongruous. Although his criticism of Michael's economic policy undoubtedly affected this assessment, Michael contrasted with Skylitzes' earlier example of Tzimiskes. The latter's penance was performed in public, but was a purely private affair. His estates financed his alms, nobody was induced to perform penance on his behalf, and the empress and her co-conspirators were exiled. By comparison, Michael's attempts appeared insufficiently personal and insufficiently sincere, something that the exhortation to weep alluded to. Michael did not act as a quasi-priestly figure, safeguarding the empire from God's wrath via personal penance, but reversed that duty, assigning it instead to the state via its coffers and monastic intercessors. He failed the common good.

not believe that this man failed to attain the better life; I believe instead that he did obtain a better lot.' Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 180-181; ed. Renauld I, 85 (trans. Sewter 118).

⁹⁶⁶ ...θνήσκει ἐν μετανοία καὶ ἐξομολογήσει, τὴν εἰς τὸν βασιλέα Ῥομανὸν ἀμαρτάδα ἀποκλαιόμενος, βασιλεύσας ἐπὶ ἔτη ἑπτὰ καὶ μῆνας ὀκτώ, ἀνὴρ τᾶλλα μὲν ἐπιεικὴς καὶ χρηστὸς καὶ εὐλαβῶς δόξας βιοῦν, πλὴν τοῦ εἰς τὸν βασιλέα Ῥομανὸν ἀμαρτήματος. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 415 (trans. Wortley 390). Emphasis added. Translation adapted.

⁹⁶⁷ More fully: ...καὶ τῶν δημοσίων καὶ κοινῶν τὰς δοκούσας εὐποιῖας ἀποπληρῶν, εἶθ' ὑπολαμβάνων συγχωρήσεως τυχεῖν, ἀνόητον ἐλογίζετο τὸ θεῖον καὶ ἄδικον, ἀλλοτρίοις χρέμασιν ὀνούμενον τὴν μετάνοιαν... Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 398 (trans. Wortley 375). Psellos confirms that Michael had indeed utilised the public treasury in order to fund his various foundations. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 158-159; ed. Renauld I, 74-75 (trans. Sewter 107). Zonaras, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 478-479, expresses similar criticism of Romanos I: namely that he had financed his repentance out of the public funds.

⁹⁶⁸ Again, in full: ...αὐταὶ δ' ἂν ἦσαν ἀνύσιμοι, εἰ τὴν τε βασιλείαν ἀπέριψε, δι' ἣν τὰ τοιαῦτα κακά, καὶ τὴν μοιγαλίδα ἀπόσωτο, καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὸν ἀπεκλαιετο τὴν ἀμαρτίαν. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 397-398 (trans. Wortley 375). Translation adapted. Emphasis added.

There are signs that others of Michael's contemporaries questioned the sincerity of his remorse. The *Chronographia* provides what amounts to a defence against exactly this charge, and it was perhaps for this reason that Psellos was quite so extensive in his accounting. In detailing Michael's efforts to court favour with the politically influential monastic community⁹⁶⁹ and receive prayers of atonement for his sins, we are told that not all of those who were asked would comply. In fact, after learning of the hesitation of some, the majority subsequently refused. Psellos asserts that, due to a false rumour, they were afraid that the emperor had committed a great crime and, being ashamed to confess, would force them to contravene the word of God.⁹⁷⁰ He reassures the reader that Michael 'appeared anxious and eager to obtain forgiveness of his sins', and the next paragraph constitutes an authorial intervention claiming that other narratives were subject to 'false opinions' that abounded.⁹⁷¹ Psellos maintained that his sources, being confidants of the emperor, were superior; his account fairer. When, upon his deathbed, Michael took the tonsure he was glad and thought himself 'changed to a higher life'. He declined to meet with Zoe, either because of 'the evils he had brought upon her', or due to his attentiveness to God.⁹⁷² By this point their association had cooled dramatically,⁹⁷³ but earlier Psellos attributed this change to Michael's shame when he looked upon Zoe and his conversing with 'saintly people' about the manner in which he had gained the throne; being advised to refrain from relations with her as penance.⁹⁷⁴ Psellos' overall image is thus of a contrite emperor resolved to atone for his sins despite what the ill-informed were saying.

⁹⁶⁹ In the previous century alone they had been among the prime opponents to the marriages of Leon VI, and Tzimiskes had resorted to buying off their voices against his rule. On the influence of the monastic communities in the political sphere, see Morris 1995: 3-4, and esp. 241-266.

⁹⁷⁰ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 160-161; ed. Renauld I, 75 (trans. Sewter 108-109).

⁹⁷¹ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 160-163; ed. Renauld I, 75-76 (trans. Sewter 109).

⁹⁷² Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 178-181; ed. Renauld I, 84-85 (trans. Sewter 117).

⁹⁷³ On the vacillations of Michael and Zoe's relationship, and its influence upon governance, see Connor 2004: 207-237; Garland 1999: 139-140; Smythe 1997: 145-146.

⁹⁷⁴ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 134-137; ed. Renauld I, 63 (trans. Sewter 96). Abstaining from conjugal intercourse constituted a common requirement for married penitents throughout the medieval world. Reuter 2006: 158.

Alexios I

Questions about an emperor's sincerity emerged again, in the context of Alexios I's usurpation. His misdeeds were numerous, he had won the throne through rebellion and civil war. On Maundy Thursday 1081 his troops forced entry to Constantinople with the aid of the soldiers protecting the Charsios gate.⁹⁷⁵ Once inside the city, they committed a litany of crimes. Where Zonaras wrote that these included looting, shedding blood, the rape of married women and virginal nuns, and the plunder of sacred vessels from the divine temples, Anna Komnene concealed the charges of rape and repudiated that of bloodshed: 'they did refrain from murder...' ⁹⁷⁶ Botaneiates, realising that there was no hope, withdrew to Hagia Sophia and took the tonsure.⁹⁷⁷

The discomfiting details of Alexios' accession reverberated for some time after the event. In a remarkably forthright speech delivered before the emperor and imperial family in 1091,⁹⁷⁸ Ioannes Oxeites, the patriarch of Antioch, revisited them. Alexios' earlier military successes had by then been reversed.⁹⁷⁹ Ioannes, seeking to explain these declining fortunes, looked to the sins of the *oikoumene* for his answer. Finding these too numerous to list, he employed the *topos* of the body politic and ruminated upon Alexios' sins choosing him as the body's head.⁹⁸⁰ Alexios' victories against the usurpers Roussel, Bryennios the Elder, and Basilakes, before his accession were contrasted with the dire straits that the empire

⁹⁷⁵ 1 April. The troops were led by Georgios Palaiologos. Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 80-81 (trans. Frankopan 72-73); Zonaras, *Epitome*, III, 727, offers a bloodier version than Anna (who implies collaboration by the guards).

⁹⁷⁶ ...τοῦ μέντοι ἀποκτείνειν μόνου ἀφιστάμενοι... Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 81 (trans. Frankopan 74); Zonaras, *Epitome*, III, 728-729.

⁹⁷⁷ Unresisting according to Zonaras, compelled by Patriarch Alexios according to Anna. Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 84, 86-87 (trans. Frankopan 76, 78-79); Zonaras, *Epitome*, III, 730.

⁹⁷⁸ Frankopan 2008: 81, 84, concludes that the speech was performed in front of an audience of some form, and possibly before the emperor himself.

⁹⁷⁹ Chios and Mitylene had been lost, Asia Minor and the Aegean islands were threatened, and Constantinople was in danger from the Pechenegs. Frankopan 2012: Chapter 4, and esp. p.59.

⁹⁸⁰ Ioannes Oxeites, *Diatribes*, ed. Gautier 20-21.

found itself in under his leadership afterwards.⁹⁸¹ The ‘illegality’ of Alexios’ accession (ἔκθεσμος τῆς βασιλείας) was raised as the proximate cause of God’s anger, so too the indefensible confiscations of ecclesiastical treasures in 1082 and 1087, and burdensome taxation.⁹⁸² Ioannes contended that God had been entreating Alexios to perform penance for these sins, and that He wanted Alexios to kneel and ‘weep before him’ with ‘humility and contrition of heart’.⁹⁸³ As Alexios had apparently not recognised this, nor shown remorse, Ioannes advanced King David as an ideal of penitence and humility that Alexios should embrace in order to restore *taxis*.⁹⁸⁴ Of course, Ioannes’ critique was also patently politically motivated, an endeavour to secure better terms for the Church through an attempted shaming, but the focus on Alexios’ usurpation reveals that, even a decade later, it remained a sore topic.⁹⁸⁵

Niketas Choniates was rather more concise: assigning Alexios’ deathbed speech on his disputed choice of successor as the first ‘scene’ of the *Historia*, he had Alexios admit that he ‘gained the throne in an unpraiseworthy manner by denying the rights of consanguinity and the principles of Christian laws’, and coupled this with a sarcastic remark from Empress Eirene about Alexios’ history of secrets and lies.⁹⁸⁶ Given that Choniates later

⁹⁸¹ Ioannes Oxeites, *Diatribes*, ed. Gautier 22-27.

⁹⁸² Ioannes Oxeites, *Diatribes*, ed. Gautier 28-35, esp. 29; see also pp. 8-9 (*Commentary*). After the confiscations of 1082 Alexios had issued a *chrysobull* denouncing the act, swearing to reimburse the costs, and promising not to repeat the action: Dölger and Wirth 1977: no. 1085. On the confiscations, see Papagianni 2002: 1068; Hendy 1999: IV.1, 188; Angold 1995: 65-69 (with discussion of Ioannes Oxeites’ critique); Hendy 1985: 231-232.

⁹⁸³ ...Εἶτα μετ’ οὐ βραχὺ πολέμου σοι ἐπεγερθέντος, δέον κίνησιν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο προσκλαίειν αὐτῷ μαι μετανοεῖν ἐν πάσῃ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ καὶ συντριβῇ καρδίας... Ioannes Oxeites, *Diatribes*, ed. Gautier 28-29. Emphasis added. See also the comments of Hussey 1990: 147.

⁹⁸⁴ Ioannes Oxeites, *Diatribes*, ed. Gautier esp. 36-37.

⁹⁸⁵ The accession may also have been criticised by Theophylaktos of Ochrid in his *Paideia bailike* (c.1185/1186) addressed to Constantine Doukas, Alexios’ then co-emperor. Theophylaktos advised Constantine that an emperor did not gain authority through bloodshed and force, but the virtue of actions. A veiled criticism of Alexios’ accession may have been intended, or (at the very least) suggested by the phrasing. For the date of composition, see Theophylaktos, *Opera*, ed. Gautier 67 (*Introduction*). Frankopan 2008, has outlined other veiled criticisms of Alexios’ rule in the surviving address of Theophylaktos, performed before the emperor during the Epiphany celebrations of 1088. See also, Mullett 1994: 261-262.

⁹⁸⁶ ...εἰ τὴν βασιλείαν οὐκ ἐπαινετῶς εἰληφώς, ἀλλ’ αἵμασιν ὁμογενῶν καὶ μεθόδοις Χριστιανῶν ἀφισταμέναις θεσμῶν... Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dielen 6 (trans. Magoulias 5-6). Kaldellis 2009: 79, considers Eirene’s sarcasm to be a reference to Alexios I’s perceived ‘false piety’.

claimed that the Komnenoi and their internecine struggles for the throne were the cause of the empire's decay and fragmentation, Alexios' assigned position as progenitor of the dynasty might suggest that his usurpation and inadequacies were designated special significance as a prototype for ensuing events.⁹⁸⁷ The ignominy of Alexios' accession, acknowledged at the start of the work, portended the ignominy of the empire torn apart by usurpation, which was the theme of the work. In the *Historia*, his successors replicated and magnified his misdeeds.

Alexios' public image, both contemporary and historical, was thus in some quarters tarnished by wrongdoing at the outset of his reign and perpetuated in its course.⁹⁸⁸ The *Alexias* provides an insider's perspective of the actions that were undertaken to atone for these errors and repair that image. Where Tzimiskes and Michael had sought ways to minimise their culpability by redirecting blame to the empresses Theophano, Zoe, and a handful of their own partisans, Alexios was allegedly more direct in his acknowledgement of guilt. To that end, Maria of Alania, whom we are told had called upon the Komnenoi to protect her son by overthrowing Botaneiates, was not held up for blame. Instead, shortly after Eirene Doukaina's coronation in April 1081, Alexios made public his remorse for the sack of Constantinople. He reportedly called upon Patriarch Kosmas, the Holy Synod, and certain monastics, to issue a penance: '[Alexios] came before them as a man on trial... he confessed everything... the commission of evil... [and] the responsibility for what was done.'⁹⁸⁹ A *therapeia* was issued, but not just to Alexios. His 'blood relatives' and those involved in the rebellion were to share the punishment by 'fasting, sleeping on the ground, and performing appropriate rites.' In a sign of their supporting role in the rebellion, even the

⁹⁸⁷ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 529 (trans. Magoulias 290). It should be remembered that Choniates counted the Angeloi emperors as part of the Komnenian dynasty (as they considered themselves), and that his criticism of the Komnenoi is first openly stated in the narrative of Alexios III's reign.

⁹⁸⁸ Magdalino 1983: esp. 329-330, 332, 335, 339.

⁹⁸⁹ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 99 (trans. Frankopan 90-91).

Komnenian wives were to share in this, and the palace became ‘a scene of tearful lamentation.’⁹⁹⁰

Alexios’ voluntary use of the penitential ritual reveals its nature as ‘a two-sided phenomenon: a potential instrument of royal power, which could be turned against a monarch as well.’⁹⁹¹ The salient difference between Alexios and the precedents of Tzimiskes, Leon, and Theodosius, was that Alexios invited his performance of a public rebuke and penance from the church. He gave it a mandate that allowed him to control his penance by transforming it into a proactively negotiated chastisement. Conversely, his archetypes had made recourse to public penance at the church’s urging. Political pressure had been asserted against them, polemical in the case of Theodosius, polemical and practical in the cases of Leon and Tzimiskes whose ceremonial duties were, or would have been, noticeably constrained as a result. The actions of the Komnenoi essentially pre-empted an embarrassing intervention.⁹⁹² If Anna’s account is accurate, the Komnenoi appeared sincere, even if only to some, and avoided a struggle over church-state authority invoking unwelcome ‘constitutionalist’ implications, as well as a potentially even more humiliating rebuke.⁹⁹³ Alexios’ later efforts to position himself as a ‘defender of Orthodoxy’ by rooting out heresies, especially via the politically manufactured trial of Italos, allowed him to wrestle back political control over the church that he had conceded for moral-legitimation at his

⁹⁹⁰ ...καὶ ἦν ἰδεῖν τὰ βασιλεία τότε δακρύων καὶ πένθους ἀνάμεσα... Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 99 (trans. Frankopan 91). On the prominent role of the women of the Komnenian family in the coup, and their involvement in the penance, see the comments of Smythe 2006: esp. 132.

⁹⁹¹ The phrasing is that of de Jong 1992: 31, talking about a similar manipulation of ritual by Louis I (the Pious).

⁹⁹² Buckley 2014: 97.

⁹⁹³ Angold 1995: esp. 45, 67-69, believes that the penance was imposed by Patriarch Kosmas rather than invited by the Komnenoi. This is possible, however, it seems that the penance was extracted *after* Alexios’ coronation - possibly weeks or months later - when the patriarch had less leverage over Alexios, or ability to provoke a damaging scandal. Possibly the terms of a penance had been negotiated before the patriarch agreed to crown Alexios, and the synod was convened to then fulfil that obligation. However, it is equally possible that the Komnenoi recognised that there was public disapproval over the usurpation and siege of Constantinople and exploited penance on their own accord in an attempt to mitigate the likelihood of this mood turning into an insurrection against them.

accession and as fallout for the financially expedient confiscations shortly thereafter.⁹⁹⁴ Paradoxically, Alexios removed himself from a position of public humiliation and a loss of authority (helplessness to resist the imposition of a penance) by seeking out humiliation on his own accord. ‘Retreat into humility’ aligned one’s own fall with Christian ideals, indicating a desire for moral perfection and expressing the foundation of *basileia* as piety and modesty in emulation of Christ.⁹⁹⁵

This penitential episode was politically astute, but Oxeites’ speech revealed that Alexios’ sincerity was not considered convincing by everyone. Seemingly aware of such views, and so that her readers would not believe him to have minimised his responsibility, Anna took particular care to convey the additional penance that Alexios accorded to himself. Emulating the period of Christ’s Temptation, for *forty days and nights* he wore a sack-cloth beneath the royal purple, slept on the ground with only stones to support his head, ‘bewailed his sins’, and with the penance complete, ‘he turned his attention to the administration of the empire with clean hands’.⁹⁹⁶ The phrasing leaves little doubt that he had sufficiently atoned, but Anna’s Alexios remained emotionally distraught at the price of his success. ‘He was sick at heart, filled with shame...’ and thus a model of earnestness in confessing wrongdoing.⁹⁹⁷

⁹⁹⁴ On these aspects of Alexios’ policies towards the church, see Fryde 2000: 50-54; Angold 1996: 411-413; Magdalino 1993: 383. On the trial of Italos, see *Le Synodikon de l’Orthodoxie*, ed. Gouillard pp.56-60; Magdalino 2003: 26; Buckley 2014: 125. Given that Alexios had empowered the church to exact a penance from him (if we trust Anna’s account), we may even question whether this constituted a submission of imperial power to ecclesiastical power since he had, in essence, acted as the head of the church and humbled himself. The question (and projection) of ‘agency’ would have been at the heart of how this was understood by contemporaries.

⁹⁹⁵ On the ideological precepts of ‘retreat into humility’ in the medieval Christian context, see Falkowski 2010: 188.

⁹⁹⁶ More fully: ὁ δὲ αὐτοκράτωρ, ὁποῖος ἐκεῖνος τὴν εὐσέβειαν, πλέον τί ποιῶν ἐντὸς τῆς βασιλικῆς ἀλουργίδος σάκκον περιβεβλητο ἐν χρῶ ψαύοντα τῆς σαρκὸς ἐπὶ τεσσαράκοντα νυθημέροις, ἐν δὲ ταῖς νυξὶ χαμεύνης ἔκειτο ἐπὶ πέτρης μόνον ἀνέχων τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ πενθῶν ὡς εἰκός, εἶθ’ οὕτως τῶν τῆς βασιλείας πραγμάτων ἀγναῖς ἄπτεται χερσίν. ‘It was typical of the emperor’s own piety that he would inflict upon himself a further *penance*: for forty days and nights he wore a sackcloth beneath the royal purple and next to his skin. At night he slept on bare ground, and his head was supported on nothing more than a stone while he bewailed his sins, as was correct. Thereafter, when the penance was complete, he turned his attention to the administration of the empire with clean hands.’ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 99-100 (trans. Frankopan 91). Translation adapted.

⁹⁹⁷ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 98-99 (trans. Frankopan 89-90).

Instead, it was Anna who exculpated him of blame. The narrative of the capture of Constantinople is littered with her efforts on Alexios' behalf. Georgios Palaiologos, who led the assault on Constantinople, was compared with Ares 'the smiter of walls' and was supposedly 'never reluctant to engage in war-like activities and the sacking of cities.'⁹⁹⁸ Botaneiates 'pretended' that he wanted to avoid civil war and was only prevented from provoking one through the patriarch's entreaties; his servant, Borilos, seeing the disorder of the Komnenian entry, ordered an attack. The Komnenoi, desperately sought a means of restraining the troops, and even feared a coup against themselves. And the sack was 'really the work of individual soldiers'.⁹⁹⁹

The Alexios that emerges from Anna's exercise in panegyric is an idealised figure who took personal responsibility for the actions of others. The crimes committed during the sack of the city were assuredly not his fault, yet he believed they were and atoned for them anyway, emulating Christ's example once again. His remorse and innocence were established beyond question.

Discussion

The case studies prove instructive. In each, guilt and sin were believed to have been accrued by the circumstances of a usurpation. Recognisable acts of ritual or symbolic repentance were performed, publicly or privately, by each emperor and associated with the cleansing of guilt accrued at the accession. These acts might be undertaken early in the reign, voluntarily, or at the urging of the church. Repentance connoted humility and was usually accompanied by philanthropic works that might also court favour with religious figures (supposed sources of moral guidance) and the divine. Deathbed repentance is also represented, as are

⁹⁹⁸ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 80 (trans. Frankopan 73).

⁹⁹⁹ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 84-85, 90, 98 (trans. Frankopan 76-78, 82, 89).

judgements concerning the authenticity and effectiveness of imperial remorse.

In theory, the emperor was a paragon of heavenly justice. Advice literature and other expressive frameworks of rulership asserted that he should comport himself as an ideal of morality, in emulation of the divine, or else face charges of tyranny and risk deposition.¹⁰⁰⁰ If he was known to have committed a sin, he was guilty of a crime and must be seen to atone for it, or else face heavenly displeasure of the kind Skylitzes attributed to Michael IV's accession, and Ioannes Oxeites asserted of Alexios'. A divinely unfavoured head of state was a potential danger. The political concern was real since the nature of an accession had a lasting influence on an emperor's reputation. Attempts were often made to lessen the impact of taking an unpopular route to the throne by redistributing blame among partisans, distancing usurpers from involvement in wrongdoing, or by pointing to a particular figure and assigning to it the role of a scapegoat. However, these measures were rarely wholly successful and in each of the cases we have examined they were accompanied by a form of penance on the part of the emperor. Through repentance he subjected himself to heavenly law (for Hellenic and Roman tradition proclaimed him beyond that of man, which he should voluntarily choose to follow),¹⁰⁰¹ demonstrated remorse, and became a model worthy of emulation.

With only one exception (Romanos I) every usurper-emperor reported to have embraced the repentant model was associated with a violent succession. Romanos' mode of accession, through integration rather than overthrow, was not conducive to an acknowledgement of wrongdoing since Constantine was superficially his co-emperor, and Romanos' authority could only have been damaged by any admission. His penitential activities under Constantine underscored restored Macedonian authority. The perception of

¹⁰⁰⁰ See above, page 20.

¹⁰⁰¹ On the concept of the emperor as 'living law', see Dagron 1994; Simon 1984; Beck 1970: esp. 31-33; Hunger 1964: esp. 117-122.

‘legitimacy’, and public relations, were thus crucial considerations in assuming the repentant persona. A guilty and unpopular emperor was a much easier political target and so particular effort was made to be seen to atone. Ioannes I’s coinage suggests that his ongoing efforts sought to engage all levels of society, and Skylitzes’ criticism of Michael’s economic policy, although a product of bias against the emperor, reveals that repentance was believed to have influenced policy decisions as well. Given that the populace of Constantinople were informed about and actively engaged with contemporary political events, seeking opportunities to express their views, it should not be surprising to see emperors catering to public opinion.¹⁰⁰² Ultimately, their power depended upon it.

The public performance of a penance, and even the association of charitable works with repentance, enabled an abstract concept like remorse to be made tangible. These acts could be pointed to if an emperor’s moral qualifications to rule were questioned; Oxeites’ example proves that they were. The narratives of Psellos and Anna in particular betray attempts to rebut claims of insincerity or insufficient remorse that were espoused by contemporaries. The eternal fate of Isaakios I, when his sarcophagus was found to contain moisture, was also allegedly widely debated.¹⁰⁰³ These deliberations offer an insight into authorial intentions, confirm that an emperor’s moral authority was at stake, and that this was connected with the perception of sincere repentance. Accusations of deception or

¹⁰⁰² Garland 1992: esp. 46-51, is essential reading on the political activities and sensitivities of the populace in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the established political interplay between emperor and people. On the political activities of the wider populace, see Krallis 2009; Kaldellis 2013; Kaldellis 2015: 118-164 (on ‘The Sovereignty of the People in Practice’), and esp. 137.

¹⁰⁰³ Some believed this moisture to be symbolic of punishment in Hell for civil war; others for his misrule and tax policies; the confiscations of ecclesiastical treasures; a warning to future emperors, although not of eternal punishment, because he had repented; still others, that he had not repented after his adoption of the monastic habit and was doomed; and finally, those who believed it proof that his repentance had been answered, and that no sin could not be overcome. The multiplicity of interpretations suggests how popular a topic discussion of the emperor’s fate was. Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 69-70 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 124-127), claiming that all of these interpretations had merit. For a comparable rumour about an emperor’s eternal fate, note how the fourteenth-century unionist Manuel Kalekas records the ‘common belief’ that Michael VIII’s remains had not begun to decompose (they ‘remained uncorrupted’, ‘blackened’, and taut ‘like a drum’) because Michael’s heretical unionist policies had brought his salvation into question. Manuel Kalekas, *Adversus Graecos*, lib. 4, quoted in Nicol 1971: 138, n.1.

insufficient remorse were used as propagandist tools against incumbent emperors in their lifetime and political concessions extracted by the litigant. Establishing sincerity was consequently a fundamental consideration of sympathetic accounts, and central to the redemptive theology underpinning Manuel II's sixth *Ethico-Political Oration*, in which he talks of 'pure repentance' as the only means of purification.¹⁰⁰⁴ In the context of a Christian belief system, complete with visions like that of Romanos' dream establishing what awaited unrepentant sinners, the consequences of falsehood were frightening and real. Which emperor consigned to hell could be considered legitimate? Which dynasty founded by such an emperor, perpetuating his sin, was worthy of ruling? Only genuine atonement could save an emperor's soul and enable moral rule. Expressions of remorse were potentially more than nakedly political endeavours.

Alongside descriptions of charitable works and ritual displays of *proskynesis*, tears emerge as a symbolic and historically recurring motif in the narratives of imperial repentance.¹⁰⁰⁵ They frequently serve as a literary shorthand for sincerity. Theodosius I reportedly wept profusely during his humbling prostrations before Ambrose, and was even said to have ripped out locks of his own hair in an additional sign of earnestness.¹⁰⁰⁶ Similarly, both of Leon VI's displays of humility outside Hagia Sophia were accompanied by tears expressing his heartfelt piety and remorse. Even his negotiations with the metropolitans were accompanied by tears.¹⁰⁰⁷ Romanos I did not weep himself, but his monastic witnesses did 'melt into tears' (δακρυρροούντων) on his behalf as they chanted 'Kyrie Eleison'.¹⁰⁰⁸ Ioannes I wept as he confessed his sins, and the Komnenian display of

¹⁰⁰⁴ (καθαρᾶς μετανοίας). Manuel II, *Seven Ethico-Political Orations*, (Oration VI), ed. Kakkoura 409.

¹⁰⁰⁵ For a general overview of scholarship on the symbolism of tears in Byzantine thought, see Grünbart 2009; Hinterberger 2006: esp. 35-38; Cameron 1979: 10 fn. 31, 20; Rouan 1981: 433-434; Kazhdan and Constable 1982: 62. For the significance of tears in Ancient Greek and Roman thought, see Fögen 2009.

¹⁰⁰⁶ See above, page 173.

¹⁰⁰⁷ See above, page 175.

¹⁰⁰⁸ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 439.

repentance resembled ‘a scene of tearful lamentation.’

A comprehensive study of imperial emotion is a desideratum, but the public and literary impact of these gestures should not be underestimated. Ideally, an emperor’s public emotional range was a muted one. Advice literature proposed self-control as a necessary virtue and asserted that imperial behaviour, including gestures and emotions, should be carefully regulated in order for an emperor to fulfil his duties impartially and immutably.¹⁰⁰⁹ Photios, in the *Letter to Boris*, advocated that a ruler should moderate his appearance and the motion of his whole-body at all times, while speech and laughter were to be controlled.¹⁰¹⁰ Kekaumenos and Blemmydes advised the same.¹⁰¹¹ Formulaic imperial portraiture also visualised this concern: the depiction of emotion, grief/sorrow in particular, was typically considered inappropriate for an authority figure like an emperor, and was also limited in wider artwork.¹⁰¹² Standard depictions of emperors known from coinage and extant portraiture portray them in a dignified pose, frontal, and almost statue like. The stance followed easily recognisable prototypes signifying the imperial majesty and dignity.¹⁰¹³ Literary comparisons of emperors with statues accomplished a similar function and constitute a *topos*. Ammianus described Constantius II’s appearance during his *adventus* in Rome (357) as resolutely impassive and compared him with a clay figurine.¹⁰¹⁴ Anna Komnene and Choniates also repeatedly employed the imagery,¹⁰¹⁵ with their comparisons

¹⁰⁰⁹ Dimitriev 2015: 8-9; Swain 2013: 104; Hunger 1965: esp. 103-104.

¹⁰¹⁰ Photios, *Letter to Boris*, ed. Laourdas and Westerink §30, 31-32 (trans. White and Berrigan 60-61).

¹⁰¹¹ Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij pp.3, 20; Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Basilikos Andrias*, ed. Hunger and Ševčenko pp.46-54, 122-125.

¹⁰¹² Maguire 1977: esp. 171-172, concluding: ‘It is true that, compared to post-medieval artists, the Byzantines had restricted means at their disposal for conveying emotion. But it could be argued that precisely because the Byzantines knew of a narrower range of techniques than we do each formula carried a proportionately greater meaning for them... The sanctity of the individual figures also controlled the degree of emotion that they displayed. Byzantine artists would have agreed with the dictum of Reynolds: “The joy, or the grief of a character of dignity, is not to be expressed in the same manner as a similar passion in a vulgar face.”’

¹⁰¹³ Grabar 1936: 9; Spatharakis 1976: 255; Magdalino and Nelson 1982: esp. 163-164; Maguire 1989: 223; Brubaker 2009: 38.

¹⁰¹⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum*, ed. Rolfe 16.10.5-10.

¹⁰¹⁵ See for example, Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 387, 441 (trans. Frankopan 360, 412); Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 240, 244, 332, 412, 415 (trans. Magoulias 135, 137, 183, 226, 228).

alluding to the immutability and incorruptibility of the emperors they described via control over mood and posture.¹⁰¹⁶

The restrictive emotional and gestural conventions were thus understood and promulgated across a variety of media. Medieval rituals restricted emotion and spontaneous behaviour, but, the utilisation of ritual-freed emotions transformed them into public communications.¹⁰¹⁷ Therefore deviations from normative, idealised, behaviour were typically carefully staged, innately symbolic, and decidedly political. Althoff has shown that tearful displays were a fundamental part of Western medieval rituals of spiritual cleansing, associated with virtues befitting an ideal Christian ruler.¹⁰¹⁸ Leon VI expounded upon the virtues of tears in similar terms,¹⁰¹⁹ and Manuel II later proposed that the illness of sin was best fought with ‘warm tears’, warning that ‘many tears and sorrows’ would be necessary ‘in order to return to the good path’ after sins had been committed.¹⁰²⁰ The association of imperial remorse with weeping was thus culturally appropriate, revealing an emperor’s humility and honest acceptance of wrongdoing. Skylitzes’ retrospective entreaty to Michael IV to weep for his sin, an indication that Skylitzes did not believe Michael’s efforts sufficiently sincere, reaffirms this reading. A similar appeal was made to Alexios I by Oxeites, who urged him to repent by ‘spilling tears’, ‘pouring out his heart’ and ‘sobbing’.¹⁰²¹

Physical tears, or their literary counterparts, thus belonged to the emotional repertoire and literary *topoi* associated with the Christian imperial ideal: particularly humility,

¹⁰¹⁶ Hatzaki 2009: esp. 52-56. Anna compared her father with a statue made of bronze and reports that he would sit through the night, even until dawn, working. Unlike his attendants, his mood would never waver nor his posture change. Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 441 (trans. Frankopan 412).

¹⁰¹⁷ Fałkowski 2010: 187.

¹⁰¹⁸ Althoff 1996: 239-252.

¹⁰¹⁹ In his *Instructions for Spiritual Direction*. Hinterberger 2006: 47.

¹⁰²⁰ Manuel II, *Seven Ethico-Political Orations*, (Oration VI), ed. Kakkoura 432, 443 (*Text*); see also pp. 147, 153 (*Commentary*).

¹⁰²¹ ... δάκρυα χέοντες, τὰς καρδίας ἐκχέοντες, ἐκ βάθους στενάζοντες καὶ ἀνακλαιόμενοι... Ioannes Oxeites, *Diatribes*, ed. Gautier 38-39. Emphasis added.

entreaty/petition, and repentance.¹⁰²² Yet tears remained an aberration from everyday imperial behaviour. The emotion was striking and, given the association with honest redemption, tears could be used to serve calculated propagandist functions.¹⁰²³ Their ritual significance was to communicate the emperor's emotional trauma and induce sympathy from the audience; to create an interpretive framework in which emotion was easily recognised and dictated the observer's understanding of events and behaviours.¹⁰²⁴ Ideally, emotional consensus was sought between participant and observer. The emperor grieved and repented for his sin, the observer was moved to grieve for/with the emperor. He was redeemed, they witnessed his redemption.¹⁰²⁵

Emotional manipulation was never considered a factor by narratives when tears were deemed sincere or when an emperor was viewed favourably. By contrast, false weeping indicated tyranny. Procopius, ascribed such nature to Justinian I, 'When he cried it was not as an expression of genuine joy or sorrow at anything, but a strategy to serve the needs of the moment.'¹⁰²⁶ The accusation furthered Procopius' *Kaiserkritik*, Justinian's tears became extensions of his enumerated tyrannical qualities.¹⁰²⁷ Theophanes, employed a similar treatment for 'the unrighteous emperor Nikephoros I, who always acted for show and never according to God'.¹⁰²⁸ 'Nikephoros, who had never respected truth in any matter', ordered

¹⁰²² On tears of petition/entreaty, see Grünbart 2009: 94-96. The shedding of tears also had a longstanding association with sincere piety and self-abasement, it was an honourable act. Herakleios was recorded as shedding many tears in a display of pious humility, on the occasion of an *adventus* in Jerusalem marking his recovery of the True Cross (discussed along with other humble imagery of Herakleios by Maranaci 2009).

¹⁰²³ The potential for which is noted by Grünbart 2009: 89, 92-93.

¹⁰²⁴ Falkowski 2010: 187.

¹⁰²⁵ For a comparable interpretive framework: Macrides 1988: 534-535, and n.130, draws attention to the shedding of tears by those accused of criminal activities (murder) as an inducement for indulgences in these cases. The emotion on display was seemingly interpreted as an indication of sincere remorse.

¹⁰²⁶ ... καὶ δάκρυα οὐχ ὑφ' ἡδονῆς τινος ἢ πάθους ἐκφέρων, ἀλλὰ τεχνάζων ἐπὶ καιροῦ κατὰ τὸ τῆς χρείας παρὸν... Procopius, *Anecdota*, ed. Dewing VIII.24; ed. Dindorf III, p. 56-57 (trans. Kaldellis 39).

¹⁰²⁷ He was 'prone to evil' but 'easy to lead around', 'never spoke the truth to anyone in his presence, always saying and doing everything with treacherous intent', 'a hypocrite, secretly vindictive, two-faced... highly accomplished at hiding his true opinion... always lying, but his lies were prepared... unreliable as an ally, treacherous as an enemy, craving murder and money'. Procopius, *Anecdota*, ed. Dewing VIII, 24; ed. Dindorf III, p. 56-57 (trans. Kaldellis 38-39).

¹⁰²⁸ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 480 (trans. Mango and Scott 659).

Bardanos Tourkos be blinded in exile on Prote. Those involved were to feign ignorance of his authorisation, and Nikephoros swore his own innocence. He ‘deceived many men even before he had become emperor’, and confined himself to the imperial bedchamber for seven days lamenting Tourkos’ fate. Crucially, Nikephoros was overheard ‘whimpering deceitfully’, proof of his ‘natural faculty for a woman’s tears, such as many low persons and false-messiahs possess’.¹⁰²⁹ His publicised grief and recourse to tears undoubtedly sought to distance him from involvement in the blinding and establish his heartfelt sorrow over Tourkos’ fate, yet deceit, treachery, and misrule were again evoked by his misuse of tears. A final example, Choniates’ Andronikos I, made repeated recourse to crying. His rise to the throne was closely associated with staged weeping that won him support during the march on Constantinople, underscored his loyalty during the initial audience with Alexios II, and accompanied his promotion to co-imperial status before Alexios’ assassination.¹⁰³⁰ Each instance was coupled with one of Andronikos’ lies or acts of deception. His prayers, ‘bitter weeping’, and ‘piteous wailing’ at the tomb of Manuel became a warning of his deceitful nature when these remorse-fuelled petitions were revealed as incoherent threats against Manuel’s family.¹⁰³¹ Elsewhere, Choniates remarked, ‘[tears] sometimes flow or trickle from the tearducts from joy, but this was not the case with Andronikos, for whom the flow of tears presaged certain death.’¹⁰³² Andronikos’ weeping revealed no genuine remorse or joy, only scheming. In all three cases, tears that were usually a sign of virtuous emotion were corrupted and became quasi-sacrilegious in nature. The contempt implied for these ‘deceptions’ only emphasises the ideological significance of tears in penitential rituals.

For authors describing acts of repentance after the fact, didactic motives become

¹⁰²⁹ ...δολίως κλαυθμυρίζομενον ...ἐπει καὶ φυσικῶς αὐτῷ γυναικῶδη προσῆσαν δάκρυα, ἃ τοῖς πολλοῖς τῶν φαύλων καὶ ψευδοχρήστοις προσεῖναι πέφυκεν. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 480 (trans. Mango and Scott 660). Translation adapted.

¹⁰³⁰ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 243-244, 255, 264-265 (trans. Magoulias 137, 142-143, 147).

¹⁰³¹ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 256-257 (trans. Magoulias 143).

¹⁰³² Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 295 (trans. Magoulias 163).

increasingly evident. Markopoulos argues that, under the early Macedonian dynasty the charisma of the imperial office prompted a shift in the structure of historical narratives being produced in court circles.¹⁰³³ The annalistic formula was exchanged for more personality-oriented works most clearly discernible in Genesis and *Theophanes Continuatus*, especially the *Vita Basilii*. The purpose of these works was propagandist, to glorify Basileios and the Macedonian dynasty and vilify Michael III and any interlopers.¹⁰³⁴ This evolution continued under subsequent authors, and the narratives adopted a more anthropocentric approach to the individuals who were their subjects.¹⁰³⁵ The generally unimpeachable, almost Neoplatonist, models of rule that had predominated gave way to much more nuanced portraits, emperors could be described as deeply flawed without necessarily being the subject of total vilification. Thus Psellos could say in reference to Michael IV,¹⁰³⁶ ‘Not one of the emperors in my time... to my knowledge, bore the burden of rule entirely free from blame to the end... So it was with this man...’ - and then proceed to provide a nuanced assessment of his qualities and ultimately declare him a good man.¹⁰³⁷ Prominent character flaws served to teach the reader what not to do, in the same way that virtues were to be embraced.¹⁰³⁸ Usurpation itself provided a teachable moment and was fraught with moral ambiguities.

The historical narratives show an increased concern to record, and establish the sincerity of, acts of repentance. This can be connected with the move toward ‘biography’ and to the increasingly instructive functions of history writing. *Theophanes Continuatus*’

¹⁰³³ Markopoulos 2009: esp. 697-699, 713; Markopoulos 2003. See also, Kazhdan 2006: esp. 133.

¹⁰³⁴ Ljubarskij 1992: 184; Kazhdan 2006: 137.

¹⁰³⁵ Markopoulos 2009: 712.

¹⁰³⁶ As Markopoulos 2009: 710-712, has noted ‘[for Psellos] the concern of earlier historiography with what is ‘proper’ and with ‘setting a good example’ is inconsistent with... his mainly anthropocentric narrative, as the personalities he analyses so vividly and in such painstaking detail are not univocal: far from being bound to particular ideals, they are changeable. Psellos tends to demystify his heroes, over whose weaknesses he lingers more than their strengths.’

¹⁰³⁷ Psellos relates a similar sentiment in relation to Constantine IX: ‘...I find such inconsistency nothing to marvel at; on the contrary, it would be extraordinary if someone were always unalterable... an emperor, one who inherited supreme power from God, especially if he lived longer than most, would never be able to maintain the highest standards throughout his reign.’ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 124-125, 274-275; ed. Renauld I, 58, 130-131 (trans. Sewter 91-92, 169).

¹⁰³⁸ Ljubarskij 1992: esp. 706.

description of Romanos' dream, like *De Administrando*'s unedifying portrait of his incompetence, was both warning and lesson: usurpers of the Macedonian dynasty were doomed to hell, and could only be saved through acknowledgement of guilt, proper order, and humiliating atonement. In a similar fashion Tzimiskes' deathbed confession of his 'sins of omission' saved Leon Diakonos' praiseworthy soldier emperor¹⁰³⁹ by having him at last acknowledge responsibility for Nikephoros' murder. Psellos undercut Michael's misdeeds in coming to power through his almost immediate recognition of wrongdoing and efforts to repent. Finally, Anna moved full-circle as her close personal connection to her subject, and her intended comparative critique of his successors, meant that Alexios was described as an idealised paradigm of rulership.¹⁰⁴⁰ Proposed as a model that his successors would never measure up to, Alexios' repentance, like his motives, had to be pure or the ideal would collapse. Hence Anna offered a personally faultless quasi-usurper who emulated Christ by redeeming others through his atonement on their behalf. Repentance became a prominent sign of 'good' emperors, and Choniates' *Historia* testifies to the political cachet of this ideal. Its record of the 'official' account of Isaakios II's accession held that the emperor begged forgiveness for the murder that brought him to power, inside Hagia Sophia, before the crown had even touched his head. Isaakios' accession was consequently sin-free, another way in which it was portrayed as an exemplary popular act.¹⁰⁴¹

The narratives now more openly acknowledged imperial misdeeds and character flaws. They recorded official propaganda and acted like advice literature by providing

¹⁰³⁹ Leon's praise was (mostly) for the martial qualities of the primary personalities his history records (Nikephoros II, Ioannes I, and Svjatoslav). Palace life in particular is subject to the author's scorn. On Leon's authorial personality and narrative focus, see Markopoulos 2009: esp. 705-706.

¹⁰⁴⁰ For Anna's motives in writing the *Alexias*, see Buckley 2014; Magdalino 2000.

¹⁰⁴¹ Καὶ ὁ μὲν ὡς εἶχε τὸν θεῖον εἰσιὼν ναὸν ἄνεισι τὸν ἀνάσταθμον, ὃν οἱ φονεῖς ἀνερχόμενοι τὸ οἰκεῖον ἀνακεκαλυμμένως διατρανοῦσι πλημμέλημα τὴν ἐκ τῶν εἰσιόντων τε καὶ ἐξιόντων τὸ ἱερώτατον τέμενος αἰτοῦντες συγχώρησιν... 'On entering the holy temple, he ascended the *anastathmos* from which murderers publicly confess their crimes, asking forgiveness from those entering and leaving the most holy shrine.' Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 342 (trans. Magoulias 189). Translation adapted. See the comments of Macrides 1988: 514, n.28, on the *anastathmos*, which was not (as Magoulias translates it) the 'pulpit'.

instructive tales for moral rulership that future emperors could learn from in order to avoid these mistakes. These concerns did not originate in the literary developments under the Macedonian dynasty,¹⁰⁴² they had always been present to some extent in the hagiographical corpus with its more biographical focus. However, it was from this point that they became pronounced in the narrative histories and were openly debated in literary circles. Before the tenth century, narratives of imperial remorse were rare.¹⁰⁴³

It is noteworthy that this amplification of repentance in the historiographical corpus roughly corresponds to a period of increased interest in humility and penitential rites in Byzantium and the West. The increasing influence of reformist-ecclesiastic ideological conceptions of Christian rulership had, in the West, already been felt in the early ninth-century. A move towards what de Jong terms a ‘penitential ideal’ of rulership in Carolingian society was then taking place.¹⁰⁴⁴ *Specula principum*’ produced in the period bear witness to the increased importance of humility, and monastic ideals progressively came to influence the royal virtues that were being exalted. This was possibly a by-product of the monastic upbringing and education of almost all authors and kings.¹⁰⁴⁵ Furthermore, as the monastic life was itself innately penitential, these ideals came to be associated with the ideals of empire.¹⁰⁴⁶ That the penitential punishments of *harmiscara* and *paenitentia publica*¹⁰⁴⁷ begin to make frequent appearance only in the early ninth-century sources, corresponds to the promotion of Louis I’s ideals of Christian Empire, and his submission to the bishops in order

¹⁰⁴² Given that Genesios and *Theophanes Continuatus* were seemingly drawing upon a common source for much of their material, we may question exactly when these literary developments began. On the evidence for this common source, see Markopoulos 2009: 700-701; Markopoulos 2003: 186 n.18; Karpozilos 2002: II, 318-324.

¹⁰⁴³ The present study has identified *no* unambiguous accounts of remorse for a usurpation in the histories and chronicles produced (at least) before the reign of Theophilos. Further, there are extremely few detailed accounts (that is, more than one or two lines) concerning expressions of imperial remorse more generally in these narratives until the tenth century.

¹⁰⁴⁴ de Jong 2011; de Jong 1992: esp. 32.

¹⁰⁴⁵ de Jong 1992: 32; Noble 1976.

¹⁰⁴⁶ de Jong 1992; Noble 1976, focusing on the example of Louis I (the Pious).

¹⁰⁴⁷ On these punishments, see de Jong 1992: 32-36, 43-52.

to perform public penance at Attigny (822) and Soissons (833).¹⁰⁴⁸ Bishop Hincmar of Rheims, in connection with King Charles II, invoked David's confession to Nathan as an example of a king's duty to keep his promises.¹⁰⁴⁹ And Anton argues that the exemplar of the repentant Theodosius represented 'the *Herrschaftypologie* of this period'.¹⁰⁵⁰ Acts of public penance, even by kings, became more visible in the West and their imposition was associated solely with the clergy.¹⁰⁵¹

In Byzantium, Leon VI's humbling prostration before the patriarch was the first reported instance of such an occurrence since Theodosius.¹⁰⁵² Patriarch Photios' earlier vision of the imperial office, as outlined in the introductory chapters to *Eisagoge*, and in his *Letter* to Boris I, was a product of late-ninth century innovation.¹⁰⁵³ The works demonstrate an attempt by Photios to redefine the emperor-patriarch relationship along Rome's Pontifical lines.¹⁰⁵⁴ The espoused ideology stripped the emperor of absolute and spiritual power, established the authority of the church as a separate institution of almost equal temporal power to the imperial office, and proposed the patriarch as akin to a pontifical authority with influence over the emperor.¹⁰⁵⁵ Title III, §11, of *Eisagoge* also asserted that the clergy alone could decide upon issues of repentance and turning away from sins and heresies.¹⁰⁵⁶ The church evidently sought greater authority under the leadership of a charismatic patriarch and these politico-ideological issues never entirely went away.¹⁰⁵⁷

An emergent 'penitential ideal' in Byzantium might explain why every emperor co-

¹⁰⁴⁸ de Jong 1992: esp. 48-49; de Jong 2011.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Hincmar of Rheims, *Ad Carolum regem pro ecclesiae liberatum defensione*, PL 125, col.1040-1; quoted in de Jong 1992: 51. For analysis, see Nelson 1977: 248-254.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Anton 2006: 442-443, 446. Ward 2015: 76-77, has warned against some of the (now outdated) assumptions in Anton's argumentation, but retains this central thesis.

¹⁰⁵¹ Hamilton 2001: 104-121; Dalewski 2008: 88.

¹⁰⁵² Dagron 2003: 114-124.

¹⁰⁵³ Photios' authorship of the introductory chapters/titles of the *Eisagoge* was convincingly argued by Scharf 1956: 385-400; Scharf 1959: 68-81. See also, Barker 1957: 89, 109-112.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Dagron 2003: esp. 234.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Dagron 2003: 229-235; Tougher 1997: 71-72; Schminck 1986.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *Eisagoge*, ed. Zepos 3.11.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Dagron 2003: esp. 223-247.

opted into the Macedonian dynasty either performed or embodied some form of penance: Romanos I through his dream and late-life repentance; Nikephoros II wanted to embrace the tonsure before he became emperor, slept on the floor and wore a hair vest beneath his attire afterwards;¹⁰⁵⁸ Ioannes I performed penance before the patriarch and instituted numerous good works; Romanos III had a reputation for piety and expressed repentance for his misdeeds in ruling;¹⁰⁵⁹ Michael IV atoned for the murder of Romanos; Michael V expressed remorse for his actions in deposing Zoe shortly before he was blinded;¹⁰⁶⁰ and Constantine IX funded numerous charitable works and new foundations.¹⁰⁶¹ Basileios I had employed the guise of a New David, and Hagia Sophia's narthex mosaic was just one example of the visualisation of royal atonement in Byzantine art in this period. King David's repentance began to appear in manuscript illuminations produced from the ninth century onwards. Cutler documents seventeen aristocratic psalters dating from the ninth to fifteenth centuries in which the scene is shown,¹⁰⁶² in several instances, with David prostrate and being rescued by Nathan from an angel of justice in the presence of female-personified *Metanoia*.¹⁰⁶³ It has also been suggested that the iconographic programme of the eleventh-century Monomachos crown was conceived in ecclesiastical circles and heavily indebted to the principles of good rulership as expressed in the David story.¹⁰⁶⁴ This origin would explain the non-traditional pairing of Humility and Truth in the enamels, which would instead reflect David's chief

¹⁰⁵⁸ In a further sign of his piety, Nikephoros supposedly slept upon a red-dyed felt and a bearskin that had been a gift from his uncle, the saint and monk, Michael Maleinos. He was sleeping on this when Tzimiskes and the other conspirators murdered him. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 255, 280 (trans. Wortley 245, 268). On Maleinos, see Laiou 1998.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 86-87; ed. Renauld I, 40 (trans. Sewter 70).

¹⁰⁶⁰ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 234-235; ed. Renauld I, 111-112 (trans. Sewter 147).

¹⁰⁶¹ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 477 (trans. Wortley 444-445).

¹⁰⁶² Cutler 1984: 122.

¹⁰⁶³ See also, Dagron 2003: 117 and n.85; citing the mss. *Parisinus gr.* 510, fol. 143v (c.880/883); *Parisinus gr.* 139, fol. 136v (late tenth-century); and *Marcianus gr.* 17, fol. IVv (c. 976-1025).

¹⁰⁶⁴ On the much-debated Monomachos crown, see Buckton 2012: 31-33; Maguire 1997/1998; Maguire 1997a; Oikonomides 1994. For the suggestion of the crown's iconographic influences and origins, see Kiss 2000: 75. See also, Kalavrezou, Saboulia, and Sabar 1993, who suggest a similar purpose for the iconographic programme of the Vatican Psalter (*Ms. Vat. gr.* 752). Stylistic similarities between the figure of Humility on the crown, and that of monastic Humility in a twelfth-century copy of *The Heavenly Ladder*, at Mount Sinai, may strengthen the attribution of an ecclesiastic source for the iconography: Maguire 1997a: 210.

virtues in religious thought. In light of these cultural and ideological developments it is perhaps unsurprising that the repentant emperor model became more pronounced in Byzantium at precisely this time.

VII. VICARIOUS REDEMPTION

As the preceding discussion has outlined, the process of usurpation could leave an emperor burdened with guilt. The performance of acts of repentance provided a route for the politically perceptive to acknowledge and rid themselves of this burden by appearing remorseful and propitiating God in accordance with established customs and models of rulership. Their efforts were judged and used as a political tool to establish, or undermine, sincerity and moral-legitimacy. However, the charismatic nature of rulership and the dynastic principle, combined with political realities, meant that the circumstances of an accession might not easily be forgiven or forgotten. The long-term political consequences might require a successor to take actions to atone for his predecessor's misdeeds in order to settle factional disputes and repair the dynasty's public image. Three cases exemplify the concerns, commonalities, and extent of these efforts.

Theophilos

Theophilos' accession in October 829 provides the first clear example of these attempts at 'vicarious redemption'.¹⁰⁶⁵ History attributes to Theophilos a well-earned and actively cultivated reputation for justice.¹⁰⁶⁶ Petitioners were encouraged to approach him as he rode through Constantinople on Fridays to pray at the Church of the Theotokos at Blachernai.¹⁰⁶⁷ Later, the twelfth-century satirical dialogue *Timarion* assigned to him the role of a judge in the underworld, as a (heretical) Christian emperor who shone with 'honest judgement'.¹⁰⁶⁸

¹⁰⁶⁵ For the dating see Treadgold 1975; Grierson, Mango, and Ševčenko 1962: 56.

¹⁰⁶⁶ On this aspect of Theophilos' reputation, see Codoñer 2014: 449-460; Macrides 2004: 359-360; Laiou 1994: esp.151-157.

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 87; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 126-129; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 50 (trans. Wortley 53); Michael Glykas, *Annales*, p.537(B).

¹⁰⁶⁸ *Timarion*, ed. Romano 33 (trans. Baldwin 64). On the deliberate irony of the heretic Theophilos' role in the *Timarion*, see Krallis 2013; Kaldellis 2007: 280.

According to the narratives of his rule, this judicial reputation was earned very early on, in connection with the coup that had brought his father, Michael II, to power nine years previous.¹⁰⁶⁹ The efforts of Empress Theodora to ameliorate Theophilos' tarnished image as an iconoclast emperor also undoubtedly influenced the strength of this reputation.¹⁰⁷⁰ Consequently, a recapitulation of the circumstances of Michael's accession is necessary.

Leon V had twice accused Michael of treason.¹⁰⁷¹ On the second occasion the evidence was deemed conclusive and Michael was to be executed on Christmas Day 820. According to Genesisios and *Theophanes Continuatus*, he was to be thrown into the furnace of the imperial baths. This fate was temporarily commuted via the intervention of Empress Theodosia, who reminded Leon that an execution at Christmas would be a grave offence to God.¹⁰⁷² Whilst imprisoned, Michael professed to feel remorse for his misdeeds and asked to make a final confession. The *Continuator* called this a 'pretext' (σκῆψις), and Genesisios asserted that 'Michael pretended that his soul was burdened by his sins.'¹⁰⁷³ This act of blasphemous false repentance provided the opportunity for Michael to contact sympathisers, and possibly members of the conspiracy, through the eunuch attendant Theoktistos. He reportedly blackmailed them into helping him and, as Leon attended Christmas prayers, the conspirators, disguised as clergymen, struck Leon down. Michael was swiftly freed from his imprisonment and proclaimed emperor.¹⁰⁷⁴

The extent of Michael's involvement in the assassination has been subject to debate.

¹⁰⁶⁹ On 25 December 820. For the narrative treatments, see below.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Laiou 1994: 156, intimating a restorative function to Theophilos' presentation as a 'just king'.

¹⁰⁷¹ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 34-35; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 54-55; Genesisios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 15-16 (trans. Kaldellis 18-19), who report that the first accusation was 'slander' and that Michael had been able to clear himself.

¹⁰⁷² *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 35-36; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 56-57; Genesisios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 16 (trans. Kaldellis 20). The proposed punishment is reminiscent of the legend surrounding Constantine I's execution of Crispus and Fausta following their purported affair, and in both narratives the empress Theodosia's intercession is somewhat frenzied, with Leon rebuking her. Possibly an allusion is being made to the Constantine legend for the purpose of *Kaiserkritik*.

¹⁰⁷³ ...προφασίζεται ὁ Μιχαὴλ τῶν κατὰ ψυχὴν ὀφλημάτων ἄγαν κεκτῆσθαι διὰ φροντίδος... Genesisios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 17 (trans. Kaldellis 21). Author's translation.

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 38-41 ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 60-65; Genesisios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 17-22 (trans. Kaldellis 21-27).

Afinogenov argues that Michael was not a direct participant at the moment of his arrest, but emerged as a figurehead after the assassination.¹⁰⁷⁵ However, as Codoñer points out, this stands in direct opposition to the reason given for his arrest in the sources, and Michael was almost certainly involved in the subsequent plot to assassinate Leon; especially given his swift release and proclamation.¹⁰⁷⁶ Nevertheless, a climate of paranoia and conspiracy certainly existed at Leon's court in the latter years of his rule. His politics became increasingly repressive and factionalism was exacerbated, as suggested by Michael's first arrest due to 'slander'.¹⁰⁷⁷

Michael exploited this environment to distance himself from the murder. The fact that he was imprisoned at the time of its commission would certainly have lent credence to any attempt.¹⁰⁷⁸ Officially, he accepted no responsibility for it. His well-known letter to Louis the Pious, betrays no defamatory propaganda towards Leon, and even claims that Leon had been killed by some 'evil doers'. It goes on to describe Michael's elevation as the work of God and the Virgin through a *consensus omnium* of the patriarch, patricians, and senate in accordance with 'ancient custom' and in effort to overcome the usurpation of Thomas the Slav, which he dates to Leon's reign.¹⁰⁷⁹ In fact, Lemerle has demonstrated that Thomas' usurpation was a response to the murder of Leon, and that Michael's version of the chronology attempted to conceal the reasons for Thomas' rebellion as they would have damaged his claims to legitimacy.¹⁰⁸⁰ The coronation was evidently used as a means of asserting Michael's supposed popularity, the *consensus omnium*, as his qualification for

¹⁰⁷⁵ Afinogenov 2001: esp. 338.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Codoñer 2014: 67. Of course, this does not rule out multiple, simultaneous, conspiracies at court.

¹⁰⁷⁷ On the increasingly repressive policies instituted by Leon, and the factionalism at court, see Codoñer 2014: esp. 20-25, 67-68.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Afinogenov 2001: 333.

¹⁰⁷⁹ *Michaelis et Theophili Imperatorum Constantinopolitanorum epistula*, pp.475-80, and esp. p.476. Michael's legitimising content is discussed in Afinogenov 2001: 332-333; Codoñer 2014: 65, 68. Noble 2009: 260-264, considers the letter's reception in the west, and its wider concern with perceived heterodox practices within the church.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Lemerle 1965, discusses the two source traditions. Afinogenov 1999: 446-447, follows Michael's version in asserting that the revolt began under Leon.

rulership, in place of dynastic authorisation. These efforts to distance himself from the murder were not wholly believable, and Afinogenov has identified references to anti-Michael pamphlets in circulation.¹⁰⁸¹

It is in this context that we must consider Theophilos' redemptive deeds. In the first *silention* called after his accession, the young emperor¹⁰⁸² ordered all senators and dignitaries to assemble at the Magnaura.¹⁰⁸³ Addressing them, he explained that his father had left him a task on his deathbed and that those who had joined the rebellion against Leon and aided Michael were to be well rewarded for their past assistance:

Since my father your Emperor, O Holy Senate, bound me with fearsome oaths as he departed from this life to reward in a fitting manner those who rebelled with him against Leon for the danger they incurred, I do not intend in any way to neglect this command.¹⁰⁸⁴

Theophilos complied with his father's request by asking that these men make themselves known. As they came forward the order was given for the *eparchos* to take them into custody at once and apply the laws appropriate to the murder of an emperor. Leon's assassins were promptly identified and executed.¹⁰⁸⁵

The story has proven contentious for modern scholarship and, given the emperor's cultivation of an aura of imperial justice, it has even been suspected to be a later literary invention.¹⁰⁸⁶ Discrepancies exist between the accounts of *Theophanes Continuatus* and

¹⁰⁸¹ Afinogenov 2001: 334.

¹⁰⁸² Theophilos was just sixteen years old at the time of his elevation to sole rule. He appears to have relied upon the advice of his step-mother Euphrosyne and his tutor Ioannes Grammatikos at this early stage in his reign. Treadgold 1988: 263-264; Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 392-393.

¹⁰⁸³ On the staging of a *silention*, see Christophilopoulou 1951. On the Magnaura, the hall usually associated with the welcoming receptions for foreign ambassadors, see Janin 1964: 115.

¹⁰⁸⁴ «ἐπειδήπερ ὁ ἐμὸς πατὴρ καὶ ὑμῶν βασιλεύς, ὃ ἱερά σύγκλητος, ὄρκους με διεβεβαιώκει φρικτοῖς ἀποιχόμενος, τοῖς συνηγωνισμένοις αὐτῷ εἰς τὸ κατὰ Λέοντος νεανίευμα τῆς ἀγωνίας παρασχεῖν ἄξια, οὐ μεθήσειν τῆς ἐντολῆς οὐδαμῶς προτεθύμημαι.» Genesisios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 80 (trans. Kaldellis 49). Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Genesisios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 36 (trans. Kaldellis 49); *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 85-86; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 124-127; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 49-50 (trans. Wortley 51-52).

¹⁰⁸⁶ Afinogenov 2001: 332, questions whether the story could be 'just another fanciful piece of literature', and cites the (likely) fictional bride-show for Theophilos as a precedent for such an invention. The question is also briefly considered by Codoñer 2014: 68. On the evidence for the literary invention of the bride-show of

Genesios, and those of Symeon Magistros and Leon Grammatikos. In the latter, the event took place at the Hippodrome and the executed conspirators abused Theophilos for benefiting from their actions.¹⁰⁸⁷ Afinogenov has argued that the only way that Michael could have reasonably promoted his own innocence would have been for him to punish those responsible. He adduces evidence from the *Life of Euthymios of Sardes* in which Methodios speaks of Michael's attempts against his fellow murderers: '...the beast was slain by his enemy and avenger, for it is right to call thus his successor in full accord with the scriptures, as he, having been hostile even to death, *attempted in turn* to avenge himself against his fellow murderers...'.¹⁰⁸⁸ However, the speech has been suggested as a rhetorical wordplay, and it does not state that Michael was successful in his 'attempt in turn'.¹⁰⁸⁹ Given the divisions in Leon's court, and the need for Michael to ensure his own security by purging some of these factions at the beginning of his reign,¹⁰⁹⁰ might the *Life* have conflated these efforts with the removal of Michael's own backers, those responsible for the assassination? Or might Michael have sought justice against a select few members of the conspiracy, offering them as scapegoats?

The difficulties and acrimonies of the latter possibility were known in the previous century when the prominent military figures, Myakios and Bouraphos, co-conspirators of the *protoasekritis* Artemios-Anastasios were blinded and exiled within a fortnight of his coronation, supposedly with popular consent. They were proposed as the instigators of the

Theophilos, see Afinogenov 1997; on the historical evidence for the performance of bride-shows, with bibliography, see Vinson 1999.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 214-215; Symeon Magister, *Chronicon*, ed. Wahlgren 217. For discussion, see Treadgold 1988: 271, 433 n.376.

¹⁰⁸⁸ ...σφάζεται ὁ θῆρ παρὰ τοῦ ἐχθροῦ καὶ ἐκδικητοῦ αὐτοῦ· οὕτω γὰρ καλεῖν τὸν τοῦτου διάδοχον γραφικώτατα δίκαιον, καθότι ἐχθράνας εἰς θάνατον διεκδικεῖν αὐτὸν πάλιν πειρᾶται ἐπὶ τε τοὺς συνανδροφόνους... *La vie d'Euthyme de Sardes*, ed. Gouillard §10, 199-201. Translation adapted from Afinogenov 2001: 332-333. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Codoñer 2014: 69, argues that Methodios is playing with the phrase 'enemy and avenger' (παρὰ τοῦ ἐχθροῦ καὶ ἐκδικητοῦ), an allusion to Psalm 8:3 in which God is said 'to destroy the enemy and avenger' (τοῦ καταλῦσαι ἐχθρὸν καὶ ἐκδικητήν) thus making both terms negative.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Leon V's relative Gregoras Pterotos, for example, was exiled to Skyros among the Cyclades islands of the Aegean in the first year of Michael's reign. Theophanes Continuatus, ed. Bekker 57-58; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 86-87.

coup in the narratives, whereas Anastasios just happened to be the official they decided to promote.¹⁰⁹¹ Their punishment evidently sought to clear Anastasios of dishonour associated with the overthrow of Philippikos, and temporarily allayed concerns about the tenuous loyalty of military personnel willing to depose an emperor. However, it also fostered resentment among the *Opsikion thema* which revolted again and promoted Theodosios III early in 715.¹⁰⁹² The *protostrator* Roupfos, who had actually blinded Philippikos, remained untouched by Anastasios' purge, suggesting that political expediency and the perception of justice, rather than justice itself, were motivating factors behind it. The incident assuredly emphasised the importance of carefully handling political reprisals.

If we attribute executions to Theophilos, as the preponderance of sources do, the narratives maintain that his actions punished those who had 'stained their hands with human blood'.¹⁰⁹³ Only the figure who delivered the final blow is singled out, yet he remains an otherwise anonymous member of the 'Krambonitai' family.¹⁰⁹⁴ Ioannes Hexaboulios the *logothetes tou dromou* and conspirator retained his office,¹⁰⁹⁵ and the *chartouliarios tou kanikleiou* Theoktistos, Michael's conduit to his accomplices, remained an important figure, even serving as a regent to Michael III.¹⁰⁹⁶ This display of justice was evidently limited to

¹⁰⁹¹ Philippikos was blinded on the 3 June 713, Anastasios' coronation took place a day later on Pentecost, 4 June. The *patrikios* and *strategos* of the *Thrakesion thema*, Theodoros Myakios, was blinded and exiled on 10 June. The *patrikios* and *comes* of the *Opsikion thema*, Georgios Bouraphos was blinded and exiled on 17 June. Of the named assailants of Phillipikos, only the *protostrator* of the *Opsikion thema*, Roupfos, who had entered Constantinople and blinded Philippikos at the *ornatorion* of the Greens (in the Hippodrome), remained unpunished. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 383 (trans. Mango and Scott 533); Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos* ed. Mango 114-117; Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 170; Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 71-72; Kaegi 1981: 190-191. For the chronology, see Sumner 1976: 289-291, amending that of Grierson 1962: 51-52.

¹⁰⁹² Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 385 (trans. Mango and Scott 535-536); Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 118-119. Kaegi 1981: 191-192, notes that in addition to the removal of the Theodoros and Georgios, Theophanes reports how Anastasios appointed new and 'most capable' *strategoi* and civil officials at the outset of his reign. For the appointments, Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 383 (trans. Mango and Scott 534); Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 120-121.

¹⁰⁹³ ...αἷματι ἀνθρωπίνῳ μίαναντες δεξιάν.... Theophanes *Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 86; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 126-127.

¹⁰⁹⁴ On the possible identity of this person, see Codoñer 2014: 69.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Genesis, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 22 (trans. Kaldellis 27); Codoñer 1995: 164; Codoñer 2014: 67.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Kazhdan et al. 1991: III, 2056; PMBZ: 8050 'Theoktistos'.

those few involved in the physical murder of Leon and not the influential wider membership of the conspiracy, who remained untouched.

But why would Theophilos have then felt the need to execute Leon's murderers? Possibly he believed that they deserved such a fate. Theophilos' sense of Christian morality prompted him to return his stepmother to the monastery from which his father had plucked her in order to marry her, and Leon was his murdered godfather.¹⁰⁹⁷ The executions were also politically useful. Moments of dynastic transition were fraught with danger, the executions may have reflected this concern and served as a warning to deter prospective conspiracies. This possibility has too often been overlooked in discussions despite the *Continuator's* assertion that this was their primary purpose.¹⁰⁹⁸ Although the account is noticeably hostile to the emperor, the declaration is not far-fetched, for Theophilos' reign reportedly ended in a similar fashion with the execution of the successful general Theophobos, whom he suspected of being a potential threat to Michael III's regency.¹⁰⁹⁹ The *Continuator* crafts an image of paranoia-inspired brutality to accompany Theophilos' justice, but Genesisios too mentions Theophilos' dynastic concerns.¹¹⁰⁰ The removal of certain members of the original conspiracy early in the reign would have prevented potential challenges to it, especially if they had sought to renegotiate terms of support, or replace Theophilos with another conspirator. Theophilos retained the backing of certain members whom his father had promoted, but rid himself of others whose patronage was politically

¹⁰⁹⁷ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 86; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 126-127; Treadgold 1975: 357.

¹⁰⁹⁸ 'Now Theophilos wanted to be known as a fervent lover of justice and righteous guardian of the laws of the state, *but in truth preserving himself from those who were forming conspiracies, lest anyone should carry out revolution against him, and observing the danger which impended*, he decided upon the destruction and slaughter of all those who through conspiracy had procured the empire for his father, and had revolted against Leon.' *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 85; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 124-125. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 136; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 196-197; Genesisios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 42-43 (trans. Kaldellis 56-57); Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 227-228.

¹¹⁰⁰ Genesisios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 49 (trans. Kaldellis 65), who claims that Theophilos had attempted to execute one 'Martenakios' in response to a prediction implying that the Martenakoioi would succeed him and enjoy a long reign.

problematic and he could now do without. Furthermore, as Treadgold remarks, '[the] executions effectively freed Theophilus from any responsibility for the murder that had established the Amorian dynasty.'¹¹⁰¹ They would have served to conciliate the partisans of Leon behind the young emperor, who was seen to be acting on their behalf in bringing to justice those who had committed the crime. Claims that he had ignored the murder for his own benefit could not be made, and charges of hypocrisy levelled by the unlucky conspirators would carry little weight in comparison to his reputation for justice.

The act distanced Theophilus from blame for the murder by distancing him from Michael's misdeeds in an act of judicial repentance that was also connected, the narratives claim, with a deathbed request from Michael. We might question whether that request was a polemical device employed to show Theophilus' capacity for deception, or a record of official propaganda designed to indicate Michael's remorse. A wider attempt to rehabilitate Michael and the dynastic image in the early years of Theophilus' reign could explain why the class III *solidi*, produced to commemorate the death of Theophilus' heir Constantine in the first-half of 831,¹¹⁰² revived Isaurian practice by placing an effigy of Theophilus' predecessor on the coin. In an apparent display of dynastic pride, both Michael and Constantine were shown. The innovation could not have been missed; an emperor whose eternal fate was questioned would certainly not have been a candidate for prominence on an imperial product. His presence was evidently a sign of his good standing and proof that the sins of his accession and iconoclast beliefs had been atoned for. Delayed justice allowed the dynasty to redress its sinful role in a historic wrong, while retaining power. Son redeemed father.

¹¹⁰¹ Treadgold 1988: 272.

¹¹⁰² On the basis of the numismatic and sigillographic evidence, Füeg and Grierson have established this as the most likely date for Constantine's death. Codoñer has further established this date on the basis of Theophilus' appointment of a *kaisar* only *after* the death of Constantine. Füeg 2007: 25-28, 71-73; Grierson 1973: III.1, 406-451 and esp. 409; Codoñer 2014: 121.

Leon VI

In Schreiner's analysis the accession of Leon VI in 886 marked the end of the Macedonian dynasty and the restoration of the Amorian.¹¹⁰³ His pronouncement is linked with the belief, held by many commentators, that Leon was in fact the son of Michael III by his mistress Eudokia Ingerina, the wife of Basileios I.¹¹⁰⁴ Much ink was spilled on efforts to establish Leon's biological paternity until Karlin-Hayter demonstrated that line of inquiry to be intractable, and irrelevant to the more pressing issue of the perception of Leon's paternity.¹¹⁰⁵ She found that historical rumours about Leon's 'true' ancestry were reported only in the anti-Macedonian chronicle tradition; that they began while Michael was still alive, and provided a means of humiliating Basileios. As Tougher then revealed, although rumours also touched upon Basileios' other sons, Constantine and Stephanos, Leon was subject to particular scrutiny.¹¹⁰⁶ A single act performed at the outset of Leon's reign is responsible for much of this debate.

According to the narratives, the first official action undertaken after Leon's accession was a burial. However, this was not of Basileios, as might be expected, but an exhumation and reburial of Michael.¹¹⁰⁷ Leon dispatched the *stratelates* Andreas and an attachment of senators to the monastery of Philippikos at Chrysopolis, the then resting place of Michael's body.¹¹⁰⁸ Skylitzes describes how, in the presence of clergymen, Michael was exhumed, placed in a cypress wood coffin, and dressed 'in a manner worthy of an emperor'.¹¹⁰⁹ An

¹¹⁰³ Schreiner 1991: 186.

¹¹⁰⁴ See, for example, Mango 1973: esp. 24; Runciman 1929: 40.

¹¹⁰⁵ Karlin-Hayter 1991b. The most complete synopsis of the historical scholarship surrounding the 'problem' of Leon's parentage is that of Tougher 1997: 42-67, and esp. 42-44.

¹¹⁰⁶ Tougher 1997: 43-44.

¹¹⁰⁷ *Georgios Monachos Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 848-849. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 172 (trans. Wortley 166), establishes that this was undertaken at the same time that charges were being read against Patriarch Photios (August-September 886) and the establishment of Stephanos the *Synkellos* as his successor on the patriarchal throne (consecrated December 886). For the chronology, see Jenkins 1965: 99-100.

¹¹⁰⁸ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 172 (trans. Wortley 166).

¹¹⁰⁹ ...ἐντίμως καὶ βασιλικῶς περιστείλαντας. On the burial, see Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 172 (trans. Wortley 166). *Georgios Monachos Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 848-849, gives an abbreviated version of these events.

adventus marked the conveyance of his remains to Constantinople. Leon's brothers, Alexandros and Stephanos (the patriarch), accompanied the body in solemn procession, complete with songs and hymns, through the city to the Church of the Holy Apostles where it was interred in a marble sarcophagus. The reburial was evidently a significant event, and Michael was granted full imperial honours throughout the procedure: although in no account is Leon VI mentioned as a participant. Michael's exhumation was respectful and attended by church and state dignitaries. The imperial attire was a worthy accoutrement loaded with symbolism, and the grandeur of the *adventus*, involving members of the ruling dynasty, was clearly intended to make public a bold political statement.¹¹¹⁰

Precisely what that statement was has been the cause of consternation. Dvornik and Kislinger have viewed the event as almost a form of 'generational-conflict' against Basileios, whom Leon despised. Leon's imprisonment (883-886), his narrow avoidance of blinding at his father's request, his resentment of the arranged marriage to Theophano, and a sense of sympathy with Michael's own unhappy marriage, were proposed as motives.¹¹¹¹ Mango, followed by Magdalino, sees it as public confirmation that Leon believed himself to be Michael's son, and thus it provided an opportunity to honour his true father who had been so brutally overthrown by Basileios.¹¹¹² The promotion of Niketas Xylinites, who was rumoured to have had an affair with Eudokia during Basileios reign, has also been cited as evidence of Leon's alleged 'anti-Macedonian' sympathies.¹¹¹³ Additionally, Magdalino contends that Leon's renewed patronage of Michael's Constantinopolitan foundations is evidence of Leon honouring his parentage.¹¹¹⁴

¹¹¹⁰ For comparison, the epitomator Zonaras describes how Alexios I did not 'receive a funeral appropriate to an emperor' because there was nobody to cleanse his body and perform the final ablutions, there were no imperial adornments available to dress the body in, and his funeral procession was supposedly sparsely attended. Zonaras, *Epitome* III, 764-765.

¹¹¹¹ Dvornik 1948: 245; Kislinger 1983: esp. 131-132.

¹¹¹² Mango 1973: 26.

¹¹¹³ *Georgios Monachos Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 843; Mango 1973: 24-25.

¹¹¹⁴ Magdalino 1988a: 196. Tougher 1997: 63, draws attention to several false assumptions in Magdalino's argumentation. Dagron 2003: 197-199, affirming Tougher's thesis.

The view that has been generally adopted by Adontz, Karlin-Hayter, and Tougher, suggests a more penitential reading of events.¹¹¹⁵ The reburial was politically adroit. Leon's true first actions upon acceding to the throne must have been to arrange the burial of Basileios, but this was quite possibly overlooked in the narratives because imperial burials were not usually considered interesting as historical events. By contrast, the reburial of Michael was an aberration from normal imperial behaviour. Although it may have suggested an anti-Macedonian motive to some contemporaries, this was unintentional. In fact, the reburial can be read as an acknowledgement by Leon of Basileios' responsibility for Michael's murder, and as a highly public attempt to honour the victim and indicate the dynasty's remorse over the circumstances of its own origins. Questions about the dynasty's legitimacy, in light of its foundation through an act of murder, would undoubtedly have been circulating. The likelihood that the reburial coincided with the anniversary of Michael's death¹¹¹⁶ would have drawn extra attention to the acknowledgement of wrongdoing, but it also projected the supposed strength of Leon's conviction and political position since he was not disguising the issue, but tackling it head on. By making the act one of the first of his reign Leon sought to avoid his own association with the misdeed that had ultimately enabled his rule, by atoning for his father's sin. Leon's gesture revealed his possession of the imperial virtues of truth and justice through an acknowledgement and posthumous righting of this historic wrong. Like Theophilos, he chose to bear the guilt of his father and correct it, helping his own cause in the process. Theophilos' justice may even have provided the model for emulation, and given Leon's frequent comparison to the biblical kings David and

¹¹¹⁵ Adontz 1933: 510-511; *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter p.158 (*Commentary*); Tougher 1997: 64-67.

¹¹¹⁶ 23/24 September. I follow Tougher's conjecture that the reburial was scheduled to coincide with the anniversary of Michael's death. Although the precise date is not given, *Georgios Monachos Continuatus* and Skylitzes confirm that the event took place concurrently with the deposition of Patriarch Photios and the establishment of Stephanos (August-September). Tougher 1997: 62 n.102.

(especially) Solomon, the image of justice was one that Leon particularly cultivated.¹¹¹⁷

With Basileios' death, Leon may have seen an opportunity to put an end to anti-Macedonian factionalism centred on Michael's partisans. Reconciliation with a predecessor's enemies was a recognised practice at the beginning of a new emperor's reign.¹¹¹⁸ A simultaneous conciliation of Amorian loyalists during this period would certainly have courted a broad political base for the emperor, and would be in keeping with this wider political repositioning.¹¹¹⁹ Karlin-Hayter has argued that the *Epitaphios* composed by Leon in 888 for his parents, marked the beginning of a transition. Between 886 and 888 Leon had undertaken a purge of his enemies from the period of Basileios' rule. The *Vita Euthymii* names Photios, Santabarenos, Leon Katakoilas, and Nikolaos (later *Mystikos*) as victims. By 888 this purge was approaching completion and the *Epitaphios* represented a moment of 'stocktaking'.¹¹²⁰ Like Theophilos, Leon was sufficiently distanced from his father's crimes, but could personally claim to have been wronged by him himself, and could present himself as a relatively impartial figure seeking to reconcile the Macedonian and Amorian dynasties. A potent source of anti-dynastic propaganda could be nullified in the attempt.

Realpolitik, rather than Amorian-sympathising motives, may be inferred since Leon was not as respectful of the tombs of the other members of the Amorian dynasty. The sarcophagus of Maria, the sister of Michael III, for example, was reportedly stripped of all

¹¹¹⁷ On the ideological connection of biblical kingship with the Macedonian emperors, see Riedel 2011; Dagron 2003: 192-201; Tougher 1997: 110-132; Antonopoulou 1997: 78-80; Tougher 1994: 175. Note also Leon's association with the legal codifications begun by Basileios: the Macedonian's were law-givers.

¹¹¹⁸ See below, page 248.

¹¹¹⁹ Tougher 1997: chapter 8, and p.86 n.73, identifies that Leon became increasingly partial to reconciliations. For example, Theodoros Santabarenos, who had been removed from Athens and sent to the east, was recalled to Constantinople and granted an allowance from the Nea Ekklesia. *Georgios Monachos Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 581.

¹¹²⁰ *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter pp.10-11, 165-166; Karlin-Hayter 1991b: 105, remarking that the *Epitaphios* may also have sought to distance Leon from rumours about his parentage that he may inadvertently have stoked through his reburial of Michael. Dvornik 1948: 250, also remarks on Leon's change in policy.

its valuable silver ornamentation.¹¹²¹ Leon's reverence evidently did not extend to the family as a whole, and if he felt a sense of familial affinity with them it seems unlikely that he would have defiled the tomb of an aunt. Instead, Leon appears to have carefully venerated the image of Michael. Magdalino has outlined how Leon sought to enhance the importance of the Palace Church of the Pharos, Michael's foundation. It was included in the festivities for the feast of Elijah, which attained special prominence under the Macedonians,¹¹²² imperial wedding celebrations were moved there from St Stephen's, and a *nomisma* was issued with the Virgin of the Pharos displayed on the obverse.¹¹²³ Tougher has suggested that this reflects the increased importance of, and Leon's devotion to, the cult of the Theotokos,¹¹²⁴ and practical considerations about the Great Palace's ceremonial topography.¹¹²⁵ However, the importance of perception should not be underestimated and Leon's patronage of foundations associated with Michael would surely have been noticed and remarked upon. Site-associations were a recognised method of asserting and promoting supposed dynastic links,¹¹²⁶ and it would have appeared that Michael was being granted further honour.

These reverential efforts may in fact have been an attempt to control or appropriate the 'cult' of Michael into the Macedonian dynasty. As already noted, the presence of Alexandros and Stephanos at Michael's funeral provided a broader dynastic overtone to the proceedings, making it appear to be more than just Leon's project alone. But Michael's remains were accorded an even greater *Macedonian* dynastic honour since they were translated to the Mausoleum of Constantine the Great, and entombed in a marble

¹¹²¹ *Georgios Monachos Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 794.

¹¹²² On the importance of Elijah in Macedonian ideology and propaganda see Dagron 2003: 193-199; Brubaker 1999: 159-162; Antonopoulou 1997: 25, 234-236; Magdalino 1987; Brubaker 1985: 1-13; Moravcsik 1961: 90-91.

¹¹²³ Magdalino 1987: esp. 56.

¹¹²⁴ On Leon's devotion to the cult of the Virgin see Antonopoulou 1997: esp. 165-171; Schminck 1985: 231.

¹¹²⁵ The Pharos was located next to the *Chrysotriklinos* and was consequently more convenient. Tougher 1997: 64-65, and n.114.

¹¹²⁶ For example, the Angeloi emperors deliberately patronised Komnenian foundations and ceremonial sites in order to promote their own connections with the name 'Komnenos' and imbibe dynastic legitimacy from the association. Simpson 2015.

sarcophagus taken from the monastery of Euphemia which had previously held the bodies of Justin I and the *Augusta*.¹¹²⁷ The sarcophagus connected Michael with a glorious past emperor, and Basileios had turned the Mausoleum into the tomb favoured by the Macedonian dynasty itself. The choice would not have been missed, and may have further emphasised that Michael was to be considered as a family member who was being symbolically restored.¹¹²⁸ The translation of his remains also served to prevent their use as relics that could function as foci for the anti-Macedonian movement. Bringing the body to Constantinople and housing it in the Macedonian Mausoleum enabled control. A show of remorse for the murder, and seemingly embracing Michael as a family member, repositioned the dynasty alongside Michael's partisans by both appropriating and propitiating their grievances.

Herlong, followed by Tougher, has concluded that the Isaurian, Amorian and Macedonian lines were in fact 'a single, diffuse dynasty' on the basis of the kinship ties that existed between the families.¹¹²⁹ Eudokia Ingerina and Theophano, respective wives of Basileios and Leon, were relatives and boasted Amorian blood. Additionally, key members of court under Basileios and Leon were connected to the Amorians, for example, Leon VI's *domestikos ton scholon* Leon Katakalon,¹¹³⁰ Stephanos the *magistros*, and Marianos the *eparchos*.¹¹³¹ Tougher has even suggested that Basileios replaced Michael as the family-political figurehead for some of the surviving Amorians.¹¹³² Basileios had been adopted by Michael as part of his promotion to the rank of *magistros*, shortly before his accession to co-imperial status.¹¹³³ In Byzantine thought this connection would have connoted a very real

¹¹²⁷ On Michael's burials and the appropriation, see Grierson, Mango, and Ševčenko 1962: 44-46.

¹¹²⁸ On the Mausoleum of Constantine as the tomb for the Macedonian dynasty see Stephenson 2005: 227-238, and esp. 228-229.

¹¹²⁹ Herlong 1986: 217; Tougher 1997: 67.

¹¹³⁰ *Georgios Monachos Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 855; Tougher 1997: 86.

¹¹³¹ Tougher 1997: 100.

¹¹³² Tougher 1997: 67.

¹¹³³ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 207; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 294-295; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 113 (trans. Wortley 113-114).

familial bond between the two. Politically, however, the adoption ‘was only as strong and long-lasting as the intentions of the parties to it allowed.’¹¹³⁴ Leon’s later attempts to revive the image of Michael, to create a political cult of the Amorian emperor in Constantinople, and to appropriate that cult into the Macedonian dynasty might suggest an attempted, posthumous, renewal of the adoption. Michael’s reburial would therefore have been a symbolic endeavour signifying the fusing of the dynasties and an effort to promote renewed continuity in the face of murder.

As with the story of Theophilos’ justice, there is some tentative evidence that Basileios was suggested as the mastermind for Michael’s reburial. In the ‘official’ histories Basileios displays no remorse for the murder of Michael. However, both the *Life of Basil the Younger* and Liudprand of Cremona convey that Basileios, on his deathbed, was concerned by the effect of Michael’s murder upon his own soul. The *Life* reports that, as Basileios lay dying, ‘...he spoke about the emperor Michael whom he had slain, seizing his throne.’ He was approached by an apparition of Michael that only he could see and which asked, ‘What did I do to you or how did I wrong you that you so mercilessly have attacked me and murdered me?’¹¹³⁵ Liudprand records a similar scene in which Christ appeared before the slumbering Basileios holding the hand of Michael, and asked ‘Why did you kill your lord the emperor?’ Basileios awoke, realised that he had committed a great sin, and sought a means of atoning for this.¹¹³⁶ The similarities of the accounts could be simple coincidence, however, they show that considerations of Basileios’ usurpation and fate were widespread in (then) contemporary thought, and may suggest that a story of late-life repentance was

¹¹³⁴ Macrides 1990: esp. 117-118, considering the functions and perception of imperial adoptions in general, and with reference to the case of Basileios I.

¹¹³⁵ Τελευτήσαντος δὲ Βασιλείου τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ, ὃς καὶ τελευτῶν ἔφρασκε περὶ Μιχαὴλ τοῦ βασιλέως, ὃν ἀνηρήκει καὶ κατέσχε τὰ σκήπτρα αὐτοῦ, «Θεωρῶ,» φησί, «Μιχαὴλ τὸν βασιλέα πρὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν μου ἑστῶτα καὶ λέγοντά μοι ‘Τί σοι ἔπραξα ἢ τί σε ἠδίκησα, ὅτι οὕτως ἀνηλεῶς ἐπέβης μου καὶ ἀπέκτεινάς με;» *The Life of Saint Basil the Younger*, ed. Talbot, Sullivan, and McGrath 68-69. See also Dagron 2003: 121.

¹¹³⁶ «Ἴνα τι ἐσφάζεις τὸν δεσποτὴν σου βασιλεα;» Liudprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, ed. Chiesa §10 (trans. Squatriti 49). (Note that the Greek accents are missing from Liudprand’s text.)

deliberately espoused in order to revive the emperor's image in relation to the misdeed. Furthermore, some of Basileios' earlier actions were deemed public expressions of his remorse. The reconstruction of the Church of the Archangel Michael near the Arkadianai,¹¹³⁷ the dedication of the *Nea Ekklesia* to Michael and Elijah,¹¹³⁸ and the staging of a hybrid triumphal coronation-ceremonial in 867 terminating at the Church of Gabriel and Michael,¹¹³⁹ are three examples. As Dagron notes, Michael was the 'celestial judge, patron saint of his victim, and protector of the Dynasty'.¹¹⁴⁰ Basileios' patronage of the saint would have been suggestive, and both Liudprand and the *Life* considered it an attempt at expiation.¹¹⁴¹ The perception of imperial remorse was prevalent and, since Basileios was a figure particularly associated with the biblical model of David, allusions to his repentance would not be incongruous. Given the stories of Basileios' remorse, the relatively short time that elapsed between his death and Michael's reburial, and Michael's association with Basileios' dynastic mausoleum, might Basileios have been proposed as the architect behind the entire event, with Leon emulating Theophilos by fulfilling his father's final request and redeeming the dynasty and the sinner?

Andronikos II

Andronikos II's actions on behalf of the Palaiologan dynasty had much in common with those of Leon. However, he was far more extensive in his exhibitions of dynastic remorse, and is known to have been following Michael VIII's own efforts to mitigate his removal of

¹¹³⁷ Janin 1969: 340, 345-346; Dagron 2003: 198.

¹¹³⁸ Theophanes Continuatus, ed. Bekker 319; ed. Ševčenko 258-261.

¹¹³⁹ On this ceremony, see above, page 88.

¹¹⁴⁰ Dagron 2003: 198-199.

¹¹⁴¹ The *Life* asserts that the Arkadianai was 'built by the emperor Basileios who desired to expiate the murder he committed of the emperor Michael ...' (...οὗς ἐδείματο Βασίλειος ὁ βασιλεύς, βουλόμενος τὸν φόνον ὃν τετέλεκεν εἰς Μιχαὴλ τὸν βασιλέα...); and Liudprand attributes the same motive to the construction of the *Nea Ekklesia*. *The Life of Saint Basil the Younger*, ed. Talbot, Sullivan, and McGrath 136-137; Liudprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, ed. Chiesa §10 (trans. Squatriti 49)

Ioannes IV Laskaris.

Both emperors' labours must be understood in light of the 'Arsenite schism' which began with Patriarch Arsenios' response to Michael's perceived usurpation in 1261, and continued until 1310, by then having become a severe internal conflict within the Byzantine church.¹¹⁴² Michael's usurpation was gradual and controlled.¹¹⁴³ Having established himself as Ioannes' guardian through the assassination of the regent Georgios Mouzalon (1258), he then arrested the individual allegedly responsible for the murder: a demonstration of 'justice' that also distanced him from the event.¹¹⁴⁴ In 1259, after a last-minute change to the coronation proceedings, he was crowned senior emperor alongside Ioannes IV, supplanting him in precedence. He swore an oath to Arsenios that he would refrain from ever conspiring against the boy.¹¹⁴⁵ Ioannes was left behind after the reconquest of Constantinople in July 1261 but was subsequently blinded on Christmas day, his eleventh birthday.¹¹⁴⁶ He was tonsured and then spent more than half of his life in confinement in Asia Minor.¹¹⁴⁷ Ioannes' blinding prompted the schism. Early in 1262 Arsenios justifiably accused Michael of breaking his oath, which had represented a tacit quasi-constitutional agreement, and excommunicated the emperor in the third degree.¹¹⁴⁸ Michael remained an excommunicate

¹¹⁴² On the Arsenite Schism, see Tinnefeld 2012; Angelov 2007: 368-375; Gounarides 1999; Macrides 1981: 73-79; Laurent 1945.

¹¹⁴³ For the chronology of Michael's proclamation and coronation, see Wirth 1961.

¹¹⁴⁴ Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 159-160 (trans. Macrides 346-347), names the *protovestiarites* Karyanites as this individual. He had been appointed by Theodoros II, and Akropolites also claims that he escaped from prison and fled to the Turks before being killed. Akropolites evidently sought to remove culpability for the murder from Michael VIII by denigrating Karyanites' reputation. Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 89-91, instead reports that a certain Latin mercenary named Karoulos was responsible for the murder, and says nothing about Karyanites' involvement. He reports that it was the latter's men who fled to the Turks, but only because they believed they would be the next targets of Mouzalon's assassins. Pachymeres' account implicates Michael VIII who was the *mezas konstablos*, and thus in command of the Latin mercenaries (including Karoulos).

¹¹⁴⁵ Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 159-161 (trans. Macrides 346-347, 351); Arsenios, *Testamentum*, 949-953; Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 134-137.

¹¹⁴⁶ Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent 254-259; Failler 1979: 154; Angold 1975: 80-95.

¹¹⁴⁷ Macrides 1981: 71.

¹¹⁴⁸ Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 93-94 (trans. van Dieten 109-111); Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 268-269. This form of excommunication allowed the emperor's name to be commemorated during the liturgy, and permitted the emperor to attend (standing behind the ambo) but only

from 1262 until 1267. In 1265 he had Arsenios removed from office on trumped up charges.¹¹⁴⁹ A tribunal, that Arsenios deemed to be illegal, was convened by Michael and swiftly declared the deposition of the absentee patriarch, who was exiled soon after.¹¹⁵⁰ Germanos III was then elevated to the patriarchal throne, but was considered an uncanonical appointment by Arsenios' supporters in the pro-Laskarid and monastic communities and soon tendered his resignation (1266). On 2 February 1267, the day of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, Michael's excommunication was officially absolved by the recently installed Patriarch Ioseph.¹¹⁵¹ Arsenios and his supporters cited canon law to reject the appointment of Ioseph, and Michael's absolution.¹¹⁵² Arsenios was excommunicated in turn. This cleavage was then exacerbated by Michael's stance in favour of uniting the Eastern and Western churches after the Second Council of Lyon.¹¹⁵³

Initially, Michael had been willing to accept his excommunicate status patiently and believed that Arsenios would soon readmit him to the church. According to Pachymeres, Michael sent mediators to enquire what penance would be sufficient for his absolution. When he received a response that Arsenios would not permit this, even if his own life was threatened,¹¹⁵⁴ Michael entreated him in person. However, Arsenios remained obstinate.

until the catechumens were asked to leave. For the details of the excommunication, see Rickelt 2011, with replete bibliography.

¹¹⁴⁹ Arsenios had supposedly omitted a psalm for the emperor from the morning liturgy, and allowed the sons of the former Sultan Izz al-din II to take communion and even bathe in holy water, despite being Muslims. Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent II, 336-337; Arsenios, *Testamentum* 956. The fraudulent nature of the charges is considered further in Shukurov 2016: 62. Angelov 2006: 197 n.16, follows Zachariadou 1964/65 in noting that some of the Sultan's sons and descendants were, in fact, recorded as baptised Christians. On Izz al-din II, see Failler 1981: 150-154.

¹¹⁵⁰ Nicol 1993: 45.

¹¹⁵¹ Installed in December 1266. Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent II, 396-399; Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 107-108.

¹¹⁵² Arsenios, *Testamentum*.

¹¹⁵³ On the council (1272-1274), see Geanakoplos 1953. On the persisting political fallout arising from Michael's stance, see Laiou 1972: esp. 21-36. Maxwell 2014: 181, has suggested that Michael's favourable stance in regard to the Union was also partly an attempt at atoning for the blinding of Ioannes IV. The suggestion is intriguing but the potential military and geo-political benefits of Union should not be minimised.

¹¹⁵⁴ Καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ὁ πατριάρχης καὶ πλείω τούτων, καὶ ὡς οὐδ' ἄν, εἴ τι καὶ νένοιτο, τὸν ἀφορισμὸν λύσειε, κἄν προσπειλῆ τὰ κακά, κἄν αὐτὸν θάνατον... Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 280-281.

Whenever Michael would ask him to name a specific penance Arsenios would cryptically respond ‘Do penance, and I will accept.’¹¹⁵⁵ Unable to apologise, or agree upon an *oikonomia* with which to lift the excommunication, Michael faced a political stalemate. He next resorted to the Theodosian ritual of repentance. He removed his crown and performed *proskynesis* before Arsenios, clutching at the latter’s knees when this humble entreaty was rejected.¹¹⁵⁶

Pachymeres’ account of the thirteenth-century ritual reveals a potential new feature, for the first time the imperial sword is mentioned as playing a part. After Michael had removed his crown Arsenios motioned to take the sword from him too, but the emperor would not allow it.¹¹⁵⁷ It is unclear how integral a function the sword played in imperial ceremonials before this point.¹¹⁵⁸ The sword held connotations of imperial justice alongside the obvious military implications of the imperial position. It was certainly well-represented in eleventh-century imperial numismatic iconography¹¹⁵⁹ and twelfth-century Angeloi propaganda. In the Angeloi cases it was connected with the celestial judge, St Michael, and with the just overthrow of Andronikos I.¹¹⁶⁰ Theophylaktos of Ohrid advised minimal use of the sword by emperors and associated this with emulation of God and the virtue of *philanthropia*.¹¹⁶¹ Pachymeres evidently considered the imagery of Michael’s refusal noteworthy, and Angelov believes that, had Michael given over his sword, he could have been regarded as having resigned from the imperial office.¹¹⁶² This interpretation was long

¹¹⁵⁵ «Ποίει τὴν θεραπείαν καὶ δέξομαι.» Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 280-281.

¹¹⁵⁶ Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 280-283.

¹¹⁵⁷ Καὶ οὕτω λέγοντα, τὴν σπάθην ἀποζώννυσθαι καὶ διδόναι, τῆς ἐκείνου διανοίας ἀποπειρώμενον. Ἐκείνου δὲ τὴν χεῖρα κατὰ σπουδὴν προτεινάντος, ἐφ’ ᾧ λαμβάνειν τὸ δῆθεν διδόμενον, μήπω τελέως καὶ τῆς ὀσφύος ἀπολυθέν, παλινωδῖαν τε ἄδειν τὸν βασιλέα καὶ ὡς ἐπιβούλῳ οἱ τῆς σφετέρας ζωῆς ὀνειδίζειν, εἰ οὕτω βούλεται. Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 282-283.

¹¹⁵⁸ On the imperial sword in late Byzantine ceremonial and its increased prominence in the ceremonial book of *Pseudo-Kodinos* see *Pseudo-Kodinos*, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov pp. 349-351 (*Studies*), noting that the sword was frequently associated with the candlestick that preceded the emperor in ceremonials, even in the eleventh/twelfth centuries.

¹¹⁵⁹ Hendy 1999: 174; Magdalino and Nelson 1982: 154-160.

¹¹⁶⁰ The sword was referred to by court orators as the ‘Sword of Tyrannicide’ and became one of the symbols of Andronikos’ downfall. For example: *Theodoros Balsamon*, ed. Horna 200-201; translated with commentary in Magdalino and Nelson 1982: 154-160; Choniates, *Orationes et epistulae*, ed. van Dieten 89.

¹¹⁶¹ Theophylaktos, *Opera*, ed. Gautier 208-209.

¹¹⁶² Angelov 2006: 195; Fögen 1997: 541-545.

understood in Western rituals of royal penance. Louis I's public penance and deposition at Soissons in 833, for example, involved the surrender of his sword and armour at the same time that he exchanged his royal attire for that of a penitent.¹¹⁶³ In Western thought, 'The ruler was responsible for the defence of those who were unable to defend themselves or to find some protector... A deposition of arms on the altar signified total surrender of honour and its instrument, military prowess.'¹¹⁶⁴ The symbolism of the gesture is therefore apposite to Michael's situation, and suggestive that his failure to uphold justice in relation to Ioannes had cost him dearly. According to a speech of Andronikos II that Pachymeres records, Arsenios had, in fact, suggested that Michael abdicate as penance for his sin.¹¹⁶⁵ The gesture may suggest a convergence of Western and Byzantine ritual practices by this time,¹¹⁶⁶ but the refusal was even more important as a statement of intent about the balance of power. Michael, despite appearing to seek sincere repentance, would not permit Arsenios to dictate the way in which he achieved it.

After several additional failed attempts to procure terms Michael abandoned these entreaties altogether and deposed Arsenios. His propagandists nevertheless continued to invoke the Davidic exemplar in order to provide a model for reconciliation with the church. In his fifth oration, composed c.1205-1207,¹¹⁶⁷ Manuel Holobolos played the role of Michael's spokesman to address the issue of sin and redemption. Michael confessed his 'sinfulness' to Holobolos and compared himself with a 'vessel of dishonour'.¹¹⁶⁸ Michael

¹¹⁶³ de Jong 1992: 29-30. Swords were also associated with the ceremonies of the Latin emperors of Constantinople: Baldwin I was preceded by an imperial sword-bearer at his coronation, and it was widely noted that Baldwin II left behind an imperial sword when he fled the city in 1261. Discussed in Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov 2013: 349-350.

¹¹⁶⁴ de Jong 1992: 45; Little 1979.

¹¹⁶⁵ Although the suggestion was not specifically linked with this incident and Arsenios' *Testamentum* makes no mention of this requirement. Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent II, 330-331; and esp. IV, 516-517; Arsenios, *Testamentum* 956-957. Angelov 2006: 196.

¹¹⁶⁶ To claim that this was a wholly new 'innovation' in Byzantine ritual, or that it was a ritual borrowed from Western practice, would be to make an argument from silence. We cannot be certain that a similar performance was not enacted earlier in Byzantine history but remained unrecorded, or that this was not a natural evolution of Byzantine ritual practices.

¹¹⁶⁷ Angelov 2006: 194-200.

¹¹⁶⁸ *Manuelis Holoboli Orationes*, ed. Treu p. 23; Angelov 2006: 199.

provided him with an exegesis on scriptural quotations, asserting that through faith in God all sins could be forgiven.¹¹⁶⁹ The exegesis invoked the sins committed by King David, quoted David's penitential Psalm,¹¹⁷⁰ and sought to position Michael as a 'New David' type figure.¹¹⁷¹ Parallels between the two were clearly articulated and Holobolos, mimicking other panegyrics from Michael's reign,¹¹⁷² drew attention to the similarly unlikely elevations of David and Michael in the face of conflict with their predecessors and a lack of successional precedence.¹¹⁷³ Rhetorical allusions to New Davids were well-known,¹¹⁷⁴ and espousing Davidic penitence via rhetorical compositions was an established practice.¹¹⁷⁵ However, Michael's use of the rhetoric was tenuous, for although he admitted to having sinned the exact nature of that sin remained unexpressed,¹¹⁷⁶ nor was canon law invoked to help to extricate him from his excommunicate limbo. Instead, as Angelov summarises, 'The special position of the imperial office within the tradition of Old Testament charismatic kingship was itself [adduced as] a reason why Palaiologos deserved a pardon for his sinful accession to the throne.'¹¹⁷⁷

¹¹⁶⁹ Angelov 2006: 200.

¹¹⁷⁰ *Manuelis Holoboli Orationes* ed. Treu p. 27.

¹¹⁷¹ *Manuelis Holoboli Orationes* ed. Treu p. 24-26, quoting Psalms 37:5; 96:5; 50:3. Angelov 2006: 201-202.

¹¹⁷² Angelov 2007; Angelov 2006: 202-203; Macrides 1994: 273-274.

¹¹⁷³ Angelov 2006: 202.

¹¹⁷⁴ Basileios I and Manuel I are two emperors who were prominently and consistently associated with the biblical king in official rhetoric, art, and other forms of propaganda. Angelov 2007: 128; Dagron 2003: 198-201; Brubaker 1999: 147, 184-189; Magdalino 1993: esp. 413-470; Markopoulos 1992; Maguire 1988: 91-93.

¹¹⁷⁵ Andronikos I may have employed an identical strategy in the previous century: another of the similarities between the two emperors and their modes of accession. Choniates' *Historia* employs an unflattering Davidic comparison of Andronikos I's usurpation with David's abortive attempt on the life of Nabal (1 Samuel 25). Choniates says that *his* chosen comparison was repeated to men of 'eloquence and learning' (λόγου καὶ σοφίας) by the emperor at court. He also confirms that this was in order to explain Andronikos' periods of exile and his life more generally. Eustathios of Thessalonike, preceding Choniates, instead employed the story of David and Bathsheba which was associated with David's repentance. Choniates' choice of Davidic story may therefore have been a deliberate corruption of official rhetoric invoking David's repentance, and which was more faithfully recorded by Eustathios' more flattering comparison. If the theory is correct, the emperor evidently exploited the Davidic model to rhetorically pardon (through an exegesis) the circumstances of his accession, in an almost identical fashion to Michael VIII. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 333-334 (trans. Magoulias 184); Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville-Jones 52-53.

¹¹⁷⁶ Michael VIII concealed the precise circumstances of his accession to sole rule in his later autobiographical accounts as well. The *Vita Sua*, for example, asserts that he was 'persuaded' to accept the throne, mentions the 'jealousy' of Theodoros II towards Michael, and conveniently ignores Ioannes' very existence. *Imperatoris Michaeli Palaeologi de vita sua*, ed. Grégoire 453-455 (trans. Dennis 1243-1244).

¹¹⁷⁷ Angelov 2006: 204. See also, Laiou 1972: 17.

In 1267, when Michael's absolution was finally granted, the emperor again prostrated himself at Hagia Sophia. In sight of members of the senate and people, he read out a list of his sins, finally including the blinding of Ioannes, and asked the assembled bishops and the patriarch for forgiveness.¹¹⁷⁸ To commemorate his absolution, the Feast of Purification was celebrated in the church each year thereafter, an annual reiteration that Michael's penance had been paid despite the continued objections of the Arsenites.¹¹⁷⁹

Following Michael's death (1282), Andronikos had to contend with the continued political and legitimist consequences of the schism. Michael's perceived illegal actions in deposing Arsenios and repudiating the excommunication, and the belief that Arsenios had called for him to abdicate, had imparted distinctly political overtones that 'put in question the legitimacy of the Palaiologan dynasty born in sin and excommunication.'¹¹⁸⁰ Pro-Laskarid conspiracies and political opposition were a recurrent problem. Soon after Ioannes was blinded in 1261 the people of the frontier zone at Trikokkia revolted against Michael.¹¹⁸¹ A congenitally blind child was found and proclaimed to be Ioannes, on whose behalf the people swore to fight.¹¹⁸² The revolt was short-lived,¹¹⁸³ but Michael's political opponents were treated increasingly harshly thereafter.¹¹⁸⁴ Manuel Holobolos, later restored to favour, was subjected to mutilation and public degradation along with others connected to the Laskarid faction.¹¹⁸⁵ Yet the Laskarid name remained an important rallying point for future rebellions against the Palaiologoi.¹¹⁸⁶ Another Pseudo-Ioannes appeared at the court of

¹¹⁷⁸ Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent II, 396-399; Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 107-108 (trans. van Dieten 117-118).

¹¹⁷⁹ Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent II, 572-573.

¹¹⁸⁰ Angelov 2007: 369.

¹¹⁸¹ Bryer 1988-1989: 172, locates Trikokkia to the south of Tarsia, on the right bank of the Sangarios.

¹¹⁸² Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 258-265.

¹¹⁸³ Korobeinikov 2014: 237; Laiou 1972: 22.

¹¹⁸⁴ Shawcross 2008: 203-227.

¹¹⁸⁵ Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 258-259; II, 502-505. Holobolos had been considered in disgrace, and exiled to a monastery, from 1261 until his restoration in 1265. He was removed from office again in 1273 when he voiced objections to Michael's proposed unionist policies with the West. Fryde 2000: 88; Macrides 1980: 17 and n.19.

¹¹⁸⁶ Shawcross 2008: 203, remarks that the cause was so prominent that 'from generation to generation, the name of Laskaris remained on the lips of those who sought to take a stand against the Palaiologoi.'

Charles of Anjou c.1273.¹¹⁸⁷ Late in 1305 the conspiracy of Ioannes Drimys, who claimed Laskarid connections and popular support from the Arsenites, was uncovered and crushed in Constantinople.¹¹⁸⁸ Even Arsenios was linked with plots against the Palaiologoi, including the Bithynian uprising in 1262, and the attempt on Michael's life in 1265.¹¹⁸⁹ After Arsenios' death in 1273, the Arsenites continued to engage in anti-Palaiologan endeavours.¹¹⁹⁰

To counter this, Andronikos followed a careful policy of pacification via political reconciliation and proclaimed the dynasty's remorse for the initial sin.¹¹⁹¹ Exemplifying these concerns, his first official act was the repudiation of Michael's unpopular unionist policies, returning the empire to 'Orthodoxy'.¹¹⁹² The pro-unionist Patriarch Ioannes XI resigned within two weeks of Andronikos' accession¹¹⁹³ and Andronikos received high praise for his stance, being named a 'New Constantine' and 'New Zorobabel'.¹¹⁹⁴

From the outset of his reign, Andronikos' coinage preserved and enhanced the aura of imperial penance that had been promoted by his father.¹¹⁹⁵ Michael's Virgin Blachernitissa protecting the walls of Constantinople was retained on the obverse of Andronikos' class I gold *hyperpyron*, suggesting the piety and divine favour enjoyed by the Palaiologoi. More importantly, the reverse portrayed Christ standing holding a bible and

¹¹⁸⁷ Geanakoplos 1959: 217-218.

¹¹⁸⁸ The sources indicate that a substantial number of persons were arrested throughout the city, not just Arsenite monks and prominent members of the conspiracy. Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent IV, 652-653. On the plot, see Failler 1996; Ševčenko 1952: esp. 149-150 and notes. See also, Nicol 1993: 104-105; Macrides 1981: 71 n.25; Laiou 1972: 197. It should be noted that the chronology and details of a certain Glykys' involvement in the conspiracy are problematic. It has been suggested that Glykys is to be identified with Drimys, although this connection is not certain and Glykys may have led a separate conspiracy. *The Correspondence of Athanasius I of Constantinople*, ed. Maffry Talbot 258-263 (*Letter 103*), 430-431 (*Commentary*). See also, Ševčenko 1952: 148-149; Macrides 1981: 71 n.25.

¹¹⁸⁹ Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent II, 370-371; Arsenios, *Testamentum* 956. See also Tinnefeld 2012: 150; Macrides 1981: 73.

¹¹⁹⁰ Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent II, 504-505.

¹¹⁹¹ Laiou 1972: 20, notes that Andronikos relied heavily upon the pro-Arsenite party in organising his defence of Asia Minor. Reconciliation with these figures was crucial to the security of the empire.

¹¹⁹² Nicol 1993: 94-95; Laiou 1972: 21, 33.

¹¹⁹³ Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent III, 24-25. See also, Nicol 1993: 95; Laiou 1972: 33.

¹¹⁹⁴ Angelov 2007: 99-100; Laiou 1972: 36; Hilsdale 2014: 187.

¹¹⁹⁵ Grierson 1999: esp. 126-137, 162.

blessing the crown that sat atop the head of a kneeling Andronikos.¹¹⁹⁶ Andronikos' pose emulated other depictions of *proskynesis* in this period and reveals his adoption of the imagery of a supplicant before Christ.¹¹⁹⁷ The design was a modification of an earlier coronation issue that showed Michael and Andronikos kneeling before Saint Michael, who blessed them in a similar fashion.¹¹⁹⁸ Andronikos' iconography retained the essential features of Michael's, but the presence of Christ enhanced the symbolic avowal of penance and supplication that typified those earlier types. His respective joint issues with the co-emperors Michael IX, and Andronikos III, also portray them kneeling before Christ.¹¹⁹⁹ Imperial *proskynesis* was evidently a distinctive feature of early Palaiologan iconography.¹²⁰⁰ Under Michael VIII it may have been perceived as part of his broader redemptive efforts and recalled his use of the penitential ritual before Arsenios and Ioseph. Under Andronikos the design conveyed dynastic intent and remorse in light of the continued questions about Palaiologan legitimacy. Andronikos would neither restore the Laskarids nor wholly disavow his father, but he and the dynasty could appear contrite.

The most salient of Andronikos' acts of conciliatory atonement occurred c.1290. As he travelled to Asia Minor, making preparations for a military expedition to bolster his flagging reputation,¹²⁰¹ Andronikos took time to visit Ioannes IV who was then nearly forty

¹¹⁹⁶ The attribution to Andronikos II of all coins of this type has been subject to much scrutiny. Good general summations are to be found in Grierson 1982: 284-285, 337 n.291; Grierson 1999a: 12; Grierson 1999b: 126-137.

¹¹⁹⁷ The well-known portrait of Theodoros Metochites at the Chora Church in Constantinople, for example, depicts a kneeling form of *proskynesis*. Ševčenko 2012.

¹¹⁹⁸ Grierson 1982: 284; Hilsdale 2014: 189.

¹¹⁹⁹ Protonotarios 1976; Bendall 1995.

¹²⁰⁰ Hilsdale 2014: 137 n.120, comments that depictions of imperial *proskynesis*, in fact, became *more* prominent under the Palaiologan emperors and were 'extremely rare before the later Byzantine period'. Michael's kneeling form of *proskynesis* was also employed for a statue he commissioned of him donating the city of Constantinople to the archangel Michael, which was erected atop a column outside the Holy Apostles: Talbot 1993: esp. 258-260.

¹²⁰¹ On the expedition of 1290/1291, see Korobeinikov 2014: 258-261, and esp. 260, who in fact asserts that it was 'hardly a military expedition. The emperor's route lay far from the most dangerous parts of the Byzantine eastern border... Andronikos II's expedition was only [to visit] the renewed fortifications along a very small part of the border.' It appears to have been a politically calculated attempt to bolster the emperor's wavering military credentials. A visit to Ioannes IV at the same time would therefore be in keeping with the emperor's

years old and living as a monk at the Fortress of Dakibyze.¹²⁰² The extraordinary visit was remarked upon by Pachymeres and Gregoras. The former provided a summary account, introducing the event as merely an incidental occurrence.¹²⁰³ In this version, Andronikos spoke kindly to Ioannes and endeavoured, through his own gentle actions, to mitigate some of the wrongs that his father had inflicted upon him. Andronikos reportedly sought Ioannes' forgiveness, an acknowledgement that he was ruling nobly and honestly, and after easing his mind about Ioannes' wellbeing continued into Asia Minor.¹²⁰⁴ Gregoras' version is three times the length, and more developed in its employment of political symbolism and the supposed personal motivations of the emperor. His narrative, further removed from the event than Pachymeres', reveals that the story attained certain propagandist qualities. Gregoras did not introduce it as an incidental happening, but instead asserted that Andronikos was motivated by the memory of his father's transgression against Ioannes. Although Andronikos had been an infant at the time, unable to express his soul's desires and intentions, he was now tormented by his 'conscience' (συνειδήσεως) because it had been for his benefit that Michael had 'committed a great injustice' (ἀδικίας) by removing Ioannes from the succession. He feared that 'justice' might turn against him, and that he might be similarly deprived of *basileia* and eyesight. After considering divine justice, we are informed that Andronikos tried to find an appropriate 'remedy' for Ioannes' wound, met with and consoled him, and ensured that Ioannes would have everything he needed to be comfortable in perpetuity.¹²⁰⁵

As Nicol concludes of the meeting, '...the propaganda value of the visit was high,

concerns about his own political image, and being able to claim that Ioannes supported his policies would have been a political boost.

¹²⁰² On the Marmara, near Nikomedia.

¹²⁰³ 'Ἄλλ' ὃ με μικροῦ παρήλθε πρότερον γεγονός... 'But I almost omitted what had happened before this.' Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent III, 118-119.

¹²⁰⁴ Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent III, 118-119.

¹²⁰⁵ Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 173-174.

and if Andronikos could say that Laskaris had in fact acknowledged him as emperor then the effort had not been wasted.¹²⁰⁶ Although Pachymeres' description reads like the visit was hastily arranged and the emperor just happened to be in the area, Gregoras' attribution of deliberate intent transformed the story into a moralising lesson of imperial repentance worthy of emulation. Gregoras' additional emphasis on justice is precisely what the occasion would have intended to convey, and exactly what the Arsenites and the pro-Laskarid faction had been calling for since December 1261. We may wonder how pervasive Gregoras' version was, but it would certainly have been espoused by Andronikos' supporters as evidence of his just rulership. The very idea of a meeting was loaded with connotations of imperial remorse, and showcased the virtues of truth and justice that were inseparable from supposedly genuine expressions of this. Where Michael had avoided an audience with Ioannes and most-often fell short of acknowledging responsibility for the blinding,¹²⁰⁷ Andronikos appeared forthright in addressing the issue, albeit eight years into his reign. He too sought to adopt the guise of a conciliatory figure seeking to redeem the dynasty by close association with the last surviving Laskarid. Ioannes, virtually absent from the histories after his deposition, was being officially revived for a political purpose. Through Ioannes' supposed acknowledgement of Andronikos those still loyal to the Laskarids, including the Arsenites, were being induced to look favourably upon the Palaiologoi and bring an end to factionalism.

Ioannes was even closer associated with the Palaiologoi after his death in 1304/1305.¹²⁰⁸ Andronikos had Ioannes' remains translated (1305) to the monastery of St Demetrios in Constantinople, which had been founded by Georgios Palaiologos in the

¹²⁰⁶ Nicol 1993: 99.

¹²⁰⁷ Michael's autobiographical works produced after his absolution do not mention the blinding of Ioannes IV at all: *Imperatoris Michaeli Palaeologi de vita sua*, ed. Grégoire 453-455 (trans. Dennis 1243-1244).

¹²⁰⁸ Ioannes' date of death is unknown, but the suggestion of 1305 on the basis of Drimys' espousal of Laskarid dynastic ties as a justification for his plot is highly plausible: Ševčenko 1952: 149. On the date of Ioannes' death, see Tinnefeld 2012: 152 n.60.

twelfth century and recently restored by Michael VIII.¹²⁰⁹ As Macrides suggests, ‘The presence of his relic there may indicate a conciliatory gesture... to appease the anti-Palaiologan elements in the city.’¹²¹⁰ The circumstances in which the body was transferred to the monastery remain obscure.¹²¹¹ Discretion was likely a deliberate choice by the emperor, for Ioannes’ supporters may not have looked kindly upon his tampering with the relics.¹²¹² However, the Laskarid emperor’s association with a Palaiologan foundation, one greatly honoured by Michael, could not have been missed and suggested a tacit relationship between the dynasties. The presence of Ioannes’ relics must have appeared like a restoration of his status or even a co-option into the Palaiologan dynasty, as an honorary figure at least. Later, his relic acquired a saintly reputation and developed a cult status in the city, garnering veneration from pilgrims like Stephen of Novgorod (1348/1349), and others at least until the fifteenth century.¹²¹³

Arsenios’ relics were also posthumously honoured. Long before the end of the schism, in 1284, his remains were translated from the island of Prokonnesos and deposited at the right of the *bema* in Hagia Sophia after an *adventus* through Constantinople.¹²¹⁴ According to Pachymeres this had been agreed upon at a meeting held at Easter in Adramyttion in order to satisfy Arsenite complaints about the injustice of Arsenios’ deposition and exile.¹²¹⁵ The emperor, senate, patriarch and clergy, attended the ceremony, providing full honours to Arsenios’ memory. The translation may even have occasioned the

¹²⁰⁹ On the monastery and the translation of the remains, see Janin 1969: 93; Macrides 1981: 71-72; Shawcross 2008: 221; Talbot 2010: 271-282. Michael’s *typikon* for the monastery has also been preserved, see *Michaeli Palaeologi de vita sua*, ed. Grégoire (trans. Dennis).

¹²¹⁰ Macrides 1981: 72; Shawcross 2008.

¹²¹¹ Macrides 1981: 72, questions if Ioannes may have been associated with the monastery in his lifetime, meaning he died in Constantinople.

¹²¹² For the discrete handling of the relics, see Shepard 2012: 75. On the importance of these imperial relics, see Shawcross 2008.

¹²¹³ Stephen of Novgorod, in *Russian Travellers*, ed. Majeska 38-39. See also, Ševčenko 1953: 173, 175; Macrides 1981: 72-73; Shawcross 2008: 218-221, 224-227; Shepard 2012: 75; Hilsdale 2014: 187.

¹²¹⁴ Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent III, 94-99. See also, Macrides 1981: 74-75; Shawcross 2008; Shepard 2012: 74. The body was later moved to the convent of St Andrew in Krisei by the Arsenite supporter Theodora Raoulaina. Talbot 2015.

¹²¹⁵ Laiou 1972: 34-35; Laurent 1945: 245-246.

composition of the *akolouthia*, memorialising Arsenios' office.¹²¹⁶ His relic too attained a cult status and was venerated regularly during Andronikos' reign.¹²¹⁷

Shawcross has argued convincingly that, in relocating the relics to Constantinople and allowing their veneration, Andronikos sought to prevent their use as focal-points for plots against the regime. By appropriating the figureheads of the anti-Palaiologan movement, and having their cults celebrated where he could exercise some control over them, Andronikos was attempting to neutralise their potential subversive influence.¹²¹⁸ Finally, in 1310 Andronikos used the relic of Arsenios in a revisionist effort to redeem his father. It was brought to the sanctuary of Hagia Sophia, seated on a throne, and a decree of Michael's absolution was placed in its hand and read aloud by Patriarch Niphon. The staged ceremony provided a posthumous absolution by the principal opponent of Michael and the dynasty, a reconciliation of these two dead figures and their supporters, and a moment of closure on Arsenite claims against Palaiologan legitimacy.¹²¹⁹ The sin of the dynasty's foundation was absolved.

Chapter Summary

The accession of a usurper-emperor connoted, if only to a minority of observers, the accession of a guilty party. The measure of culpability varied, but, at the very least, this individual had broken sacred oaths to the emperor whom he had overthrown. The potential long-term political consequences were grave, as exemplified by the fifty-year Arsenite schism and frequent intrigues against the Palaiologoi. Elevations through bloodshed accrued, to a greater or lesser extent, the additional charge of bloodguilt. These misdeeds were

¹²¹⁶ Macrides 1981: 75.

¹²¹⁷ Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent III, 96-97, states that the coffin was opened for veneration of the relic every third day of the week. See also, Shawcross 2008.

¹²¹⁸ Shawcross 2008.

¹²¹⁹ Gregoras, *Historia*, Schopen I, 261-262. See also, Tinnefeld 2012: 160; Shawcross 2008: 233-234; Hussey 1990: 253.

assuredly non-trivial, they could not easily be dismissed, and might irreparably stain an emperor's public image in the histories and wider contemporary thought; potentially leading to the designation *tyrannos* and his overthrow. To help mitigate this risk, the 'facts' of sin and moral culpability had to be established. Public and private displays of repentance, accompanied by strategies for redistributing blame, provided routes by which wrongdoing could be acknowledged, communicated, and excised.

In embracing the ideology of the repentant emperor, a usurper began the process of atonement. The fate of the immortal soul was endangered, but Old Testament and late-Roman prototypes provided precedents for imperial redemption. Christian theology permitted and encouraged these efforts, and usurpers were never considered lost causes. Repentance was not beholden to a particular format, but ritual penitence in the fashion of David and Theodosius provided a ready visual and structural arrangement for its 'communication'. This ritual was embraced, willingly or unwillingly, throughout the empire's history. The church was often able to obtain concessions in exchange for its moral and political support of emperors utilising these rituals. Less formalised penances, proscribed and/or self-imposed, were also commonly embraced by emperors. These often took the form of works of *philanthropia* in emulation and propitiation of the divine, and offered evidence of remorse. Repentance could even be associated with policy and was potentially articulated through numismatic iconography, a medieval mass media product. Expressions of remorse and humility in the face of God and society, sought to minimise hostile claims concerning the immorality of an accession or rule. The acknowledgement of guilt and remorse showcased the imperial virtues of truth and justice, counterintuitively providing an opportunity for positive propaganda and a strengthening of authority. The ideologically immutable monolith of the imperial persona here permitted an emotional display in the hope of courting popular approval and thus creating legitimising *consensus*.

When a new dynasty was widely believed to have been born from sin, a successor might also perform acts of atonement for the founder's transgressions. These actions strove to minimise the politico-ideological consequences and factionalism that arose from usurpation. Even more than the repentant usurper, repentant successors embodied truth and justice, for they were righting wrongs that they had not personally committed. In doing so they seemingly appropriated the cause of their chief adversaries as their own and thus diverted potential charges of hypocritically and unfairly benefiting from their predecessor's actions. Dynastic continuity might be suggested, or imposed, in the hope of propitiating the wronged faction and facilitating political reconciliation. In the cases of Leon VI and Andronikos II, the dynasties their predecessors had displaced were granted honour and symbolically subsumed into the new dynasty through the translation of imperial relics, personal association, and site-associations. The enduring influence of the dynastic principle and hereditary rights on imperial policy were made evident through these actions, criticisms of the regime on this basis were being forestalled through the processes of integration. The charisma of, and loyalty to, the old regime were being appropriated for the purposes of the new. At the same time, the respective choice of distinctly Macedonian and Palaiologan sites as resting places for the imperial remains reiterated that the new dynasties were firmly in control.

Changing ideologies in the ninth and tenth centuries prompted increased emphasis and scrutiny of these acts of repentance. The initial development was potentially a result of early ninth-century Western ecclesiastical ideology being imported to and embraced in Byzantium. Byzantine ecclesiastical conceptions of emperors, with a focus on truth and humility that also characterised penitential acts, progressively found expression at this point. The documentation of repentance dramatically increased in the histories produced from the early-tenth century onwards, reaching a zenith in the political turbulence of the mid-

eleventh, and retaining importance even under the Palaiologoi. Due to literary developments taking place in that period, guilt and repentance concurrently became major considerations in the construction of narratives that progressively concerned themselves with imperial biography, as a source of *Kaiserkritik* or praise. In the literature, sincerity revealed an emperor's character, swiftly becoming a hallmark of 'good' emperors. Tearful displays, closely associated with ceremonial acts of repentance and symbolic of earnestness, also became marks of authenticity; their corruption a sign of misrule.

In a society whose prevailing political ideology espoused meritocratic and elective principles, both popular and divine, as the basis for *basileia*; where the position was administrative, and popularity essential to political survival, a new emperor had to prove himself worthy of the title. Popular perception was the foremost consideration in the admission of guilt, its manner of expiation, and the way in which it was subsequently recorded. The assumption of imperial power could not eradicate wrongdoing, nor popular memory. Real power, popularity, and Christian morality might allow misdeeds to be amended and overcome, but 'genuine remorse' was deemed necessary. Contrite emperors could be saved, the unrepentant or false were 'justifiably' agitated against and doomed to hell.

VIII. THE DEFEATED AND DETHRONED

We have seen that the process of challenging a reigning emperor necessitated and acquired rituals that were designed to communicate the legitimisation of power and to expiate guilt, when deemed necessary. The successful outcome of a coup, or a defence by the existing regime, also came to require communicative rituals. Reconciliatory gestures, capital punishments, or victory celebrations, served to glorify and legitimise the successful party, and to demean the conquered. The present chapter considers the histories, symbolisms, and communicative-legitimist functions, of these rituals and punishments as used against defeated usurpers and dethroned emperors. Some provisional conclusions about the projection of imperial authority in regard to how regimes sought to create, present, and (re)define the status of rivals and the political circumstances of imperial victories will be suggested.

Reconciliations

The frequency with which rituals of reconciliation between emperors and conspirators recur in the histories leaves little doubt as to their importance throughout the political life of the empire. Yet they have received only minimal attention from Byzantinists.¹²²⁰ Nevertheless, trends and variations in these rituals' formats and ideopolitical significance can be identified in relation to structural changes in the empire's internal politics, and some provisional comments may be made about how they were understood by the Byzantines themselves.

¹²²⁰ Grünbart 2008 and Vučetić 2013, are the principal works. Both have limited scope and address particular examples taken from the tenth and twelfth centuries respectively. Grünbart provides a thorough analysis of the source material for the reconciliation of Bardas Skleros and Basileios II. Vučetić approaches a broader topic, the use of *deditiones* (a contemporary Western format of reconciliatory ritual) for several reconciliations under Manuel I, and proposes Manuel's involvement with the crusader states as a possible source for the introduction of this ritual into Byzantium. On *deditiones*, see below.

The initial response to a conspiracy usually involved an attempt to dissuade participants from rebellion, and even conflicts involving open war featured attempted settlements. Byzantine diplomacy, concern about *asphaleia*, and the ideology of Christian rulership, ensured that resolutions were often attempted. Clemency was a fundamental virtue, encouraging emperors to imitate Christ in bearing patiently slander and offenses, and by punishing mildly.¹²²¹ Reconciliation was built into the practice of rulership itself. Traditionally, upon his accession, an emperor would pardon many political prisoners and exiles who had fallen into disgrace under his predecessor. Justin I pardoned Appion, Diogenianus, and Philoxenus, officials exiled by Anastasius.¹²²² Michael I reportedly followed a ‘prevailing custom of clemency’ in overturning Leon V’s exile.¹²²³ And Ioannes I restored many of Nikephoros II’s political exiles.¹²²⁴ Official pardons typically coincided with the occasion of religious holidays; especially Easter,¹²²⁵ which provided connotations of rebirth, resurrection, and political renewal. A similar practice *mutatis mutandis* is known to have characterised the instigation of popular rebellions in Constantinople. Prisons were immediate targets, and prisoners were informally pardoned by the instigators to fight for their cause.¹²²⁶ Like the pardon of prisoners during a revolt, pardons at the outset of a reign were more practical than virtuous, for they might enable long-running disputes to be ended or procure influential support for a fledgling regime. Nikoulitzas Delphinas who, after his failed revolt, wrote to Romanos IV to gain leave to return, demonstrates that these opportunities were eagerly embraced. Nikoulitzas was disappointed, however, that all he

¹²²¹ On clemency as an imperial virtue, see Dmitriev 2015: 10-11. It was always a standard theme in advice literature: see, for example, Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij pp.57, 93, 94; Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Vasilikos Andrias*, ed. Hunger and Ševčenko pp.54-55, 125.

¹²²² Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn 337 (trans. Jeffreys 231).

¹²²³ ...ἀπολύεται ὁ Λέων τῆς ὑπερορίας κατὰ τὸ ἐπικρατήσαν ἔθος χρηστότητος ἕνεκεν τοῖς Ῥωμαίων βασιλεῦσι, καὶ τῆς θυγῆς κατὰγεται. *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 12; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 22-23.

¹²²⁴ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 285 (trans. Wortley 272).

¹²²⁵ Maleon 2010a: 10.

¹²²⁶ Kaldellis 2015: 120-125, 128-134; Cheynet 1990: 159.

gained from his pardon was the promotion of his son Gregoras to the rank of *protospatharios*, and an increased salary for his other son Pankratos.¹²²⁷ Ingratitude aside, the reconciliation was beneficial for both parties: Nikoulitzas and his family profited from the connection, Romanos gained loyalists.

Wartime measures of reconciliation were less low-key, but the narratives are typically more concerned with the political outcome of these events than the processes involved. Nevertheless, the essential stages of the ritual format, the ideological significance of which remained intact with relatively few changes throughout the period of study, can be traced.

Constantius II's resolution of the usurpation of Vetranio (350) was the first significant reconciliation in Roman history. Vetranio's proclamation by the troops of Illyricum on 1 March was ostensibly a response to the more serious usurpation of Magnentius, which precipitated the murder of Constans.¹²²⁸ Another usurpation, Nepotianus', was quashed after just twenty-eight days when Magnentius' agents murdered him and his mother in Rome.¹²²⁹ Vetranio's motives remain unclear,¹²³⁰ yet he had, or claimed to have, the support of Constantius' sister Constantina,¹²³¹ whose role has prompted conflicting statements about the relationship between Vetranio's revolt and the internal-politics of the Constantinian dynasty: was she trying to help Constantius, or displace him?

¹²²⁷ Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij p.72-73.

¹²²⁸ Magnentius was proclaimed on 18 January at Augustodunum. On the historical circumstances of these usurpations, see Dearn 2003; Drinkwater 2000; Vanderspoel 1995: 84-85.

¹²²⁹ Nepotianus proclaimed himself emperor when he entered Rome with his supporters on 3 June 350, defeating the *Praefectus urbi*, a loyalist of Maxentius in the process. He was killed on 30 June 350 when Maxentius dispatched the *Magister Officiorum*, Marcellinus, against him. For details, see Vanderspoel 1995: 85.

¹²³⁰ Bleckmann 1994, and Drinkwater 2000, propose that he was acting purely as a self-interested usurper, whereas Dearn 2003 considers Vetranio to have consistently presented himself as a loyal and subordinate colleague of Constantius. Dearn 2003: esp. 180-183, draws attention to the use of a wreath in the numismatic iconography of Vetranio, which contrasts with the diadem - denoting seniority - worn by Constantius. The choice of insignia is believed to have connoted Vetranio's efforts to espouse his deference to Constantius, and was a consistent element on his issues.

¹²³¹ Constantina's involvement is especially prominently mentioned in the fragments of an *Arian History*, collected and translated in: Philostorgius, *Church History*, trans. Amidon 220 (*Appendix 7*). Constantina is also named as Constantia in the sources. Here I follow the prevailing naming conventions.

Or was she simply being used?¹²³² Whatever Vetranio and Constantina's motives, it appears that Constantius offered support to Vetranio while concluding his own campaigns in the east. Funds were sent to bolster Vetranio's flagging opposition, and later narratives falsely asserted that a diadem was sent by Constantius in acceptance of Vetranio's proclamation as *Augustus*.¹²³³ Yet, by summer Vetranio had allied with Magnentius, and together they approached Constantius with a proposal. Constantius would retain seniority, but recognise the usurpers as co-*Augusti*. Constantius would marry Magnentius' daughter, and Magnentius would marry Constantina. Constantius rejected the proposal and marched into Illyricum in late autumn.¹²³⁴ His troops met no resistance from Vetranio, and supposedly took him by surprise at Serdica.¹²³⁵

Weeks later, on 25 December, the two figures appeared before their combined forces at Naissus to enact the public divestiture and retirement of Vetranio. This peaceful settlement of hostilities was then without parallel in Roman history and garnered exorbitant praise in official panegyrics.¹²³⁶ According to the *Chronicon Paschale*,

[Constantius] received Vetranio with great honour... he set up a dais high in the plain, and in the presence of the army and with Vetranio at his side he gave a speech in which he said that it was fitting for the state that power should be held by the same man who had received it from the emperors who were his forebears and that it also benefitted the state to have public affairs properly administered by only one authority... As for Vetranio... Constantius divested him of the purple robe... and at the same time entertained him at his own table...¹²³⁷

Zonaras adds that,

...after he [Vetranio] had stripped off the marks of imperium, Vetranio, in

¹²³² The main arguments concerning Constantina's involvement are summarised, with bibliography, in Dearn 2003.

¹²³³ Philostorgius, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Bidez III, 22 (trans. Amidon 57).

¹²³⁴ Vanderspoel 1995: 85-86, with references.

¹²³⁵ Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 38.

¹²³⁶ On the then singular nature of the settlement, see Drinkwater 2000: 155. On the praise for the settlement in panegyric, see Dearn 2003: 176; Vanderspoel 1995: 86.

¹²³⁷ *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. Dindorf I, 539-540. Translated adapted from, Philostorgius, *Church History*, trans. Amidon 218 (*Appendix 7*). See also, Sozomen, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, ed. Bidez et al. 198-201: providing essentially the same details, in abbreviated form.

the garb of a commoner, embraced the emperor's feet. And Constantius embraced Vetranio, called him 'father', and, offering his hand to him and supporting him (since he was elderly), made him his dinner companion.¹²³⁸

Scholarship has traditionally followed the sources in believing Vetranio's divestiture an unexpected betrayal achieved through bribery and rhetorical prowess exploiting the military's historic loyalty to the Constantinian dynasty.¹²³⁹ However, the image of spontaneity which served to flatter the dynasty's continued popularity, and Constantius' shrewd leadership in the face of challengers, must be suspected.

Drinkwater proposes an alternate reading. Constantius' uncontested access to Illyricum was too miraculous to be accurate.¹²⁴⁰ Vetranio was an experienced general unlikely to have neglected the principal access point into his territory. The fact that negotiations with Constantius had been undertaken before the appearance at Naissus,¹²⁴¹ that Vetranio's partisans did not challenge his resignation, and that he did not hear about mass bribes, in fact, suggests a pre-arranged and highly choreographed sequence of events taking place.¹²⁴² The *Augusti* had travelled together for a week before the reconciliation-divestiture, presumably both wearing imperial attire and claiming titulature. Vetranio began the ceremony wearing his insignia and was thus treated as a colleague at the outset. Although the 'ritual divestiture of a defeated leader had been associated with the army in the fourth century',¹²⁴³ can we be certain that Vetranio's divestiture was intended as that of a defeated usurper? His *proskynesis* was a traditional sign of respect shown to a senior emperor, and an expected one considering Vetranio's retirement left Constantius as the sole 'legitimate' emperor, for the first time. Rather than a forced humiliation, the divestiture-retirement could

¹²³⁸ Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 38 (trans. Banchich and Lane 163-164). Translation adapted.

¹²³⁹ Vanderspoel 1995: 85-86, for example, summarises how Constantius 'dispossessed Vetranio of his throne by deceit and oratory.'

¹²⁴⁰ Philostorgius, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Bidez III.24 (trans. Amidon 58).

¹²⁴¹ This is stated explicitly by Sozomen, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, ed. Bidez et al. 198-201.

¹²⁴² Drinkwater 2000: esp. 155-157.

¹²⁴³ McCormick 1986: 128.

be interpreted as a wholly voluntary act, especially as Constantius' gestures showed deference and respect in return. The staging before the troops was not intended to degrade Vetranio, but to suggest their involvement in providing authorising *consensus* for his retirement, just as they had been responsible for promoting him.¹²⁴⁴ Furthermore, their transferral of loyalty to Constantius, allegedly on the basis of his dynastic appointment and aversion to polyarchy,¹²⁴⁵ was preceded and authorised by Vetranio's presence and actions. Rather than an unforeseen divestiture, the whole sequence makes more sense if interpreted as a negotiated settlement between colleagues celebrating a 'handover' of power. Where a forced humiliation may have divided loyalties, a respectful reconciliation-retirement removed Vetranio whilst engendering unity. The fact that the iconography of Vetranio's coinage consistently demonstrated his subordination to Constantius has been interpreted as further evidence that he anticipated his own abdication, 'an event not forced... but expected and orchestrated.'¹²⁴⁶

The reconciliation of Bardas Skleros and Basileios II (c.989-991)¹²⁴⁷ provides the next detailed account of ritual procedures. It employed similar rites to establish Basileios as sole emperor.¹²⁴⁸ Skleros' usurpation had succeeded that of Bardas Phokas when the latter's troops, and widow, chose him as successor.¹²⁴⁹ Basileios sought a diplomatic resolution to a conflict that might continue for years. In exchange for the cessation of hostilities and divestiture, Skleros was granted assurance and the rank of *kouropalates*, second only to Basileios himself. Furthermore, his supporters were exempted from punishment.¹²⁵⁰

The receipt of assurance had always been a significant element of negotiations, but

¹²⁴⁴ Drinkwater 2000: 157.

¹²⁴⁵ Zosimus, *Histoire Nouvelle*, 2.44.2-4.

¹²⁴⁶ Dearn 2003: 170.

¹²⁴⁷ The exact date is contentious, but the reconciliation certainly occurred before 6 March 991 (Skleros' death).

¹²⁴⁸ On the sources, and the procedure of this reconciliation, see Grünbart 2008.

¹²⁴⁹ April/May 989. For chronology, see Holmes 2005: 240-246.

¹²⁵⁰ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 36-39; ed. Renauld I, 16 (trans. Sewter 42); Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 338-339 (trans. Wortley 321); Yahya of Antioch, ed. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev II, 430-431.

Basileios' offer of titulature was more important, for it suggested that he believed himself incapable of victory.¹²⁵¹ Similar offers known from the eleventh century were never made from a position of strength but were intended to forestall a dethronement.¹²⁵²

Although Skleros delayed his response, he agreed to Basileios' terms and met him at Didymoteichon, away from Constantinople where it was undoubtedly feared that Skleros might foment unrest.¹²⁵³ The scene for the ceremony was the imperial tent. Skleros was escorted by Basileios' guardsmen; already blinded according to Skylitzes, frail on account of his old age according to Psellos.¹²⁵⁴ Both works record Basileios' alleged mockery of Skleros' need for assistance: 'He of whom I stood in fear and dread is approaching being led by the hand.'¹²⁵⁵ Only Psellos details subsequent proceedings. Although Skleros had already divested himself of all other insignia, Basileios noticed that he still wore a pair of red sandals and refused to allow him an audience until he had removed them. After submitting to this requirement, rendering himself barefoot, Skleros approached and the pair embraced. He apologised for the revolt and Basileios accepted this, calling their disagreement 'evil fortune'. A shared drink cup was produced to seal the reconciliation, with Basileios taking the first draught to confirm that it had not been poisoned. Basileios asked Skleros' advice on how best to campaign and govern, and Skleros retired to his family estates, dying soon after.¹²⁵⁶

¹²⁵¹ Bardanes Tourkos received an oath of assurance from Nikephoros I before surrendering himself to tonsure; the reconciliation of Theophilos and Theophobos had been preceded by such an oath; and Kekaumenos records the role of the patriarch in guaranteeing the validity of oaths of assurance. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 479 (trans. Mango and Scott 657); *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 124, 136; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 179, 195; Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. Vasilevskij p.72 (trans. Roueché).

¹²⁵² Cheynet 1990: 171.

¹²⁵³ Grünbart 2008: 220.

¹²⁵⁴ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 339 (trans. Wortley 321); Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 38-41. Although Psellos does not state that Skleros had already been blinded, Grünbart 2008: 218-219, and n.21, draws attention to Psellos' repeated use of the word ἰδών (five times) in this passage. The repetition appears to indicate that Psellos was subtly alluding to a blinding, yet it remains unclear whether he means to suggest that this preceded or followed the reconciliation.

¹²⁵⁵ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 339 (trans. Wortley 321); Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 38-39; ed. Renauld I, 17 (trans. Sewter 42).

¹²⁵⁶ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 40-41; ed. Renauld I, 18 (trans. Sewter 43).

The use of forced divestiture as a humbling measure is more pronounced in Skleros' entrance. Although his assembled loyalists and Basileios troops saw him being led into the imperial tent, the reconciliation itself was restricted to those officials inside. The image of frailty and submission that characterised Skleros' assisted approach and divestiture (presumably involving bending or kneeling and thus resembling *proskynesis*), was consequently the only one witnessed by the troops, and was perpetuated through Basileios' apparently well-known remark.¹²⁵⁷ It clearly contrasted with the relatively intimate and egalitarian image of proceedings inside the tent, after reconciliation had begun. We may suspect that Skleros had not simply forgotten to remove this insignia, but had agreed to enact a divestiture as part of the meeting; possibly in order to preserve the imperial dignity given that Basileios had clearly failed to defeat the rebels after years of warfare. Undertones of *consensus* politics, although in a narrower form to Vetrano's resignation, were also expressed through Basileios' supposed enquiries regarding how best to govern. Ideally, Basileios' administration was shown to respect and acknowledge the opinions of the aristocracy who were encouraged to engage with policy decisions rather than resorting to civil war. The effort may be linked with the wider 'aristocratization' of the imperial image in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.¹²⁵⁸ The fact that Psellos provided a critique of Basileios' introverted and absolutist style of rulership in the next paragraph suggests his deliberate efforts to undermine Basileios' propaganda in this area.¹²⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the ritual performance reveals how a stalemate was transformed into an apparent imperial victory, and then a symbolic concession to Skleros' supporters amongst military aristocracy whom Basileios was attempting to placate. The reconciliations of Vetrano and Skleros reveal that these rituals were malleable and useful instruments of imperial propaganda, alongside viable

¹²⁵⁷ If we may understand its reproduction in almost identical form in two narratives to be evidence of 'public' or 'widespread' knowledge.

¹²⁵⁸ On this trend, see Kazhdan 1984; Kazhdan and Epstein 1985: 99-102.

¹²⁵⁹ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 40-43; ed. Renauld I, 18 (trans. Sewter 43-44).

methods of conflict resolution during periods of open warfare.

From at least the ninth century, formal reconciliations also came to play an increasingly important role in dynastic politics and family rivalries. The reign of Basileios I provides the first substantive example: in 883, after Leon VI had been accused of conspiring against his father during a hunting trip, Basileios removed him from precedence and confined him to the Palace. Although the details of the conspiracy were suppressed and remain unclear,¹²⁶⁰ the *protovestiaros* Helladikos, the *domestikos ton scholon* Andreas, and the *magistros* Stephanos fell from favour along with unnamed ‘others’.¹²⁶¹ Yet, the fall of Leon’s faction did not end his political aspirations. By 886 Basileios was unpopular and had withdrawn from public life as a result of illness. He narrowly avoided being overthrown by a senatorial conspiracy headed by Ioannes Kourkouas.¹²⁶² Leon’s supporters within the senate and aristocracy now attempted to intercede on Leon’s behalf.¹²⁶³ The intervention of the *megas hetaireiarches*, Stylianos Zaoutzes, prompted Basileios to permit Leon’s restoration to precedence.¹²⁶⁴ Pragmatic concerns about the succession and the dangers faced by the dynasty forced Basileios’ hand. Leon was brought before Basileios on the occasion of the Feast of Elijah. His ‘clothes of mourning’ were replaced with imperial attire, and his hair clipped.¹²⁶⁵ The date of this restoration (21 July) was commemorated annually

¹²⁶⁰ Details about exactly what prompted Leon’s fall from favour are scarce and dependent upon later traditions. Although it does appear that Leon was accused of conspiracy against Basileios with his faction, we cannot be certain that he intended to assassinate Basileios as the sources claim, or assume that what details about the episode that they do provide are accurate. On the uncertain circumstances and motives of the plot, and for discussion of the sources, see Tougher 1997: 57-60.

¹²⁶¹ Genesisios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 81 (trans. Kaldellis 100); *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 348-350; *Vita Basilii*, ed. Ševčenko 324-331; *Georgios Monachos Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 846-847; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 168-169 (trans. Wortley 161-162), listing the *Margarites* (‘Pearl’) as the place of Leon’s confinement.

¹²⁶² On the conspiracy of Kourkouas, uncovered in March 886, see Vlyssidou 1985.

¹²⁶³ *Vita Basilii*, ed. Ševčenko 330-333; *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 350-351.

¹²⁶⁴ *Georgios Monachos Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 847; Tougher 1997: 58-61.

¹²⁶⁵ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 169-170 (trans. Wortley 163). See also, *Vita Basilii*, ed. Ševčenko 332-333; *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 351. Attributing Leon’s restoration not to Zaoutzes’ intervention, but to Basileios’ change of heart after a parrot (kept for the emperor’s entertainment) repeated Leon’s name during a banquet with influential members of the senate, causing them to express their shame at Leon’s continued maltreatment.

thereafter. Leon broached the episode (in vague terms) in *Homily 34*, performed on one such commemoration. He accepted full responsibility for wrongdoing including plotting ‘countless deaths’, claimed not to have deserved forgiveness, and called his father’s patron saint, Elijah,¹²⁶⁶ the heavenly intercessor responsible for his salvation.¹²⁶⁷ The *Homily* served as another confession of wrongdoing, and the reconciliation’s timing to coincide with the Feast was evidently intended to invoke supernatural protection for the reunified dynasty and Basileios successor. Although Leon’s plot had been an embarrassment, the formal reconciliation projected the restoration of dynastic unity at a time of political weakness, since the factions of Leon and Basileios were ostensibly no longer in conflict.

The successional disputes of Leon’s descendants, and the struggle to establish hereditary succession, mitigated against further ‘dynastic reconciliations’ under the Macedonians. However, the role of reconciliation in dynastic politics re-emerged under the Komnenoi. At the same time that administrative roles were becoming increasingly restricted to Komnenian and ‘client’ family members, and concepts like noble birth were promoted to reinforce this situation, the main threats to the dynasty increasingly came from within. To counteract these divisions being exploited, the facade of interfamilial and intrafamilial unity is known to have been especially promoted,¹²⁶⁸ and public and private reconciliations constituted an essential element in maintaining that image.

Of course, it should be noted that, wherever possible, nascent plots against the Komnenian emperors involving members of this core group were concealed from public knowledge. Although we cannot realistically confirm that the Komnenoi were more prone to masking dissent than previous dynasties they appear to have had greater success in

¹²⁶⁶ The saint responsible for reconciling Ahab with God after Ahab had repented for murder and other misdeeds (1 Kings 21).

¹²⁶⁷ For analysis of the content of the *Homily*, see Antonopoulou 1997: 234-236.

¹²⁶⁸ Frankopan 2007.

regulating the leak and production of potentially damaging information.¹²⁶⁹ In particular, the reign of Alexios I was ‘characterised by an extraordinary dearth of primary narrative materials’ in comparison to those which preceded and succeeded it.¹²⁷⁰ Revisionist historiography concerning the wider Komnenos-Doukas dynasty’s origins was one example of a ‘unification and suppression’ programme in action. We may add several other reconciliatory and unificatory efforts to this list.

In 1094, whilst on campaign, Alexios uncovered the conspiracy of Nikephoros Diogenes and Constantine Doukas. According to the *Alexias*, a large part of the army and many ‘leading figures’ were implicated. Maria of Alania and Alexios’ brother, Adrianos, also had prior knowledge.¹²⁷¹ Alexios reportedly feared for his life when those involved were called to assemble, and the scale of the nascent conspiracy precluded mass arrests given the shortage of loyal troops, prompting a general amnesty. Diogenes and Kekaumenos Katakalon became scapegoats. The involvement of Constantine and Maria was then turned to Alexios’ benefit. A false-rumour was spread that Constantine had been the one to inform Alexios of the conspiracy, and Maria’s foreknowledge was wholly concealed.¹²⁷² In reporting this, Alexios was able to present the image of continued unity with the Doukai, enabling his status to be reaffirmed by those who had originally supported it and who held influence with the rebels, and in opposition to Diogenes, whose claims to *basileia* were also dependent upon his relation to the Doukai. Adrianos’ involvement was similarly concealed and, given his position as *mezas domestikos*, his subsequent absence from proceedings is

¹²⁶⁹ In the words of Frankopan, ‘It seems that the Komnenoi were singularly skilful at establishing and servicing an image of the family which not only promoted individual members and above all the group as a whole, but at snuffing out any criticism of the dynasty.’ Frankopan 2008: 79-80. See also, Frankopan 2007; Magdalino 1993: esp. 414.

¹²⁷⁰ Frankopan 2008: 79. Aside from the brief account in Zonaras’ *Epitome*, Alexios’ reign was documented by an insider, Anna.

¹²⁷¹ Conspicuously, a lacuna exists in both of the oldest manuscripts just as the author begins to name those involved in the conspiracy: Frankopan 2007: 19.

¹²⁷² Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 275 (trans. Frankopan 254).

indicative of Alexios' strong suspicions about him.¹²⁷³ Suggestively, both Constantine and Adrianos disappeared from the political sphere shortly after the coup, with Adrianos possibly taking the tonsure.¹²⁷⁴ The tenuous image of dynastic unanimity was clearly central to Alexios' immediate survival once his dubious control over the state had been uncovered.¹²⁷⁵ His attempts to engineer a narrative of what had taken place allowed him to retain this image, project strength through the punishment of Diogenes and Katakalon, and surreptitiously remove Constantine and Adrianos from authority.

Alexios' successors, Ioannes and Manuel, were often unable to create 'alternative narratives' but attempted to maintain an image of unity through reconciliations with hostile family members. Ioannes successfully weathered the intrigues of Anna Komnene and Nikephoros Bryennios c.1118-1119 and reportedly instigated a reconciliation.¹²⁷⁶ After Manuel had secured the throne by isolating his elder brother Isaakios at the Pantokrator Monastery, and subverted Isaakios' hereditary claims, he sought reconciliation soon after the coronation. Isaakios was summoned to the Great Palace, swore fidelity, and the pair were formally reconciled after exchanging the Kiss of Peace.¹²⁷⁷ Around the same time, Manuel's uncle, the former *sebastokrator* Isaakios, who had been exiled by Ioannes because of his repeated plots against the throne, was summoned from Pontus and pardoned.¹²⁷⁸

¹²⁷³ Frankopan 2007: 24, argues that Adrianos would have been expected to be present when the conspirators were assembled so as to prosecute them, or defend Alexios, if asked to. Yet Adrianos is wholly absent from events after the conspiracy was uncovered. Given Anna's particular attention to detail in recording what happened at this point, Adrianos' absence does not seem to have been a mere oversight on her part: he was simply not present.

¹²⁷⁴ Frankopan notes that a necrological notice indicates that Adrianos died in 1105 having assumed the monastic habit and taken the name 'Ioannes'. Tonsure would explain his absence from the political realm in the aftermath of the conspiracy. Alongside Adrianos' absence from Byzantine dealings with the crusaders, and the Cuman campaigns, Frankopan points to Nikephoros Bryennios (the Younger's) assumption of Adrianos' duties as further evidence of Adrianos' disgrace after the conspiracy: Frankopan 2007: 27-31.

¹²⁷⁵ Frankopan 2007: 26-28.

¹²⁷⁶ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 11 (trans. Magoulias 8-9). Anna Komnene and Nikephoros Bryennios (the Younger) reportedly conspired against Ioannes II's accession with Empress Eirene, and were involved in an intrigue at some point during the first year of his reign (now against Eirene's wishes).

¹²⁷⁷ Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 32 (trans. Brand 34); Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 52 (trans. Magoulias 31).

¹²⁷⁸ Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 32-33 (trans. Brand 34), whose chronology indicates that this reconciliation occurred *before* Manuel's distribution of largess to the military.

Manuel's most significant reconciliations involved Andronikos I. In 1166, the self-exiled Andronikos was cooperating with the Cumans against the empire. Manuel made his return the foremost priority despite Hungarian incursions along the Danube frontier. Little is known about the ensuing reconciliation, although Choniates states that Manuel summoned Andronikos, they exchanged mutual oaths, embraced, and Andronikos was later appointed governor of Kilikia.¹²⁷⁹ It is possible that the format had been negotiated.¹²⁸⁰ A second reconciliation, in July 1180, after Andronikos had spent the period from 1167 as a self-exiled rebel, was described in greater detail. Andronikos' wife and children had been taken captive by Manuel,¹²⁸¹ prompting Andronikos to request safe passage to Constantinople. This was granted and, at the audience with Manuel, Andronikos allegedly manipulated proceedings.¹²⁸² At an opportune moment he revealed a chain around his neck and prostrated himself before the emperor, shedding tears and begging for forgiveness. Manuel was moved by the display and ordered his attendants to raise Andronikos who immediately demanded that one of the onlookers, the future Isaakios II, dash him against the throne, which he did. The ceremony complete, Andronikos was granted titles and dispatched to govern Oinaion.¹²⁸³

¹²⁷⁹ For the reconciliation: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 132 (trans. Magoulias 75). For Andronikos' appointment: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 137-138 (trans. Magoulias 78); Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 250 (trans. Brand 188).

¹²⁸⁰ An analogous situation arose in 830, when Theophilos' intermediaries negotiated a reconciliation with his general Manuel 'the Armenian' who had been raiding the empire in collusion with the Abbasids. He was promoted *domestikos ton scholon* after his return. Manuel had defected to the Abbasids circa 829 when accused of conspiring against the emperor by the *logothetes tou dromou* Myron. He was reconciled and promoted after meeting with the emperor at the Church of the Mother of God at Blachernai (presumably where he renewed his oath of fidelity) and was appointed godfather to Michael III. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 71 (trans. Wortley 72); Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 219-221; *Georgios Monachos Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 796-798, *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 118-120; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 170-173.

¹²⁸¹ This is the last reference to Andronikos' illegitimate wife Theodora Komnene (married unlawfully c.1167), the mother of his son Alexios, and daughter Eirene. It is unclear what happened to Theodora after her capture although it is probable that she subsequently accompanied Andronikos into 'retirement' at Oinaion. She must have died c.1180-1181, as she did not accompany Andronikos when he marched on Constantinople, and his marriage to Anna/Agnes of France in 1183 would not have been possible had Theodora still been alive (no divorce is mentioned).

¹²⁸² The location for this audience is not stated, but was most likely held at the Blachernai Palace.

¹²⁸³ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 226-227 (trans. Magoulias 128-129). Oinaion was located on the Black Sea and was probably where Andronikos' father had been exiled under Ioannes II.

Yet again, we have good reason to question the presentation of events. The negotiations preceding Andronikos' return in 1180 gave plenty of opportunity for the ceremonial format to be discussed. Moreover, the ritual elements that Andronikos performed 'unexpectedly', in fact, conform to the contemporary Western *deditio* format known to have been used by Manuel elsewhere. *Deditiones* represented a ceremonial surrender of a rebel before a king/lord, and are known from at least the early tenth century.¹²⁸⁴ They replaced a real surrender and implied a victor's duty to show lenience.¹²⁸⁵ The ritual details were often negotiated in advance and 'borrowed elements of public penance, especially the clothing, for a somewhat different purpose.'¹²⁸⁶ The ritual humiliation communicated imperial victory, and preceded gestures denoting forgiveness and reunion.¹²⁸⁷ Rebels appeared wearing a sackcloth and barefooted in *imitatio Christi*, before submitting themselves to the ruler, rather than God or a bishop.¹²⁸⁸ The religious undertones of the ritual were intentional, and cast the supplicant in the guise of a political penitent.¹²⁸⁹ Although a *deditio* did not automatically connote a rebel's restoration, it strongly implied it.

Vučetić has discussed Manuel's use of *deditiones*, believing him to have introduced them modelled on practices observed in Antioch.¹²⁹⁰ Accordingly, the submission of Renaud de Châtillon (1159)¹²⁹¹ resembled a *deditio*. William of Tyre records the ritual: after preliminary negotiations, Renaud, unarmed and on foot, first led Manuel's horse during the triumphal entry into Antioch.¹²⁹² He appeared bareheaded, barefooted, wearing a black

¹²⁸⁴ Dalewski 2008: Chapter 2, and esp. 44-54; Reuter 2006: 160; Bagge 2002: Chapter 2, and esp. p.164-169; Althoff 1997; Althoff 1989. Althoff summarises the format thus: a set of ritual elements and their precise implementation are agreed upon in advance; these ritual elements are then performed before an audience; the guilty party prostrates himself and admits wrongdoing; a pardon is granted by the wronged party, and a restoration of the guilty party's titlature and privileges may be granted.

¹²⁸⁵ Bagge 2002: 164.

¹²⁸⁶ Reuter 2006: 160; Dalewski 2008: 46.

¹²⁸⁷ Dalewski 2008: 45.

¹²⁸⁸ Reuter 2006: 160; Dalewski 2008: 52-53.

¹²⁸⁹ Reuter 2006: 162.

¹²⁹⁰ Vučetić 2013: esp. 496; Anca 2010.

¹²⁹¹ As part of Manuel's retribution for Renaud's alliance with Thoros II, and their pillaging of Byzantine-controlled Cyprus in 1156. Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 178-179 (trans. Brand 136-137).

¹²⁹² Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 182-183, 187 (trans. Brand 139-140, 142); Vucetic 2013: 495-496.

woven tunic, with a rope around his neck, and holding his sword pointed towards himself. At the terminus, Renaud handed his sword to Manuel (denoting submission), he prostrated and wept, swore fidelity, and was forgiven.¹²⁹³ Kinnamos stresses that the entire procedure was witnessed by ambassadors assembled from across the medieval world, and that Manuel was standing on a dais.¹²⁹⁴ The Hungarian populace of Zemun had performed similar acts in 1151 and 1165,¹²⁹⁵ as did Stefan Nemanja in 1172.¹²⁹⁶

The chain worn by Andronikos in 1180, his penitential acts, and entreaties for forgiveness were therefore expected ritual components. As Beihammer argues, the sequence was most likely concocted as a way of settling hostilities between two branches of the family which had, since the revolt of Ioannes II's brother Isaakios (1130), been in regular conflict. Manuel undoubtedly considered the reconciliation essential to the dynasty's stability and wanted to end his charismatic cousin's troublemaking, especially now that Alexios II was to succeed him.¹²⁹⁷ The reconciliation of 1166 may similarly have coincided with Manuel's plans to raise Bela-Alexios to precedence, and thus aimed to remove Andronikos as a possible rival.¹²⁹⁸ Despite authoring a *chrysobull* (1167) calling for Andronikos to be captured and blinded, Manuel had always displayed a propensity for forgiving his cousin.¹²⁹⁹

¹²⁹³ William of Tyre, *Chronique*, ed. Huygens 18.23, p.845.

¹²⁹⁴ Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 182 (trans. Brand 139).

¹²⁹⁵ Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 115, 245 (trans. Brand 91-92, 184). For commentary, see Zupka 2016: 105-106; Vučetić 2013: 498 (considering the Hungarian reconciliation of 1165 only).

¹²⁹⁶ Kinnamos and Choniates place this event at different points in their respective chronologies. Choniates suggests Nemanja was reconciled with Manuel in 1168, a year after the Byzantine victory over the Hungarians; Kinnamos, correctly, places it in 1172. Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 287-288 (trans. Brand 215); Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 159 (trans. Magoulias 90). For discussion of the chronological issues, see Vučetić 2013: 494; Lilie 2009.

¹²⁹⁷ Beihammer 2013: 181; see also Vučetić 2013: 498-499; Grünbart 2009: 105-107.

¹²⁹⁸ Magdalino 1993: 200. If this was Manuel's intent, it failed spectacularly. Andronikos objected to the oath of fidelity that Manuel demanded for Bela-Alexios and Maria, was dispatched to govern Kilikia for a second time, and there seduced Philippa of Antioch, Manuel's sister-in-law.

¹²⁹⁹ Along with the reconciliations of 1166 and 1180, Manuel's forgiveness/indulgence of Andronikos was exemplified by his unwillingness to believe (accurate) rumours about Andronikos' incestuous relationship with Eudokia Komnene (c.1152); reluctance to accept rumours about Andronikos' collusion with the Hungarians in 1154/5; feigned ignorance of Andronikos' supposed attempt to assassinate him whilst on campaign (1154/5); and his rebukes of Andronikos' early failures in Kilikia made only in private. Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 124, 126-128, 130 (trans. Brand 98, 100-101, 102); Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van. Dieten 104-106, 132, 227 (trans. Magoulias 59-61, 75, 129). On the Komnenian propensity to indulge relatives, see Magdalino 1993: ch.3, and esp. 191-192; Frankopan 2007.

Consequently, the scene in 1180 was probably not a demonstration of Andronikos' wiliness, but a sequence of agreed-upon-acts that corresponded to normative treatments of defeated opponents, and which demonstrated Manuel's clemency without risking a loss of prestige. Choniates' account likely reflects Angeloi propaganda depicting Andronikos as a consummate manipulator who won the throne through deceit.

In the West, in terms of their value in honour-conscious societies, *deditiones* were public humiliations that accompanied a loss of honour while allowing the victim to retain his life, property, and office. Their severity can be inferred from their position as the most serious punishment used against magnates in the Ottonian and early-Salian periods, when members of this group were almost never executed.¹³⁰⁰ The adoption of *deditiones* at a time when Byzantine society was becoming increasingly conscious of 'honour' may have seemed a natural development that better served to exploit the importance of nobility, and shame wrongdoers, than the divestiture-*proskynesis* format.

The dynasty of Michael VIII, who was twice reconciled with Theodoros II,¹³⁰¹ saw the emergence of reconciliation as a defining feature of successional politics. Andronikos II and Andronikos III were reconciled twice before the grandson successfully deposed his grandfather. The first resolution concerned a conspiracy by Andronikos III's faction,

¹³⁰⁰ Bagge 2002: 164-165.

¹³⁰¹ First, after his acquittal in 1253 Michael was reconciled with Theodoros II in autumn 1254 at the behest of the patriarch and clergy. Michael had to renew his oath of fidelity as part of the terms of his reconciliation. Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 92-101 (trans. Macrides 259-263, 268); Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 38-41; Macrides 2013b, with bibliography. Second, after his return from self-imposed exile - during which he had helped the Turks to raid the borders of the empire. The reconciliation had been negotiated following the receipt of an oath of assurance and letters of security from Theodoros in 1256/1257. The reconciliation occurred in early 1257, and Gregoras asserts that Theodoros had taken the initiative to reconcile with Michael; Pachymeres asserts that Michael took the initiative and repented for his misdeeds (treasonable activities). It is possible that Theodoros did not wish to contend with the charismatic figure of Michael Komnenos Palaiologos attacking the empire on one front (and posing a potential threat to his continued reign), and combat the advances of the Epirot emperor, Michael II Komnenos-Doukas on another front. Palaiologos' swift dispatch to the west, removed him as an immediate threat and it may have been hoped that he would be killed in battle (Akropolites emphasises the meagre quality and size of the force given to Michael to command - this may have been an invention to emphasise his military exploits, or, more likely, reflect the reality that he could not be trusted with a superior force). Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 143-144 (trans. Macrides 326); Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 45; Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 59-60.

uncovered shortly before Easter 1321.¹³⁰² According to Gregoras, Andronikos II summoned the patriarch and bishops to the palace, along with numerous other officials, in order to interrogate and admonish his grandson. The younger Andronikos entered, sat upon his customary throne, and was examined. Eventually, mutual oaths were exchanged to the effect that he would remain Andronikos II's successor and would never plot against him.¹³⁰³ Kantakouzenos provided more detail about the ritual aspect: after being rebuked, Andronikos III performed *proskynesis* before his grandfather, begging for forgiveness and refusing to rise until it was granted. Andronikos II lifted and embraced his grandson who then prostrated again, kissed the emperor's foot, and stood to receive a kiss in return. The patriarch and senators praised God for the settlement, and all parted.¹³⁰⁴

The accounts differ on how Andronikos III's partisans responded. Gregoras' pro-Andronikos II version claimed that they considered the reconciliation a betrayal of their cause and rebuked him for breaking his oath to them. Kantakouzenos' pro-Andronikos III version asserted that all were overjoyed and celebratory. In any case, at Easter, Andronikos III fled to his allies, Kantakouzenos and Syrgiannes, at Adrianople, and civil war ensued. By 6 June, following extensive negotiations, peace was restored; in part through Syrgiannes' mother's mediation. The empire was divided between the two emperors, who ruled as colleagues, separately at Constantinople and Adrianople.¹³⁰⁵

By December the situation had deteriorated again. Syrgiannes, believed himself insufficiently remunerated, switched allegiance to the elder Andronikos, gained the title *megas domestikos*, and advocated renewed war.¹³⁰⁶ The elder emperor agreed and war

¹³⁰² Andronikos III was accused of 'unchristian conduct'. The terms of the settlement of the dispute indicate that he was believed to be plotting against Andronikos II's throne. The circumstances of Andronikos III's 'trial' and the literary aspects of Kantakouzenos' narrative of the event are considered in Angelou 2013: esp. 275-278.

¹³⁰³ Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 312-314.

¹³⁰⁴ Kantakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen I, 75-76.

¹³⁰⁵ Kantakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen I, 107-123; Nicol 1993: 154-157.

¹³⁰⁶ For a summary of events, see Bosch 1965: 26-27.

consumed Thrace for the next six months. Although Andronikos III lacked finances to pay his mercenary troops,¹³⁰⁷ he was able to win the support of Lemnos and Thessalonike.¹³⁰⁸ Faced with these reverses and the threat of Turkish advances, Andronikos II sued for peace in July 1322. The terms, negotiated through Andronikos III's mother, were more favourable to the younger emperor. He would now rule jointly over the whole empire, be crowned as heir,¹³⁰⁹ receive an annual allowance of 35,000 *hyperpyra*, and his troops would be paid by the state. His grandfather would remain senior emperor and decide all domestic and foreign policy.¹³¹⁰

A reconciliation was enacted outside Constantinople. Andronikos III approached his grandfather who waited before the city walls, both were on horseback. As he drew within a *stadion* of him,¹³¹¹ Andronikos III descended from his horse to walk on foot. The grandfather motioned his grandson to stop and made to deny him as, according to Kantakouzenos, this was a breach of protocol: only an emperor's entourage were to dismount at a meeting of two emperors, the emperors themselves were to meet on horseback, the junior (having removed his hat) would incline his head and grasp hands with the elder, and would then kiss him on the face.¹³¹² The grandson nevertheless proceeded on foot to kiss his grandfather's hand and foot which was still astride the horse. He proceeded to remount his own horse, embraced his

¹³⁰⁷ Ioannes Kantakouzenos interceded to pay for his own mercenaries out of his own estates. Nicol 1993: 157.

¹³⁰⁸ Bosch 1965: 31-32.

¹³⁰⁹ He received a [second] coronation at Hagia Sophia on 2 February 1325, the date of the Feast of the Purification. Kantakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen I, 196.

¹³¹⁰ Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 358-395; Kantakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen I, 167-169; Bosch 1965: 33-34; Nicol 1993: 158.

¹³¹¹ Approximately 180 meters (600 feet): a not insignificant distance for the emperor to traverse on foot and giving ample opportunity for spectators to observe and comprehend this humble act.

¹³¹² 'When they drew close to each other, the young Emperor jumped from his horse to welcome the Emperor on foot. But the elder Emperor, using his bridle, pushed his horse back. He wanted to make clear what was correct should a co-emperor not greet the audience on foot, but on horseback. For, an ancient custom has prevailed amongst the emperors of the Romans, that when they encounter each other, those who are of the entourage (of each) dismount from their horses and follow on foot, but they themselves encounter each other [mounted], and the younger emperor bends and clasps hands with the elder emperor, having first taken off his hat from his head, while the father, while he reigns, kisses his face in reply.' Kantakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen I, 167-168 (trans. Fatouros and Krischer I, 119-120). Translation adapted.

grandfather, and received the Kiss of Peace in return, before the pair conversed.¹³¹³ In modifying horse protocol, Andronikos transformed a standard meeting into a reconciliation and quasi-*supplicatio*; he performed standing *proskynesis*. Kantakouzenos clarified that the breach of protocol was due to the excellent character of Andronikos III who was rendering ‘the greatest respect and obedience, demanding more than duty and custom’. The public nature of the ritual was also emphasised, for the army was reportedly filled with ‘joyful lamentation’.¹³¹⁴ A ritual *adventus* followed, with the grandson visiting the Hodegetria before joining his grandfather in the Palace. He spent fifteen days meeting officials before returning to Adrianople.¹³¹⁵ But even this proved insufficient and in 1328 Andronikos III ousted his grandfather.

Recurring reconciliations typified each accession of the century and the *deditio* format known from Manuel I’s reign was either deemed inappropriate for a co-emperor to perform, or had fallen out of practice during the period of ‘exile’. Ioannes V and Ioannes VI were reconciled and ruled jointly after the latter’s success in the civil war of 1341-1347. Kantakouzenos’ abdication (December 1354) was achieved after a reconciliation between the pair specified continued joint rule and Kantakouzenos’ seniority.¹³¹⁶ In 1381, after his restoration and two years spent besieging his son Andronikos IV and grandson Ioannes VII at Pera, Ioannes V was reconciled with them.¹³¹⁷ Andronikos had been formally disinherited in 1373, after an earlier conspiracy, but he and his son now had their successional rights

¹³¹³ Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 359-360.

¹³¹⁴ Τότε δὲ οὐκ ἀγνοῶν τὸ ἔθος ὁ νέος βασιλεὺς κατέβη τοῦ ἵππου, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἂν μάλιστα καὶ πλέω τοῦ δικαίου καὶ συνήθους αἰδῶ καὶ εὐπειθειαν τῷ πάπῳ ἀποδῶ. Kantakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen I, 168.

¹³¹⁵ Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 360; Kantakouzenos, *Historiarum*, ed. Schopen I, 168-169.

¹³¹⁶ On the terms and circumstances of both of these settlements, see Nicol 1968: 63, 84-85; Nicol 1979: 237-246.

¹³¹⁷ Where Andronikos had taken as hostage his mother, the Empress Helena, his maternal grandfather, Ioannes VI Kantakouzenos, and two aunts (probably including Theodora Kantakouzene, the widow of the Ottoman Sultan Orhan Gazi). Doukas, *Historia Turco-Byzantina*, ed. Grecu 73 (trans. Magoulias 79-81); Chalkokondyles, *Historia*, ed. Darkó I, 57-58 (trans. Kaldellis 98-101); *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, ed. Schreiner I, Chr. 7/19, 12/3, 22/20; Necipoğlu 2009: 126.

restored. Andronikos was granted a semi-independent ‘appanage’,¹³¹⁸ and the settlement was confirmed after he had begged for forgiveness, and renewed fidelity.¹³¹⁹ The arrangement was intended to quell Andronikos’ aspirations whilst re-unifying the dynasty against those who had exploited the rift, especially the Ottomans and Genoese. It sought to satisfy Andronikos’ faction in Byzantium and his Genoese backers; all parties signed a treaty in Constantinople in November 1382 pledging mutual aid against all enemies except Sultan Murad.¹³²⁰ However, Andronikos’ restoration alienated the other branch of the family. Manuel II was removed from precedence and began an independent rule in Thessalonike, following a different foreign policy to his father.¹³²¹ Even Andronikos was discontented and rebelled again in 1385. He was defeated and died later that year. Ioannes VII’s usurpation and conquest of Constantinople for five months in 1390, was ended when Manuel came to Ioannes V’s aid.¹³²² Ioannes VII fled to Selymbria but continued to fight.¹³²³ Although the sources are unclear about the circumstances, a reconciliation of Ioannes VII and Manuel II was achieved in 1399 with the assistance of Boucicaut,¹³²⁴ the Marshall of France. Boucicaut approached Ioannes at Selymbria and escorted him to Constantinople. The presence of a retinue including Ioannes’ mother, Maria-Kyratza, may suggest that terms had been negotiated in advance and that he was not under duress.¹³²⁵ Ioannes was adopted by Manuel and ruled as his proxy while Manuel spent three years in Europe seeking aid against the

¹³¹⁸ Comprising Selymbria, Daneion, Herakleia, Rhaidestos, and Panidos. Doukas, *Historia Turco-Byzantina*, ed. Grecu 73 (trans. Magoulias 80-81); *Kydones*, ed. Loenertz II, §155, 198, 201, 218-220, 222. See also, Necipoğlu 2009: 129; Kianka 1992: 161-163.

¹³¹⁹ Doukas, *Historia Turco-Byzantina*, ed. Grecu 73 (trans. Magoulias 80).

¹³²⁰ *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, ed. Schreiner I, Chr. 9/29; Nicol 1988: 324-325.

¹³²¹ Necipoğlu 2009: 130.

¹³²² Ioannes’ rule over Constantinople lasted from 14 April to 17 September. Ignatius of Smolensk, ed. Majeska 100-103; *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, ed. Schreiner I, Chr. 7/21-22, 10/6. Necipoğlu 2009: 131-137; Nicol 1988: 328-330.

¹³²³ *Kydones*, ed. Loenertz II, §442.

¹³²⁴ Jean II Le Maingre, who had been named *megas konstablos*.

¹³²⁵ Doukas reports that Ioannes had exchanged oaths with Manuel before arriving in Constantinople, and the presence of a retinue might suggest that he had had time to call upon his supporters to join him, before heading to the meeting. Doukas, *Historia Turco-Byzantina*, ed. Grecu 77 (trans. Magoulias 86). For analysis of the sources and scholarship on this reconciliation, see Barker 1969: 160-165, 490-493. See also Dölger 1931; Nicol 1988: 338-339.

Turks.¹³²⁶ Upon Manuel's return in 1403, Ioannes ceded the throne to his uncle and Manuel was again recognised as sole emperor. A dispute soon broke out and Ioannes was sent to Lemnos in disgrace.¹³²⁷ He joined his father-in-law, Francesco II, to lead a naval expedition against Thessalonike. Another reconciliation followed; the terms were confirmed in a written oath and documented by the Castilian ambassador Clavijo. Both Manuel and Ioannes would retain the title *autokrator*. Ioannes would succeed Manuel. Manuel's son, Ioannes VIII, would succeed him, and Ioannes VII's son, Andronikos V, would follow him. An ivory *pyxis*, (possibly) created to commemorate Ioannes VII's receipt of Thessalonike, records the arrangement within its iconographic programme.¹³²⁸ The deaths of Ioannes VII and Andronikos (1407 and 1408 respectively) pre-empted the succession.

By this time, reconciliation between warring parties, now usually members of the imperial family, had become a political game. Instead of a humbling method of surrender and control, with the defeated rival striving to keep his life and his holdings, reconciliations could extend power and dominion. The creation of appanages under the Palaiologoi, an extension of the Komnenian practice of dispatching relatives to safe regions and granting some autonomy (itself a response to centripetal and 'quasi-feudal' developments in the eleventh and twelfth centuries), became more extreme.¹³²⁹ The empire was increasingly divided amongst emperors, co-emperors, and aristocracy, in a way that was reminiscent of the failed tetrarchic and Constantinian successions. Infighting and foreign gains were perpetuated by an unwillingness to use harsher penalties against imperial relatives, and the

¹³²⁶ For Ioannes' adoption by Manuel, recorded in archival documents dating to the first two decades of the fifteenth century, see Oikonomides 1977: 331, n.11. In addition, Manuel Palaiologos, *Dialogue with the Empress-Mother on Marriage*, ed. Angelou 110-113, composed c.1394-1397, mentions a previous proposed reciprocal-adoption that would have established a clear line of succession (Manuel was to adopt Ioannes VII, and Ioannes VII was to adopt Ioannes VIII, Manuel's new-born son, in the name of the 'common interest'). The plan was never enacted but it seems that Manuel had long intended to place his relationship with his nephew on a more 'secure' footing, via adoption.

¹³²⁷ Doukas, *Historia Turco-Byzantina*, ed. Greco 111-113 (trans. Magoulias 100-101).

¹³²⁸ On the *pyxis* see, Oikonomides 1977; Hilsdale 2014: 210.

¹³²⁹ On the late-Byzantine practice of creating appanages, see Barker 1971; Malatras 2014: esp. 112-113; Wright 2017: 288-289, 292.

involvement of foreign powers in the political sphere lent an ‘international’ dimension to these internal disputes, raising the spectre of wider conflict.¹³³⁰ From the early fourteenth century, reconciliation was the indispensable tool of internal diplomacy and the principal response to usurpation. Reconciliations were an integral component of a subjective political system wherein disputes were decided by the use of force or negotiated compromise instead of objective laws and procedures. Calculations of potential gains or losses were equally important as general rules and privileges.¹³³¹ They allowed the dynasty to espouse strength in the face of division, partially veiling insecurities.

It is apparent that gestures, both shared and individual, were of central importance to reconciliatory rituals, as communicative signifiers of mutual-relations and social hierarchies. They encapsulated the underlying political ideology, were easily seen by even a distant audience, and were sometimes recorded in the histories. A handful of motions are attested, with each being intended to connote intimacy or familiarity. The embrace which characterised the reconciliation of Ioannes II with his brother and nephew, after their rebellion (1130), implied trust and acceptance.¹³³² Psellos’ account of the promotion of Romanos IV, for example, includes an alleged embrace from Michael VII which implied his acceptance of Romanos as friend and senior.¹³³³ The Kiss of Peace was another recurrent gesture suggesting fealty and friendship.¹³³⁴ The *Book of Ceremonies* records its liturgical

¹³³⁰ On these concerns, see Wright 2017: esp. 290-291.

¹³³¹ As shown by Bagge 2002: 165-166, in the western medieval context.

¹³³² Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 32 (trans. Magoulias 19). Perhaps one of the reasons that Choniates (in particular) so frequently listed these kinds of gestures was because his narrative detailed and lamented the breakdown of *taxis* and kin-relations under the emperors of his day. By contrast, these gestures of reconciliation between imperial family members stressed the importance of familial unity and kin-relations - they suggested a partial (and usually transient) restoration of *taxis*.

¹³³³ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 328-329; ed. Renauld II, 156 (trans. Sewter 349). Certainly, a more trusting image than that suggested by the *histanenon* of Romanos, on which both Romanos and Eudokia are depicted crowned by Christ on the reverse, and her sons are shown in place of Christ on the obverse, denoting their right of succession and Eudokia’s equal authority to grant it. The Romanos ivory, if indeed it depicts Romanos IV and Eudokia Makrembolitissa (I am inclined to agree that it does), also employs a visual hierarchy for their coronation by Christ that affords the empress equal authority with Romanos, as it was from her that power was being transferred. On the *histanenon* and ivory, see Kalavrezou-Maxeiner 1977: esp. 314.

¹³³⁴ Burrow 2004: 11-12, 52-53: ‘...men bound themselves together as lord and vassal “by mouth and hand”’, citing the example of Richard II’s restoration in 1388, when the English lords renewed their oaths of allegiance

usage: the emperor and patriarch would exchange the Kiss outside the Sanctuary, before the emperor entered the *metatorion*. Emperors might also exchange the Kiss with senators and dignitaries whilst standing at the nave.¹³³⁵ According to Pseudo-Kodinos, a ritual of the Kiss, performed on Easter Sunday, involved Western courtiers kissing the emperor's right foot, right hand, and right cheek.¹³³⁶ Although status differences could thus be visualised, embraces and kisses also carried implications of equality because, 'although one party most often takes the initiative, the participants commonly perform more or less the same physical act reciprocally.'¹³³⁷ Linguistically too, reconciliation invoked reciprocal/collective acts: Choniates used the terms *σπένδεται* ('share a common drink'), and *συμβαίνω* ('stand together'), as synonyms for *καταλλαγή/καταλλάσσω* ('reconciliation').¹³³⁸ Shared drinks or meals that were used to conclude reconciliations also denoted a form of intimacy since only those believed to be favoured by the emperor would join his table.¹³³⁹ In the west, a king who received the submission of a rebel and then immediately dined with him was announcing his formal restitution.¹³⁴⁰ Obviously, it does not follow that, in performing mutual acts, reconciled individuals were understood to be the emperor's equal, but, rather,

by kiss and grasped hands. French knights would also exchange a Kiss of Peace in order to achieve reconciliation after conflict.

¹³³⁵ On the liturgical context, see Majeska 1997: 6-8. For a biblical precedent, see 2 Samuel 15.

¹³³⁶ Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov 184-189; Macrides 2011: 224.

¹³³⁷ Burrow 2004: 32.

¹³³⁸ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 52 (trans. Magoulias 31).

¹³³⁹ On the honour of dining with the emperor in Late Antiquity (but still applicable in later contexts) including its occasional connotations of equality between those present, see Malmberg 2007: esp. 75-76, 79-80. See also, Liudprand's account of his embassy of 949-950 including the shared meal of Constantine VII with the ambassadors, and the order of precedence used when dining with Nikephoros II during the embassy of 968 which Liudprand perceived as deliberately insulting to himself. Liudprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, ed. Chiesa §6.8 (trans. Squatriti 119); Liudprand of Cremona, *Relatio de Legatione Constantinopolitana*, ed. Chiesa §11 (trans. Squatriti 247). The significance of dining with a former enemy was a cross-cultural phenomenon: in 1071, Romanos IV was permitted to dine with Alp Arslan after his own capture at Manzikert. Attaleiates even claims that the emperor was granted equal honours and status with the sultan while dining with him. Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 165 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 298-299), '[the sultan] invited him to sup with him and share his table, not placing him off to one side but made him sit next to him at an equal situation to his rank and share the same honours.' Additionally, in 1203, after the flight of Alexios III and the restoration of Isaakios II (with Alexios IV), the leaders of the Fourth Crusade entertained the restored emperor at their camp across the Peraia. Isaakios and Alexios reportedly shared a tent and dined with these figures. Choniates also reports that the Crusaders had already been similarly entertained at the Palace. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 551-552 (trans. Magoulias 302).

¹³⁴⁰ Reuter 2006: 162; Althoff 1990.

were equally members of the community to which they were then being restored and of which he was the head.

Power dynamics and culpability were clearly emphasised in the ceremonial format. The reconciliatory gestures generally followed, or incorporated, the rebel's performance of *proskynesis*, typically associated with rituals of worship, repentance, or submission. The polyvalent character of *proskynesis*, in religious and secular contexts, even suggests a merging of ideologies. Transgressions against one's faith and emperor were expiated through similar rites. Consequently, the *deditiones* seen under Manuel I, which further emphasised the rebel's penitence and subjugation, need not have been imported as Vučetić believes.¹³⁴¹ The essential ritual gestures already existed in Byzantine society, and the increasing prominence of penitential humility in tenth- and eleventh-century Byzantium, alongside an increasing emphasis on nobility and the special status of imperial family members, may naturally have influenced reconciliatory procedures which had traditionally provided a reasonable compromise for both parties and continued to do so until the fall of the empire.

Finally, some similarities drawn with caution between gestures used in reconciliatory rituals and kin-making rituals can be suggested. At the conclusion of an adoption, the adopted son would prostrate himself at the feet of his father while the latter intoned a prayer. The son would then rise, and the pair would embrace, denoting their newfound spiritual kinship.¹³⁴² Ceremonies of *adelphopoiesis*, wherein two men were united in 'spiritual friendship', involved the pair placing their hands, one atop the other, onto the gospel and reciting a prayer before embracing as brothers. Often this ritual preceded a shared meal

¹³⁴¹ It should be noted that the *deditio* of the Hungarians in 1151, which was missed by Vučetić, preceded that of Renaud de Châtillon by almost eight years. Therefore it is unlikely that Manuel's period in Antioch was the source for the innovation in the Byzantine ritual's format. Of course, the Hungarians were in close contact with the medieval West, so it remains possible that a western connection inspired the *deditio* of 1151.

¹³⁴² For a summation of the ritual, see Macrides 1990: 110-111, citing Goar 1730 (repr. 1960).

marking their brotherhood.¹³⁴³ The clipping of Leon VI's hair, may have recalled the famous occasion of Leon's childhood tonsure, and the receipt of a lock of his hair by fifty 'tonsure godparents/sponsors'.¹³⁴⁴ The performative structures of reconciliations closely resembled these ceremonies, restoring an individual to the wider community and making them a 'brother' once more. In fact, in 923 the reconciliation of Romanos I and Symeon of Bulgaria involved an embrace at the outset, and Symeon was termed Romanos' "spiritual brother" in official correspondence thereafter.¹³⁴⁵

In resembling ritual gestures that were well-known for creating kinship ties, the restoration to the community of individuals who had been portrayed as political 'outsiders' in official rhetoric could be better understood, and might gain potency.¹³⁴⁶ The connotation of renewed kinship would assuredly have been obvious to anyone witnessing a 'dynastic reconciliation' under Basileios II, the Komnenoi, or Palaiologoi, and may be alluded to in the case of Vetrano whom Constantius allegedly called 'father'.¹³⁴⁷ Therefore, in some sense, reconciliations may have been considered a symbolic form of 'civil' or 'communal adoption' performed by the emperor as the chief representative of the community, in order to restore *taxis* through the reconstitution of that community.

Sanctuary, tonsure, and exile

When reconciliation was unlikely, other strategies were employed to attempt to secure merciful treatment from a victorious party. A great number of conflicts resulted in either the

¹³⁴³ Rapp 2016: 48-86 (the ritual), 69, 257 (the significance of the shared meal); Karlin-Hayter 1968: 37. The shared meal is an ongoing practice of these rituals in the Orthodox Church.

¹³⁴⁴ On Leon's first tonsure, see Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. Reiske II, 620-622 (trans. Moffatt and Tall II, 620-622); Dagron 2003: 46; Tougher 1997: 46-47.

¹³⁴⁵ On this episode, and its presentation in the extant sources, see Howard-Johnston 2006; Grünbart 2012.

¹³⁴⁶ For their status as political 'outsiders', see above, page 168.

¹³⁴⁷ It should be noted that this could equally be Zonaras' twelfth-century interpretation of the ritual, as, to my knowledge, none of the other sources for Vetrano's reconciliation with Constantius mention him being addressed as 'father'; instead all agree that he was treated with appropriate honour and respect. This does not discount Zonaras' possible use of a no longer extant source, but the prospect of a later interpretation or interpolation must also be considered.

conspirators or imperial family claiming church asylum. Among the imperial cases we may count: Basiliscus and his family;¹³⁴⁸ Tiberios, the six-year-old son and co-emperor of Justinian II;¹³⁴⁹ the sons of Constantine V;¹³⁵⁰ Michael I and his family;¹³⁵¹ Michael V;¹³⁵² the Komnenian women; Nikephoros III;¹³⁵³ and finally, the *kaisarissa* Maria Komnene and her husband Renier.¹³⁵⁴ Alongside these cases, there are more than a dozen other clear references to usurpers and conspirators requesting church asylum in the face of imminent capture.¹³⁵⁵

From the fourth century, legislation acknowledged the custom of asylum and dictated that criminals were safe whilst within the boundaries of a church. Anyone who tried to remove them by force would suffer a penalty: originally death, but later other forms of physical punishment.¹³⁵⁶ The refugee had to surrender any weapons and submit to the authority of the clergy. They would be interrogated as to the nature of their crime, might be judged in an ecclesiastical court, and receive a penance.¹³⁵⁷ Although not originally applicable to murderers, the right of asylum was expanded under Constantine VII to include

¹³⁴⁸ They sought refuge in the Great Church in August 476, before being exiled to die of exposure in Cappadocia. Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Parmentier 107-108 (trans. Whitby 142); Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn 303 (trans. Jeffreys 210).

¹³⁴⁹ Tiberios was crowned co-emperor in 705. In December 711, he was taken to the Church of the Theotokos at Blachernai by his grandmother in order to claim asylum, but was then dragged from the sanctuary and executed by Philippikos' loyalists: Head 1972: 120-121.

¹³⁵⁰ In October 797, *after* their tonsure (780), and mutilation and confinement to the Palace of Therapeia (August 791), the brothers sought sanctuary in Hagia Sophia. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 473 (trans. Mango and Scott 650).

¹³⁵¹ They claimed asylum at the palace Church of the Pharos in June 813, abdicated to Leon V, and took the tonsure. *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 19-20; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 32-33.

¹³⁵² He fled to the Stoudios Monastery in April 1042, but was dragged from the sanctuary to be paraded in disgrace, and blinded. See below, page 299.

¹³⁵³ The Komnenoi sought refuge at Hagia Sophia in 1081 at the outset of Alexios' revolt. Nikephoros mimicked them when Alexios captured Constantinople, but he subsequently abdicated and took the tonsure. Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 66-67, 86 (trans. Frankopan 60, 78).

¹³⁵⁴ They claimed asylum in Hagia Sophia in 1181 during their conflict with regency government of Alexios II, and were subsequently reconciled with the regents. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 232, 241 (trans. Magoulias 131, 136).

¹³⁵⁵ See Table 4.

¹³⁵⁶ Zachariä von Lingenthal 1892: 326-330, §75; Macrides 1988: 510-511.

¹³⁵⁷ Zachariä von Lingenthal 1892: 327.

protections and punishments for these criminals.¹³⁵⁸ Crucially, the laws of asylum did not apply to those accused of treason, and our case-list indicates that asylum did not assure safety.¹³⁵⁹ Consequently, usurpers and conspirators put themselves at the mercy of the clergy and emperor. They hoped that the latter might show clemency to them because they had submitted, and that the clergy might protect them.

The decision to accept political refugees was a calculated one since the clergy were not obliged to do so, and were taking a political risk when they did. Theodosios Monomachos, a cousin of Constantine IX, was abandoned altogether by his supporters and subsequently denied sanctuary in Hagia Sophia when the patriarch closed the doors in his face (1056).¹³⁶⁰ His pitiable usurpation offered little political value for the Church compared with the risk of imperial displeasure. Anna Komnene described the difficulties faced by the Komnenian women even in gaining refuge (*prosphygion*) at St Nicholas' chapel. Sanctuary was only granted to them after an unspecified member of the group wilfully deceived a verger.¹³⁶¹ When Botaneiates was informed, Anna Dalassena was able to secure her own passage from St Nicholas' to Hagia Sophia to pray. After making a third genuflection she grasped the sanctuary doors and loudly proclaimed: 'Unless my hands are cut off, I will not leave this holy place, except on one condition: that I receive the emperor's cross as guarantee of safety.'¹³⁶² The scandal forced Nikephoros' compliance, and Dalassena, her daughters and daughters-in-law, were confined at the Petrion Monastery.¹³⁶³

¹³⁵⁸ Macrides 1988: 511-512. By the twelfth century the right of asylum was so prominent that murderers were coming to Hagia Sophia (in particular) from across the empire to confess and gain protection. Manuel I was prompted to issue legislation critical of the church and existing practices. On this legislation and the status of Hagia Sophia as a place of refuge for murderers, see Macrides 1988: esp. 512-514; Macrides 1984. The prominence of Hagia Sophia as a place of refuge, was due to its reputation for successfully defending those seeking asylum.

¹³⁵⁹ Zachariä von Lingenthal 1892: 328.

¹³⁶⁰ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 482 (trans. Wortley 450).

¹³⁶¹ She claimed that the Komnenoi women were impoverished easterners who intended to pray before returning home. Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 66-67 (trans. Frankopan 60).

¹³⁶² ...εἰ μὴ τὰς χεῖρας ἀποτηθεῖν, οὐκ ἂν τοῦ ἱεροῦ τεμένους ἐξέλθοιμι, εἰ μὴ τὸν τοῦ βασιλέως ὅσπερ ἐχέγγυον τῆς σωτηρίας δεξαίμην σταυρόν. Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 67-68 (trans. Frankopan 61).

¹³⁶³ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 68 (trans. Frankopan 62).

Patriarchal support had mixed successes in ensuring safety. In 605 the deposed Empress Constantina and her daughters were granted assurance by Phocas after Patriarch Kyriakos refused to permit their removal by force. A conspiracy to proclaim the *patricius* Germanus with Constantina's support had failed, but the women and Germanus escaped with tonsure and confinement thanks to the patriarch's intervention.¹³⁶⁴ In 1181 the *kaisarissa* Maria was able to orchestrate an opposition movement from Hagia Sophia because she was protected by the clergy. However, Basiliscus, and Bardanes Tourkos, who were both granted asylum and imperial assurances, were swiftly made victims of other penalties.¹³⁶⁵ Circumstance, political cachet, and strength of will, determined the outcome of any claim to asylum.

Tonsure was another merciful fate for political opponents and was used by nineteen usurpers against their predecessor or his co-emperor(s).¹³⁶⁶ It represented the most common treatment of deposed emperors in the eighth century and from the tenth century onward, when execution of deposed emperors was rarely practised. Although tonsure did not mean a wholesale abandonment of one's previous lifestyle,¹³⁶⁷ renunciation of worldly concerns and re-devotion to the spirit was implied, and it was often a person's final late-life act.¹³⁶⁸ To accompany the transformation, initiates would exchange their civil attire for simple black robes, and their heads would be shaved in imitation of the Apostle Paul. This *mutatio* differentiated monastics from laypersons and was deliberately dissonant, both the hairstyle

¹³⁶⁴ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 293 (trans. Mango and Scott 421-422).

¹³⁶⁵ Basiliscus and his family were left to die of exposure, a punishment that did not technically breach the emperor's oath of assurance to Basiliscus: Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn 303 (trans. Jeffreys 210); Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 124-125 (trans. Mango and Scott 192). Bardanes was blinded (probably on Nikephoros' orders) whilst living as a monk: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 479-481 (trans. Mango and Scott 657-660).

¹³⁶⁶ Those induced to take the tonsure include: Leontios, Artemios-Anastasios, Theodosios III, Artabasdos, Staurakios, Michael I, the children of Leon V, Romanos I, Stephanos and Constantine Lekapenos, Empress Zoe, Michael V, Michael VI, Isaakios I, Michael VII, Nikephoros III, Isaakios II, Alexios III, Andronikos II, and Ioannes VI. See Table 1.

¹³⁶⁷ Caseau 2008: 257-259, noting that the main complaint of those newly tonsured was the change in diet.

¹³⁶⁸ Michael IV, Isaakios I, and Manuel I, for example, were tonsured on their sick-beds.

and dark attire were humbling features.¹³⁶⁹ The contrast between the splendour of imperial insignia, to which victims had aspired, and the simplicity of monastic garb was considered particularly striking. Attaleiates' narrative of Empress Zoe's tonsure and exile exploited this contradictory imagery: in contrast to the 'luxurious and expensive fabrics... gold and silver ornaments' associated with Michael,¹³⁷⁰ Zoe 'was made to dress in black, shorn of her hair,' and exiled to Prinkipos.¹³⁷¹

Additional humiliation and scorn could also be invoked. In September 780, shortly after the death of Leon IV, the former *kaisar* Nikephoros was uncovered as the head of a conspiracy to dispossess Eirene and Constantine VI. High-ranking figures were tonsured and exiled,¹³⁷² but Nikephoros and his brothers were kept in Constantinople to receive tonsure and administer the communion to the emperor and senate on Christmas Day. Eirene thus manipulated the ceremony to humiliatingly emphasise the fact of their defeat and tonsure. Their inferior status and seeming acceptance of the Empress' authority was ritually enacted, and a public distribution of largess subsequently courted popular support.¹³⁷³ In 1081, the recently tonsured *kaisar* Ioannes Doukas was mocked for aiding Alexios' revolt, since his appearance proved a source of ridicule for Constantinople's defenders.¹³⁷⁴ Tonsured opponents were visually 'othered' and it was hoped that their spiritual vows would prevent them from engaging in future treason.

¹³⁶⁹ On the religious significance of hair cropping as a Christian initiatory rite, see Baun 2013: 123-126.

¹³⁷⁰ He was celebrating the ceremonial procession of the Feast of the Resurrection (17 April 1042).

¹³⁷¹ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 12-13 (trans. Kaldellis 18-21). Psellos also emphasised the visual dissonance of a divestiture, commenting that Leon Tornikios' 'magnificent robes' were replaced by 'rags'. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 38-39; Renault II, 16 (trans. Sewter 207).

¹³⁷² Among the named conspirators were: Gregoras, the *asekretis* and *logothete* of the course; Bardas, the former *strategos ton Armeniakon*; Constantine, son of Vikarios (the former *spatharios* and *domestikos ton exkoubitoron*); and Theophylaktos, the son of Rhangabe, *droungarios* of the Dodecanese.

¹³⁷³ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 454 (trans. Mango and Scott 627); see also, the summary remarks in Rochow 1994: 229-230 (*Nikephoros* §48).

¹³⁷⁴ 'Ioannes was annoyed at this command [from Alexios], for he had only recently adopted the monastic garb and he knew he would be laughed at by the soldiers on the walls and ramparts if he came near them in such dress. And this is just what did happen, for when he followed Alexios against his will, they immediately spotted him from the walls and sneered at "The Abbot" with certain ribald epithets'. Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 78-79 (trans. Frankopan 71).

Constantinople, Chrysopolis, and northern Asia Minor remained favourite locations for deposed emperors to receive their tonsure. Churches in Kyzikos, the metropolitan see, were favoured by early emperors.¹³⁷⁵ The monasteries of Delmatos and Stoudios in Constantinople, Elegmoi in Bithynia, Chrysopolis, and those of Prote became other favourites. Their close proximity allowed opponents to be monitored, and monastic foundations with connections to reigning emperors might be selected for extra security. The Elegmoi, a probable Lekapenoi foundation, was the destination for the *sakellarios* Anastasios under Romanos I,¹³⁷⁶ and Michael V under its later Macedonian patrons.¹³⁷⁷ Under the Komnenoi-Angeloi, Nikephoros III was kept in Constantinople at the Peribleptos, a foundation of Romanos III distinguished for its relics which were used in ceremonial processions.¹³⁷⁸ Andronikos Lapardas was sent to Anna Dalassena's Constantinopolitan foundation, the Pantepoptes,¹³⁷⁹ and both Alexios Axouchos¹³⁸⁰ and the *sebastokrator* Alexios (an illegitimate son of Manuel) were sent to Mt Papykios in Thrace, where the emperors were held in high regard.¹³⁸¹ The tonsure of the *sebastokrator* was overseen by Choniates in-person, on behalf of Isaakios II, an indication of its political importance.¹³⁸² In 1211, during the period of 'exile', Alexios III was tonsured at St Hyakinthos in Nikaia, the

¹³⁷⁵ The *Caesar* Basiliscus was ordained as Bishop of Kyzikos (although only a boy) early in Zeno's second reign in order to dispose of him, and for Zeno to escape his agreement with Armatus the *magister militum Praesentalis*. Basiliscus had first been enrolled as a reader at an unspecified church in Blachernai. Justinian I dismissed John the Cappadocian and ordained him deacon of Artake, near Kyzikos. Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn 305, 406 (trans. Jeffreys 211-212, 285-286). On Basiliscus, see Croke 1983: esp. 84-85.

¹³⁷⁶ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 400; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 214 (trans. Wortley 208).

¹³⁷⁷ Michael took the tonsure at the Stoudios monastery, before being blinded and exiled to the Elegmoi. He was moved to Chios under Constantine IX. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 421 (trans. Wortley 396). The Macedonian emperors are believed to have taken over patronage of the Elegmoi monastery after the fall of the Lekapenoi. On the Elegmoi monastery, see *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, ed. Thomas, Hero, and Constable 1042-1043, §33 (*Institutional History*).

¹³⁷⁸ Romanos III and Nikephoros III were buried at the monastery. On the Peribleptos monastery, see Janin 1969: 218-222; Dark 1999; Mango 1992.

¹³⁷⁹ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 278-279 (trans. Magoulias 154-155). On the Pantepoptes, see Stanković and Berger 2013: 20-22.

¹³⁸⁰ Axouchos was tonsured during the reign of Manuel I. Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 269 (trans. Brand 202); Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 144 (trans. Magoulias 82).

¹³⁸¹ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 425-427 (trans. Magoulias 234-235). On the relationship between the Komnenoi and the monastic communities, see Angold 1995: esp. 280-316.

¹³⁸² On Choniates' authorial intrusion at this point in the narrative, see Simpson 2013: 249.

then seat of the Patriarchate and future burial place for Theodoros I and Anna, a loyalist stronghold.¹³⁸³ And Ioannes VI, after abdicating, was tonsured at St Georgios at Mangana.¹³⁸⁴ He was denied a transfer to Mt Athos, by Ioannes V, and was housed at the Peribleptos. Matthew Kantakouzenos remained a threat, and Palaiologos was undoubtedly concerned about the potential for his father-in-law to abscond and renew hostilities if allowed to leave the city.¹³⁸⁵

Exile (ἀειφυγία) was yet another potential fate. It was an imperial prerogative that became a regular sentence in the second century.¹³⁸⁶ The penalty intended that victims were literally excluded from the community and thus forgotten or deemed *xenoi*. It could be a temporary or permanent sentence, and a law of Botaneiates had patriarchs remind emperors of exiles' identities.¹³⁸⁷ However, emperors had to be wary of exiling charismatic figures who might subsequently foment local movements or act as foci for conspiracies as Artemios-Anastasios, the sons of Constantine V, and the Lekapenoi, were able to do.¹³⁸⁸ Consequently, exiles were often moved to prevent networks forming around them. They lived in fear lest they be considered a threat best solved by execution. Occasionally, political or religious dissidents might voluntarily choose exile, to elude punishment or to continue resistance.¹³⁸⁹

Exile was a popular literary theme: Leon Choirosphaktes, exiled in connection with the revolt of Andronikos Doukas,¹³⁹⁰ appealed for reconciliation with the emperor and bemoaned his ill health and impoverishment.¹³⁹¹ Theophylaktos of Ohrid offered

¹³⁸³ Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 17 (trans. Macrides 131; and 132, n.9 (*Commentary*)); Skoutariotes, *Synopsis Chronike*, ed. Sathas 457.

¹³⁸⁴ On St Georgios at Mangana, see Kazhdan et al 1991: 1283-1284.

¹³⁸⁵ Nicol 1979: esp. 245-248, adopts a rather more sympathetic interpretation of Ioannes VII's abdication and the decision to remain in Constantinople, asserting that Ioannes was 'persuaded' to remain to advise his son-in-law, and had intended to enter monastic orders for a long time before his abdication.

¹³⁸⁶ Garnsey 1968: 144-145.

¹³⁸⁷ See below, page 301.

¹³⁸⁸ See Table 1.

¹³⁸⁹ Maleon 2010b: 352. See also, Beihammer 2011, considering some examples from the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

¹³⁹⁰ Tougher 1997: 11-13, 177.

¹³⁹¹ Mullett 1997: 250-251: Constantine VII appears to have pardoned him at the beginning of his reign because he was known to be writing poetry at court c.913.

metaphorical insights into conditions: his missives speak of his sense of separation from the cultural life of the empire, his difficulty communicating with his old associates, and having to wait for letters to arrive whilst fearing that they might not. His surroundings were ‘barbarous’ and strange; a ‘desert’, both inaccessible and dry. He even worried that he was becoming a barbarian by association.¹³⁹² Even Niketas Magistros, exiled on his own estate, complained about his exclusion from metropolitan culture.¹³⁹³

Although undoubtedly exaggerated, poor physical conditions and hardships were not merely a *topos*.¹³⁹⁴ Judicial exile specified a place, beyond the capital. In Late Antiquity, the preference was for border regions, far from geographical and cultural centres, where the empire’s power and control was tenuous. Island destinations were used, including the central islands of the empire like Sardinia, Sicily, or Rhodes. This engineered isolation and control over movement.¹³⁹⁵ Environments were generally hostile and communication difficulties typically made it unfeasible to formulate tangible resistance. Under Zeno, Basiliscus was exiled to Cappadocia and died of exposure, and the usurper Marcian was sent to Papyrios, also in Cappadocia.¹³⁹⁶ Later, the future Leon III was exiled to Mesembria on the Thracian border.¹³⁹⁷ Kherson, was also well represented until the mid-eighth century. It was far from the capital and served as a naval station, theoretically affording supervision of exiles.¹³⁹⁸ However, both Justinian II and Philippikos escaped from the city and successfully marched on Constantinople. Thereafter the region’s use as a place of banishment declined and Kherson fell under Khazar control between the mid-eighth and early-ninth centuries. It was

¹³⁹² Mullett 1997: 274-276. A theme that we have already seen employed by Choniates against Andronikos I, and a recurring motif in descriptions of the actions of rebels during a usurpation.

¹³⁹³ Mullett 1997: 251.

¹³⁹⁴ Mullett 1997: 253, 256.

¹³⁹⁵ Maleon 2010b: 353.

¹³⁹⁶ For Basiliscus, see Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn 303 (trans. Jeffreys 210); Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 124-125 (trans. Mango and Scott 192). For Marcian, see Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 127 (trans. Mango and Scott 195).

¹³⁹⁷ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 391 (trans. Mango and Scott 542).

¹³⁹⁸ Ahrweiler 1966: 48.

substituted for the islands as the foremost place of exile. Most often these were inaccessible locations where people generally refused to live.¹³⁹⁹ The island landscape was typically mountainous and arid, and they were often exposed to dangers from storms, piracy, and irredentism in periods when the maritime frontier was contested.¹⁴⁰⁰ The latter danger was why the Cyclades fell out of favour as destinations for exiles in the tenth century. The islands of the northern Aegean, the Marmara, and coastal Asia Minor, then allowed secure supervision of prisoners.¹⁴⁰¹ The Prinkipos islands, off the coast of Constantinople, eventually became the most renowned of these ‘political islands’. Four of the nine were inhabited, with monasteries instead of prisons. Thessalonike, Athens, the Pontic coast, and thematic strongholds were other regular places of exile. Constantinople and Chrysopolis were used for ‘house-arrests’. And in the final centuries, a mixture of secure fortifications, islands, and cities were preferred, with Lemnos and Selymbria becoming the principal locations for exiles of the Palaiologan dynasty.¹⁴⁰²

The major shortcomings of exile and tonsure as punitive measures was the potential for the victims to flee to the enemies of the empire or renounce their monasticism and reinitiate hostilities. Artemios-Anastasios, Bardas Phokas, and Leon Tornikios, had each been tonsured before initiating usurpations and civil wars.¹⁴⁰³ The monastic condition was insufficient to disbar a candidate from claiming *basileia*, even if it could provoke scorn and condemnation.

¹³⁹⁹ Their inhospitable character and contemporary concerns about the dangers of sea travel were commonly adduced as reasons for the islands to be avoided. Malamut 1988: 26-27; Maleon 2010b: 353; Pryor 2002: 57-58, quoting Nikephoros Ouranos on the difficulties of sea travel.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Malamut 1988: 30-31, 55-58.

¹⁴⁰¹ Maleon 2010b: 354.

¹⁴⁰² Manuel II was twice exiled to Lemnos by his father (1387 and 1389), and Ioannes VII was exiled to Lemnos in 1403. Andronikos IV was exiled to Selymbria in 1384, and Demetrios Palaiologos in 1442.

¹⁴⁰³ Cheynet 2013b: 64-65.

Body politics and the body politic

Although execution was always prescribed as the legal penalty for treason, bodily mutilations were alternative punishments frequently used alongside, or in place of, tonsure and exile. Christianity played a moderating role by encouraging these alternatives to execution.¹⁴⁰⁴ They were not a traditional feature of Roman law, under which deliberate disfigurement of high-born Romans (*honestiores*) was exceedingly rare, commonly commuted to fines or exile; instead, mutilations were reserved for slaves, foreign prisoners, and low-status citizens (*humiliores*). In late antiquity they were prescribed extra-legally, and Justinian I introduced legislation limiting their discretionary application by members of the judiciary.¹⁴⁰⁵ They were adopted gradually in legal practice in the two-hundred year period after Justinian, culminating with their systematisation in the *Ekloga* (726).¹⁴⁰⁶

Since imperial ideology necessitated that the best candidate reign, in theory, that also meant the best physical specimen, making bodily integrity a consideration for office.¹⁴⁰⁷ Leviticus offered a biblical justification: the physically imperfect were ‘unclean’, unable to serve as priests, or enter the sanctuary.¹⁴⁰⁸ Consequently, disfigurement would curtail an emperor’s quasi-priestly duties and prevent him from emulating Christ. Execution became

¹⁴⁰⁴ Kazhdan 1994: 204, notes that Byzantine religious figures and private correspondence often quoted Ezekiel 33:11, ‘I have no desire for the death of the wicked. I would rather the wicked man should mend his ways and live.’

¹⁴⁰⁵ *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, ed. Schöll and Kroll, §134.13; Robinson 2007: 168.

¹⁴⁰⁶ This process of adoption and the eventual codification of judicial mutilations was documented in a seminal study by Patlagean 1984.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Karayannopoulos summarised this ideology thus: ‘... according to Byzantine imperial reasoning, only the best man might aspire to be emperor. But what constitutes the best? Herein lies the importance of bodily integrity and soundness of limb. The mutilation of a limb meant its owner was deprived of a vital qualification for ascending the throne, for theoretically an amputee was considered handicapped and under no circumstances could he aspire to the imperial throne and authority.’ Karayannopoulos 1987, quoted in translation in Lascarotos and Marketos 1992: 134.

¹⁴⁰⁸ ‘And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to Aaron, saying: ‘No man of your descendants in succeeding generations, who had any defect may approach to offer the bread of his God. For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who had a marred face or any limb too long, a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch. No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the Lord. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God. He may eat the bread of his God, both the most holy and the holy; only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he had a defect, lest he profane My sanctuaries; for I the Lord sanctify them.’” Leviticus 21:16-23.

unnecessary when maiming could achieve the same ‘political death’. Therefore, the physically ‘perfect’ were expected to gain prominent positions. The seventh-century usurper Mizizios was praised for his statuesque beauty.¹⁴⁰⁹ Michael III announced that Basiliskianos had ‘the appearance of a ruler’;¹⁴¹⁰ and Alexios I sought to protect the conspirators Leon and Nikephoros Diogenes because of their handsome physiques and leadership potential.¹⁴¹¹ Idealised physical descriptions of favoured candidates were regular features of histories and other media. Laiou outlined how Anna Komnene manipulated those of the nobility in order to emphasise the perfection of aristocratic status, making beauty an attribute of the powerful.¹⁴¹² Gregoras advised rhetorically disguising or correcting physical flaws so as not to mar a person’s image for posterity.¹⁴¹³

Physical imperfections and deformities were frequently associated with divine punishment and provoked derision.¹⁴¹⁴ ‘Ugliness’ was a political weakness in a society that valorised beauty, and physiognomy considered imperfections symptoms of poor character.¹⁴¹⁵ Thomas the Slav’s heir, Anastasios, was described as ‘a very ugly man’ and villainous because of his ‘great stupidity’.¹⁴¹⁶ Propaganda ridiculing the failed coup (c.1200) of Ioannes Komnenos(-Axouchos), a grandson of the *megas domestikos* Ioannes Axouchos, exploited his obesity to proclaim him mentally deficient for believing he could ever be emperor.¹⁴¹⁷ In a speech of Euthymios Tornikios, Ioannes’ obesity caused the throne to

¹⁴⁰⁹ Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 221-222; Hatzaki 2009: 51.

¹⁴¹⁰ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 113 (trans. Wortley 114); *Vita Basilii*, ed. Ševčenko 96-101.

¹⁴¹¹ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 271 (trans. Frankopan 249).

¹⁴¹² Laiou 2000: 9; followed by Hatzaki 2009: 16-18.

¹⁴¹³ Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 11.

¹⁴¹⁴ Hatzaki 2009: 10-48. In the twelfth century, the ‘most hideous looking little man’ Zintziphitzes was ridiculed for his disproportionate limbs. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 315 (trans. Magoulias 174). The birth of malformed children or the arrival of malformed individuals from abroad was also widely reported and could be interpreted as an ill-omen: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 225 (trans. Magoulias 128); Gregoras, *Historia*, ed. Schopen I, 546-548.

¹⁴¹⁵ Hatzaki 2009: esp. 11-12, 37-42. By contrast, Eusebius of Caesarea asserted that Constantine I’s natural beauty and physical perfection were illustrations of his exceptional spiritual and athletic qualities. Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, ed. Winkelmann 26, 86 (trans. Cameron and Hall 77, 125).

¹⁴¹⁶ Genesisios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 27 (trans. Kaldellis 34).

¹⁴¹⁷ On the circumstances of this failed coup, see Angold 2015; Angold 2005: esp. 59-64. It is noteworthy that Ioannes is consistently referred to as Komnenos, and not Axouchos. The more prestigious name was used of

collapse beneath him, but Ioannes failed to realise its significance because his intellect did not match the size of his body.¹⁴¹⁸ Choniates described him as ‘potbellied and with a body shaped like a barrel’, a man who drank water ‘like a dolphin’, and ‘gushed forth’ perspiration like a ‘spring’. Having captured the Great Palace, Ioannes grew lazy, neglected to guard the gates, and allowed his troops to lounge around in the Hippodrome in emulation of himself. Alexios III dispatched the Varangians who quickly restored order and executed Ioannes.¹⁴¹⁹ Mesarites and Chrysoverges were similarly scornful.¹⁴²⁰ ‘Ugliness’ was aligned with other shortcomings unworthy of *basileia*.

One’s appearance, including disfigurements, was believed to be deserved and mutilations provided a means of rendering the body unsuited to power. Constantinou argues that grotesque descriptions of the diseased body in Hagiography ‘served as vehicles through which the divine makes itself perceptible...’, ‘punishments and therapies performed by the saints suggest that the divine... manifests itself in horrifying, and sometimes comic, grotesque forms.’¹⁴²¹ The histories indicate comparable beliefs. Patriarch Nikephoros, for example, remarked of Herakleios’ sons with Martina, that ‘Justice’ had punished the incestuous progeny, causing Flavius to be born paralysed and Theodosios deaf.¹⁴²² The negative connotations of imperfection, led Zonaras to describe both Zeno and Staurakios as unsuitable for the throne because of their displeasing visages and lack of wisdom.¹⁴²³ We may question how seriously these associations were taken, but the criticisms were exploited.¹⁴²⁴ Rhetoric employed against political foes often drew attention to physical flaws

him.

¹⁴¹⁸ Euthymios Tornikios, *Les Discours*, ed. Darrouzès 66-70, §12-18.

¹⁴¹⁹ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 526-528 (trans. Magoulias 289-290).

¹⁴²⁰ Nikolaos Mesarites, *Die Palastrevolution des Johannes Komnenos*, ed. Heisenberg; *Nicephori Chrysobergae ad Angelos orationes tres*, ed. Treu 1-12.

¹⁴²¹ Constantinou 2010: 44-45, 53. See also Metzler 2013: 24, on this theme in Western hagiography.

¹⁴²² Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 52-53.

¹⁴²³ Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 126-127; III, 304.

¹⁴²⁴ The power of this kind of natural, ‘physical charisma’, is recognised by sociologists to have a real effect: Glassman 1975: 630-631.

or simply invented them.¹⁴²⁵ As Hatzaki notes, this implies that an emperor was chosen as much on the basis of his appearance as his character, and Zonaras' 'manner-of-fact wording suggests that among his contemporaries all this would be far from foreign.'¹⁴²⁶

Disfigurement intended to transform victims into social outcasts by using the body as an indelible means of inscribing its occupant's misdeeds. Penalties exploited symbolisms to 'other' victims and connect them with sacrilegious or contemptible behaviours. This encouraged abuse and ridicule to be directed against them, engineering a change in their public identity and turning them into warnings to others.

Amputation and castration

Amputations were the most common penalty for conspiracies that fell short of outright usurpation, and a principal penalty for secondary figures. The loss of any combination of a hand or foot was intended as a disabling punishment, making life harder for the victim and physically inhibiting their continued participation in treasonable activities. The tenth-century Pseudo-Constantine Doukas (actually a certain 'Basileios'), for example, had a hand amputated after his first rebellion against Romanos I, but brazenly commissioned a copper prosthesis and sword to replace it when he later resumed his insurrection.¹⁴²⁷ Amputations were also particularly prevalent during the civil wars preceding 1204, and were among the tortures inflicted on Andronikos I prior to his execution.¹⁴²⁸ The hands and feet of an emperor held a quasi-sacral status:¹⁴²⁹ they were kissed during deferential rituals of *supplicatio* and

¹⁴²⁵ For example, the propagandist use of 'old age' as a means of undermining charismatic authority, led Andronikos I to order Maria of Antioch depicted as an old woman in official art despite her relative youth. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 333 (trans. Magoulias 183).

¹⁴²⁶ Hatzaki 2009: 40.

¹⁴²⁷ *Georgios Monachos Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 912; *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 421; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 228 (trans. Wortley 220).

¹⁴²⁸ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 342-349 (trans. Magoulias 192-3).

¹⁴²⁹ Boeck 2015: 213, 215; Burrow 2004: 53; Dagron 2003: 155.

proskynesis that were a recurrent feature of imperial ceremonial,¹⁴³⁰ and their loss would have served to undermine imperial ‘sacrality’ by proving that a victim’s body was neither divinely protected nor mysterious. Therefore, severed limbs featured in posthumous ceremonies of degradation, but Andronikos was the only living emperor to receive such mutilation. A preference for tonsure, execution, or subjection to more debilitating disfigurements, often rendered amputation redundant for deposed emperors.

As a legal penalty, the *Ekloga* prescribed the amputation of a hand for the loss of military animals, selling of another’s slaves, desecration of graves, and theft of livestock.¹⁴³¹ The roughly contemporaneous *Farmers Law*¹⁴³² prescribed it for the damage of crops, or encroachment.¹⁴³³ From the reign of Herakleios the loss of a hand remained the penalty for the counterfeiting of coins and official documents.¹⁴³⁴ Judicial amputations were thus associated with theft or activities liable to be financially damaging to the wronged party. As conspirators were physically and symbolically correlated with thieves, and reduced from elite status to that of common criminals, their treasonable activities were associated with the attempted ‘theft’ of *basileia*.

Castration was employed intermittently against political rivals, especially between the ninth and mid-eleventh centuries. The Justinianic code had forbidden it on imperial territory, the *Ekloga* advocated it for crimes of bestiality,¹⁴³⁵ and Leon VI’s *Novel 60* reiterated Justinian’s prohibition.¹⁴³⁶ However, eunuchs were conspicuous in Byzantium in

¹⁴³⁰ Pseudo-Kodinos, for example, describes the ritual of the Kiss, performed on Easter Sunday: ‘All of the titleholders enter, each one down to the humblest, and kiss, first the right foot of the emperor, then his right hand and, after this, his right cheek. If, at that moment, the *podestà* of the Genoese in Galata also happens to be at the place where the emperor is, he too enters and with his companions kisses the emperor in the manner of the titleholders...’, trans. Macrides 2011: 224.

¹⁴³¹ *Ekloga* 17.10, 11, 13-14, 16; Patlagean 1984: 406.

¹⁴³² Itself a codification of existing rural practices. On the *Farmer’s Law*, see Ashburner 1910: 85-108; Lemerle 1979: 27-67; Patlagean 1984: esp. 407-411; Kazhdan and Epstein 1985: esp. 5.

¹⁴³³ Patlagean 1984: 409.

¹⁴³⁴ Lopez 1942/1943.

¹⁴³⁵ *Ekloga* 17.39.

¹⁴³⁶ It also called for offenders to be maimed in kind. Ringrose 2003: esp. 71-72; Patlagean 1984: 411; Tougher 2008: 29; Herrin 2000: 59.

the higher echelons of politics, in the religious context, and as valued servants.¹⁴³⁷ They became part of the system of internal control, holding positions in place of potential political rivals, and were often sought from beyond the empire. Numerous families breached prohibitions by castrating their younger sons in order to secure future career advancements.¹⁴³⁸ Basileios I's son, Stephanos, was castrated in youth and eventually made patriarch by Leon VI (886).¹⁴³⁹ Theophylaktos, the youngest son of Romanos I, was castrated and given to the church before ascending to the patriarchate at the unprecedented age of sixteen and governing for twenty-three years.¹⁴⁴⁰ But this political-eunuchism became less prevalent in the changed dynastic-administrative landscapes of the Komnenoi, Laskarids, and Palaiologoi, when eunuchs' court roles were granted to family members (especially imperial women) as a way of encouraging participation in politics and counterbalancing the increased threat from within.¹⁴⁴¹

For those castrated before puberty, bodily development was also radically altered and believed to render them unhealthy.¹⁴⁴² Despite their potential social advancement, eunuchs were viewed as a gender apart and were associated with the negative stereotypes of women.¹⁴⁴³ The change in status for an ideologically 'brave' and 'honourable' aristocrat must have been profound. However, the social stigma was seemingly less important as a

¹⁴³⁷ Tougher 2008.

¹⁴³⁸ Herrin 2000: 59; Herrin 2013: 268.

¹⁴³⁹ He was then nineteen years old, and administered until May 893: Jenkins 1965: 99; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 134 (trans. Wortley 133).

¹⁴⁴⁰ *Symeon Magister*, ed. Bekker 742-743; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 227 (trans. Wortley 220); Herrin 2013: 267.

¹⁴⁴¹ Gaul 2002: esp. 201, 208-209. For contrast: Guiland 1943, concluding that the decline of political eunuchism in the later empire was a result of a westernisation of Byzantine society, and the predominance of hereditary-dynastic succession in contemporary political thought rendering them unnecessary. See also, Kazhdan and Epstein 1985: 99-102, on the 'aristocratization' of politics in the eleventh and twelfth centuries as a contributing factor to the increased prominence of women in the political sphere. For comparison, Neville 2010: esp. 72, drawing attention to the classical Roman models and behavioural ideals still underpinning many of the narrative histories produced in this period, and suggesting that our current beliefs about the emerging prominence of women in Byzantine politics at that time are overstated, and may actually owe more to our misreading of gendered *Kaiserkritik* and literary fiction than to objective historical fact.

¹⁴⁴² The medical implications on bodily development are summarised in Tougher 2008: 32-34. For the perceived side-effects of castration, see Ringrose 2003: 56-57.

¹⁴⁴³ Including intrigue, greed, and immorality. Tougher 2008: esp. 34-35.

punitive measure than the victim's physiological transformation and inability to provide a viable heir: as Psellos remarked, it would be impossible for a bastard or eunuch to usurp power from a 'legitimate' heir.¹⁴⁴⁴ Although castration may not outwardly have appeared as disabling as the loss of limbs or senses, which inhibited the victim's ability to function on a daily basis, it could be regarded as a worse fate. For, in medieval terms, the 'functional' body encompassed gender, fertility and procreative ability in addition to mobility and sensory perception.¹⁴⁴⁵ An individual incapable of procreation was not 'whole'.

In connection with usurpation, castration was always accompanied by tonsure and normally targeted younger family members who could otherwise have claimed a hereditary-dynastic right to *basileia*, raising the spectre of revolt. Among the political castrati we may count: Marinos, the son of Constantina and Herakleios, castrated after the elevation of Konstantinos II. The sons of Michael I,¹⁴⁴⁶ and of Leon V,¹⁴⁴⁷ who were mutilated in the immediate aftermath of their fathers' respective overthrows. Stephanos Doukas, the son of the usurper Constantine Doukas, who was a victim of an outright purge of the charismatic and popular family, and whose castration ensured the elimination of that entire branch.¹⁴⁴⁸ The *sebastophoros* Romanos Lekapenos,¹⁴⁴⁹ and Basileios 'the *parakoimomenos*',¹⁴⁵⁰ who

¹⁴⁴⁴ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 10-11; ed. Renauld I, 3 (trans. Sewter 28).

¹⁴⁴⁵ Metzler 2013: 22.

¹⁴⁴⁶ July 813. Theophylaktos, the eldest surviving son (and co-emperor) was castrated and tonsured on one of the Prinkipos isles. He died five years later (January 849) and was buried with his father on Plate. Niketas assumed the name Ignatios after his tonsure and went on to become patriarch. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 8-9 (trans. Wortley 9).

¹⁴⁴⁷ December 820. Symbatios-Constantine, Basileios, Gregory, and Theodosios accompanied their mother to Prote where all were tonsured and the boys were castrated. Symbatios died as a result of the mutilation and was buried with his father. *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 41; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 64-65.

¹⁴⁴⁸ This may be dated c. June 913. *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 385; *Georgios Monachos Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 876-877; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 200 (trans. Wortley 194). Stephanos' cousin, Michael, had died with Constantine, and Stephanos' mother was tonsured on her Paphlagonian estate. Polemis 1968: 2, 25, concludes that this branch of the Doukai became extinct in the male line by 917. See also, Whittow 1996: 338. The charismatic threat of the Doukai was indicated by the enduring loyalties to them exhibited in the two rebellions of Basileios 'the Copperhand', and the persistence of elements of Constantine's life story in the epic poem *Digenes Akrites*.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Skylitzes' chronology places the castration of Romanos after Easter 945, possibly indicating a date in April or May. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 238 (trans. Wortley 230); Tougher 2008: 180, n. 23, 25.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 238 (trans. Wortley 230), asserts that Basileios was castrated on the orders of Constantine VII. This appears incompatible, however, with Basileios prominent role as a supporter of Constantine VII against Stephanos and Constantine Lekapenos. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed.

became victims of imperial foresight. (Since they were potential threats to the successors of Romanos I and Constantine VII respectively, they were prevented from contesting power.) And Michael V's relatives, who 'whether they were full grown men with a blooming beard or just adolescents, he had castrated.'¹⁴⁵¹ The imposition of the penalty on mature men was incredibly rare, and in the latter instance was precipitated by political expediency (they were plotting against him). Michael was allegedly 'ashamed to kill them openly: he preferred to compass their destruction by mutilation.'¹⁴⁵² In each case the victim was prevented from ever holding the imperial office. Castration allowed a prospective threat to be mitigated, whilst appearing to demonstrate imperial *philanthropia*. Its documentable use against dynastic rivals ends in the late-eleventh century when 'nobility' became increasingly synonymous with 'lineage' and connections to the reigning dynasty, making the procreative potential of the elite essential for the continued status of their families.

Rhinokopia and tongue-cutting

Rhinokopia, the amputation or 'slitting' of the nose, was a seventh-century penalty for usurpers of the Herakleian dynasty.¹⁴⁵³ It first appears in 635/637 as punishment for the failed conspiracy of Ioannes Athalarichos, an illegitimate son of Herakleios.¹⁴⁵⁴ Athalarichos was to be elevated in a bloodless coup that also implicated prominent Armenian nobles at court and Theodoros (nephew of Herakleios).¹⁴⁵⁵ All were condemned to suffer the

Impellizzeri I, 10-11; ed. Renauld I, 3 (trans. Sewter 28), claims that Basileios had been castrated as an infant (born ca. 925) to prevent him from ever contesting the throne. See also, Ringrose 2003: 62; Brokkaar 1972.

¹⁴⁵¹ 1034. Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 12 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 16-19).

¹⁴⁵² Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 234-235; ed. Renauld I, 111 (trans. Sewter 147).

¹⁴⁵³ For a comparative study of nose-cutting in medieval and modern contexts, see Skinner 2014. On nose-cutting as an ongoing practice of so-called 'honour' mutilations in tribal societies of modern day Pakistan, with similar connotations to medieval practices, see Frembgen 2006.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Martindale, Jones, and Morris 1992: IIIa, 706 (*Ioannes 260*).

¹⁴⁵⁵ On the conspiracy, see: Kaegi 2003: 260-261; Brandes 2009: 309-316. The prominent Armenians were, the *kouropalates* Varaztiroch, and David Saharuni (Athalarichos' cousin). Theodoros was also the *magister officiorum*. Martindale, Jones, and Morris 1992: IIIa, 389-390 (*David Saharuni 6*); IIIb, 1284-1285 (*Theodoros 171*); 1363-1364 (*Varaztiroch*). On the prominence of Armenians in the empire at this time, see Charanis 1959: esp. 34; Charanis 1961.

amputation of their noses and right hands. The Armenians escaped, but Athalarichos and Theodoros were mutilated.¹⁴⁵⁶ At the time, Herakleios was attempting to mitigate the threat of the Islamic conquests and settle the Monophysite-Chalcedonian schism.¹⁴⁵⁷ The conspiracy exposed fractures within the imperial family, increased mistrust, and implicated prominent individuals.¹⁴⁵⁸ The severity of Herakleios' response should be understood as a reaction to the danger, not just to his office but the empire itself.

The penalty was next used in November 641 during the overthrow of Heraklonas and his mother, Empress Martina, who were accused of poisoning Constantine III and having designs against his son Konstans II. When a popular uprising captured the palace and removed Heraklonas, his brothers David and Marinos, and Empress Martina, Konstans ordered Heraklonas' nose cut and Martina's tongue slit (*glossotomia*).¹⁴⁵⁹ A forty-year lacuna in the punishment's documented political use followed this deposition. Then, in 681, Constantine IV removed his brothers from precedence in order to secure the throne for Justinian II. *Rhinokopia* was used against each, and they disappear from the historical record at this point.¹⁴⁶⁰ In 695, Justinian was overthrown in a popular revolt at Constantinople that proclaimed Leontios, *strategos* of the Helladic *thema*. Spared execution in a display of Leontios' *philanthropia*, Justinian's nose was amputated and tongue slit before his exile to Kherson.¹⁴⁶¹ Then, in 698 Tiberios-Apsimaros, *droungarios* of the Kibyrrhaeot *thema*, was

¹⁴⁵⁶ The former was then exiled to Prinkipos, and the latter to Gaudomelete (Malta), where one of his legs was also amputated. Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 72-73; Sebeos, trans. Thomson 93, 107.

¹⁴⁵⁷ On the Monophysite controversy, see Frend 1972.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Kaegi 2003: 260-262.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 341 (trans. Mango and Scott 475). John of Nikiu's account differs slightly in asserting that Martina and all three sons were subjected to rhinotomy and exiled to Rhodes, where Marinos was castrated causing his death. John of Nikiu, *Chronicle*, trans. Charles 197.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 352, 360 (trans. Mango and Scott 492, 502); *Michael the Syrian*, ed. Chabot II, 454-456; Brooks 1915.

¹⁴⁶¹ According to the narratives the crowds had called for Justinian to be executed, but Leontios spared him out of 'love' for the emperor's father, Constantine IV. It is possible that Patriarch Kallinikos was, in fact, able to stay Leontios' hand, in exchange for his assistance and moralising-authority in the revolt. The public execution and burning of Justinian's chief finance ministers seems clear evidence that Leontios was not unwilling to resort to executions as a means of garnering support. The story that these latter executions were 'against his will' is assuredly later propaganda intended to bolster his merciful image; had he wanted the executions stopped, his troops could have intervened at some stage during the lengthy degradation parade that preceded

proclaimed in a military revolt and captured Constantinople with aid from the Greens, field armies, and the *exkoubitoroi*. The now traditional disfigurement was repeated on Leontios before his tonsure.¹⁴⁶²

The penalty was never again used on a deposed emperor or would-be usurper. The usurpation in Sicily of Basileios Onomagoulos (717), and the failed restoration of Artemios-Anastasios (719), report *rhinokopia* imposed against secondary figures but not against the usurpers.¹⁴⁶³ The revolt against Basileios I's promotion as co-emperor (866) initiated by Symbatios, and Georgios Peganes, reportedly ended with their blinding and maiming, including Peganes' nose being cut.¹⁴⁶⁴ The last certain reference¹⁴⁶⁵ to *rhinokopia* in relation to an attempted usurpation concerned the efforts of Leon Kladon to return Stephanos Lekapenos to power (c.947). Constantine VII ordered confiscations, nose-cutting, and exile against those found guilty, but Stephanos remained untouched.¹⁴⁶⁶

This seventh-century penalty for political opponents was a temporary innovation, but it was not a new or exclusively Byzantine practice. Malalas attests to its use as a punishment at the time of Julian, inflicted on Sasanian nobility.¹⁴⁶⁷ Jordanes' sixth-century *Getica* details

them. Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 96-97; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 369 (trans. Mango and Scott 515).

¹⁴⁶² He was tonsured at the Monastery of Delmatos in Constantinople. Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 100-101; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 370-371 (trans. Mango and Scott 517). See also Haldon 1997: 75-76; Head 1972: 101-102. It is noteworthy that the involvement of the 'Greens' in Tiberios-Apsimaros' revolt is known only from the thirteenth-century manuscript '*Anonyme de Cumont*'.

¹⁴⁶³ For Basileios Onomagoulos, see Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 124-125; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 398-399 (trans. Mango and Scott 549-550). For Artemios-Anastasios, see Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 126-127; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 401 (trans. Mango and Scott 552).

¹⁴⁶⁴ The *strategos* of the *Thrakesion thema* and *komes tou Opsikiou*, respectively. Both men were later sentenced to exile. The revolt was ostensibly in defence of Michael III's rights which were believed to be at risk from Basileios: *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 241, 263; *Vita Basilii*, ed. Ševčenko 76-77, 128-131; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 130 (trans. Wortley 129-132).

¹⁴⁶⁵ It should be noted that Ignatius of Smolensk, *Russian Travellers*, ed. Majeska 100-101, reports that, in 1390, fifty persons were arrested and exiled from Constantinople by Ioannes V. And that some of this group were subjected to *rhinokopia* and others to blinding. However, it is unclear if these figures were partisans of Ioannes VII attempting a coup.

¹⁴⁶⁶ See Table 1.

¹⁴⁶⁷ By the Sasanian King Shapur II. Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn 254-255 (trans. Jeffreys 180), asserting that Shapur had sent these nobles to Julian in order to mislead him and draw him deeper into Sasanian territory; eventually resulting in the defeat at Ctesiphon. Possibly Malalas' presentation of the mutilated nobles acting as 'double-agents' is based on Herodotos' story of Zopyros, a Persian noble who helped Darius I to

how the first wife of Huneric was returned to her father with her nose and ears removed, after she was suspected of poisoning her father-in-law Gaiseric.¹⁴⁶⁸ *Rhinokopia* was controversial in the Frankish Kingdoms,¹⁴⁶⁹ and served as a punishment for a wide variety of crimes ranging from theft to sexual deviancy throughout the medieval world.¹⁴⁷⁰

Despite falling out of favour as a punishment for usurpers, *rhinokopia* was not abandoned altogether: a cleric found guilty of sedition was maimed by the rebel Leon Phokas,¹⁴⁷¹ Manuel I ordered a certain Katides' nose slit after battle,¹⁴⁷² and Andronikos I's supporter Hagiochristophorites was allegedly 'shameless' in flaunting his slit-nose.¹⁴⁷³ Nevertheless, *rhinokopia* is almost wholly absent from accounts after the tenth century when, blinding, exile and tonsure became the preferred methods of disqualifying opponents.¹⁴⁷⁴

power by cutting his own nose in order to win the trust of the Babylonians and then weakening the city's defences on behalf of Darius' armies. Herodotos, *Histories* 3.150-160.

¹⁴⁶⁸ '...and because of the mere suspicion that she had been preparing poison for him, he cut off her nose and mutilated her ears, ruining her natural beauty, and sent her back to her father in Gaul. Thus the wretched girl presented the appearance of a disfigured corpse ever after, and the cruelty which would stir even strangers all the more strongly incited her father to vengeance.' Jordanes, *Getica*, ed. Mommsen. 36.184.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Laws from the fifth and sixth centuries prescribing heavy fines for deliberate cases of rhinotomy, and the sixth-century Bishop Gregory of Tours criticised King Chiperic for unjustly mutilating the nose of one 'Gailen'. Charlemagne repeated the sixth-century provisions *en-masse* in his eighth-century revision of the laws. Skinner 2014: 49-50, and n.21.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Skinner 2014; Groebner 2008. In the Crusader States, for example, the canons of Nablus prescribed rhinotomy for adulterous women: Mitchell 2004: 128; Kedar 2006: 313. Psellos provided a detailed report on the blinding and rhinotomy enforced upon Dolianos, the opponent of the lawful heir to the Bulgarian throne, Aalousianos, involving a hastily purloined 'cook's knife': Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 174-175; ed. Renauld I, 81-82 (trans. Sewter 115). There is also extensive evidence of rhinotomy being used as a punishment by Muslim populations before the arrival of the crusaders, probably as a result of Byzantine legal influences. The crusaders too, may have borrowed the custom from the Byzantine legal codifications: Catlos 2014: 371.

¹⁴⁷¹ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 395. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 209-210 (trans. Wortley 203), says that the priest was flogged and had his ears cut, but makes no mention of *rhinokopia*. In fact, the two punishments were similarly symbolic, indicating sexual crimes. On the link between punishments involving the ears and nose, see below.

¹⁴⁷² 'As the emperor was rushing to seize the Turks as booty for the taking and easy prey, Katides frightened them off by telling them of the emperor's arrival. Thus provoked, Manuel flew into a rage and decreed the destruction of his nose as punishment.' Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 195 (trans. Magoulias 110).

¹⁴⁷³ Hagiochristophorites had purportedly attempted to make a marriage alliance above his own status, bedded his would-be bride, and been found out. Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville-Jones 44-47. See also Garland 1990: 18; Hatzaki 2010: 99.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Skinner 2014: 60-61, also raises doubts about its prevalence in early Byzantine and medieval society, describing its use as exceptional, intended to punish and deter extreme cases, and which allowed narratives a means of discrediting those who used it indiscriminately.

We may question what prompted the shift to facial mutilation. *Rhinokopia* was usually non-fatal and a better choice if the victim was supposed to survive, and was by far the most noticeable disfigurement. Simply, when one thinks of a face it is typically a face with a nose; total nasal amputation has historically been considered a means of rendering a victim ‘faceless’.¹⁴⁷⁵ As signs of potential disgust, bodily-orifices, like the nose, ears, and mouth, are particularly relevant in Bakhtin’s theory of the ‘grotesque-body’.¹⁴⁷⁶ He notes how nasal mutilation is perceived to expose the inner body, revealing the ‘grotesque’.¹⁴⁷⁷ Miller goes further, emphasising the nose’s importance in evoking disgust, referring to its contaminating mucus.¹⁴⁷⁸ Consequently, victims were removed from participation in regular society by provoking revulsion, causing observers to turn away or mock them. Dreambooks connected the nose with honour,¹⁴⁷⁹ and Hagiochristophorites allegedly did not even try to hide from ‘ridicule’ (indicating derision as a natural response).¹⁴⁸⁰ Jordanes’ account of the mutilation of Huneric’s wife asserted that she consequently had the ‘appearance of a disfigured corpse’, and facial mutilation was commonplace in ceremonies of posthumous degradation: *rhinokopia* and the dishonoured dead were linked.¹⁴⁸¹

In Byzantine law, *rhinokopia* was prescribed in eleven statutes governing sexual offences in the *Ekloga*, including incest, abduction, and adultery.¹⁴⁸² Leon VI’s *Novel 35*

¹⁴⁷⁵ Groebner 2008: 67-85. This remains, for example, one of the aims of nose-cutting as an honour-inspired bodily mutilation in tribal societies in modern-day Pakistan: Frembgen 2006: esp. 252.

¹⁴⁷⁶ Bakhtin 1987: esp. 357.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Bakhtin 1987: esp. 78.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Miller 1997: 89-108.

¹⁴⁷⁹ *The Oneirocriticon of Manuel II*, trans. Oberhelman p.206, §21 and n.88, 89.

¹⁴⁸⁰ See the comments of Hatzaki 2010: esp. 99, on Byzantine concepts of beauty and the mocking attitude taken towards Hagiochristophorites (although mistakenly attributing Eustathios’ words to Niketas Choniates). *The Life of Basileios the Younger*, ed. Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath 96-97, asserts that those whose ears or nose had been cut, were ‘a source of laughter to all those who see [them].’

¹⁴⁸¹ On facial mutilation as a feature of posthumous degradation, see Varner 2004.

¹⁴⁸² These include: union with a nun (wedded to the Church of God), abduction of a nun or virgin, union with or marriage to a godparent, incestuous unions with stepchildren (the crime of cousins and second-cousins illegally marrying was punished with separation and flogging. (*Ekloga* 17.37.)), adultery or condoning adultery, “corruption” of a minor (namely under thirteen years old), union with a betrothed girl, union with a mother and her daughter (or complicity between the two). *Ekloga* 17.23-28; 17.30-34; Patlagean 1984: 406. See now Humphreys 2015: esp. 120-121.

confirmed a provision of Basileios I in which accomplices to violent kidnappings would no longer be sentenced to death, but subjected to nose-cutting and flogging.¹⁴⁸³ The association with sexual crimes had biblical origins,¹⁴⁸⁴ and significantly, the legal penalty was tied to acts of betrayal: fidelities (spousal, spiritual, or political) were typically being broken.¹⁴⁸⁵ *Rhinokopia* thus ‘othered’ victims by associating them with disloyal persons considered amongst the worst members of society. The punishment itself was a metaphor for sexual crimes because the nose and ears were associated with fertility and nasal mutilation implied castration.¹⁴⁸⁶

The initial cases of Athalarichos, Heraklonas and his brothers, offer a tentative origin based on these sexual symbolisms. Athalarichos was an illegitimate son, associated with Theodoros, whose father had criticised Herakleios’ incestuous union with Martina.¹⁴⁸⁷ Heraklonas, David, and Marinos, were considered offspring of that incestuous union. These victims were turned into sexual offences/offenders by utilising a punishment associated with sexual crimes. They were de-legitimised and marked by reference to their dubious lineage. Herakleios’ mutilation of Athalarichos served to silence Athalarichos’ probable criticism of the marriage to Martina by implying the illegitimate son’s own hypocrisy, and (at least, in

¹⁴⁸³ Patlagean 1984: 410-411. On this law, and abduction in Byzantium more generally, see Burton 2000: esp. 381-382.

¹⁴⁸⁴ The story of Oholibah, who, even after the death of her sister for prostitution, continued her own ‘sinful ways’, states that God threatened all prostitutes that their lovers would ‘cut off your noses and your ears, and those of you who are left will be consumed by fire.’ Ezekiel 23:25.

¹⁴⁸⁵ It is briefly worth noting that the law was less concerned with a breach of marriage in these cases than with immoral sex itself. The symbolic association with sexual infidelity and betrayal was merely incidental: Humphreys 2015: 121.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Groebner 2008: 12-13, 73-75; Frembergen 2006: 243-260. A frequent assertion in medieval medical texts was the belief that semen was passed down from the brain through the veins behind the ears, and that cutting those veins would thus render a man sterile. On Hippocratic beliefs, see Pirsig 2001: 45; Cadden 1993: esp.16. Byzantine dreambooks often associated the nose, hair, and ears, with sexual prowess: Patlagean 1984: 423. Modern cultural practices of nose-cutting are also believed to exploit ideas of sexual symbolism relating to the nose. A wide-ranging summation is provided by Frembergen 2006: 243-247. The disfigured nose is also a symptom of advanced syphilis (a long-understood connection).

¹⁴⁸⁷ According to Nikephoros’ source, Herakleios’ brother, Theodoros, had harshly rebuked the union: ‘His sin is continually before him.’ Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 68-69. Kaegi 2003: 261 has even proposed that the ‘parade of infamy’ resulting from this statement was the reason Theodoros’ son, also named Theodoros, participated in Athalarichos’ conspiracy.

Herakleios' mind) confirmed Constantine III and Heraklonas' legitimate birth by comparison. Konstans II then denied Heraklonas' legitimacy by marking him (and mother and brothers) as crimes of incest, highlighting his own legitimate birth (as a child of Herakleios' lawfully born son, Constantine III) in the process.¹⁴⁸⁸

The clipping of Martina's tongue, aside from being an aberration from (usually) sparing imperial women, was perhaps an expression of personal discontent with her prominent, vocal, role in public matters.¹⁴⁸⁹ *Glossotomia* was an irregular political penalty.¹⁴⁹⁰ Its most conspicuous use was against the sons of Constantine V at Saint Mamas after a conspiracy against Eirene and Constantine VI (792). They were variously subjected to blinding and *glossotomia* dependent upon their perceived prominence, and *glossotomia* appears to have been considered a lesser penalty which probably did not involve the complete excision of the tongue.¹⁴⁹¹ Its next prominent use was against Constantine Barys for his attempted usurpation under Constantine IX, and then in 1255 against Nikephoros Alyates, the *epi tou kanikleiou*, for collusion with the 'European aristocracy' against Theodoros II.¹⁴⁹² On both occasions most important conspirators received the harshest treatment.¹⁴⁹³

¹⁴⁸⁸ In fact, Konstans' legitimacy was also contestable, since his mother Gregoria was a second cousin of Constantine and their union was therefore considered incestuous under the rules of consanguinity: Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 64-65; Mango 1985: 105, 113-114.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Garland 1999: 70. For the sparing of imperial women, see Head 1982: 43.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Here I disagree with Patlagean 1984: 414, that the penalty of *glossotomia* was the second most-practised method of removing potential rivals for the throne. There are only a handful of episodes in which it was employed, and that which side-lined the sons of Constantine V was exceptional in terms of the number of persons it marked (only four). If its near nonexistence in the narrative histories in this regard should be understood as more than just repeated authorial omission (as assuredly it must), the number of episodes in which it was employed are unlikely to have greatly exceeded single digits.

¹⁴⁹¹ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 468 (trans. Mango and Scott 643), names Christophoros, Niketas, Anthimos, and Eudokimos as the brothers subjected to *glossotomia*. Nikephoros, the former *kaisar*, on whose behalf the conspiracy was instigated, was blinded.

¹⁴⁹² For Bary's usurpation: *Vita S. Lazari auctore Gregorio Monacho* §105; Ševčenko 1979/1980: 725-726. On the conspiracy of 1255, see Puech 2011: esp.75-76.

¹⁴⁹³ Kourkouas was blinded along with the Bulgarian chieftain Bogdan, and Glabas and Goudelios. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 372 (trans. Wortley 351). Alyates was evidently considered a middling threat; Theodoros Philes the governor of Thessalonike, and Constantine, son of the governor of Serres were both blinded. Alexios Strategopoulos was removed from office; and Alexios Raoul the *protovestiaros* (whose sons were imprisoned), Constantine Tornikios the *mezas primmikerios*, and Georgios Zagarommates the *parakoimomenos*, were simply divested of their titles. Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 154-155 (trans.

Glossotomia represented the legal penalty for those found guilty of perjury.¹⁴⁹⁴ The *Oneirokritikon of Achmet* asserted that a king whose tongue was cut would descend into misrule and his enemies be victorious.¹⁴⁹⁵ At the time of *Achmet's* composition the connection between *glossotomia* and political mutilation was evidently common-knowledge and the interpretation relevant.¹⁴⁹⁶ The associations with disloyalty and perjury were also reflected in historical practice. In 662 Maximos the Confessor was tried for his refusal to accept Monotheletism, found guilty of heterodoxy, and had his hand and tongue amputated so that he could never again communicate heresy.¹⁴⁹⁷ This punishment mimicked another inflicted over seven-hundred years earlier: in 43 BCE, Cicero's hands and tongue were posthumously amputated as they were his instruments for profaning Caesar.¹⁴⁹⁸ The later practice was therefore consistent with Roman tradition, and the mutilation of Martina's tongue may have been understood as a traditional response to disloyalty and blasphemy. Possibly it was intended to indicate her alleged involvement in Constantine III's death, or as a lesser punishment for her incestuous marriage (profaning Chalcedonian canons).

Justinian's mutilation occurred over fifty years later when the tale of Constantine III's poisoning and Martina's usurpation on behalf of her sons was well known.¹⁴⁹⁹ The precedent of Constantine IV's brothers' disqualification was also available. Consequently, when Leontios ousted Justinian, he selected the traditional penalty of the Herakleian dynasty, and one connected with a famous populist uprising like his own. The sentences of Martina

Macrides 339-340); Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 41-43; 61.

¹⁴⁹⁴ *Ekloga* 17.2; Humphreys 2015: 181. Note also: Statute 28 of the *Farmer's Law* calls for *glossotomia* in cases where a herdsman commits perjury relating to the loss of an ox; and Statute 3.14 of the *Rhodian Sea-Law* (ed. Ashburner) calls for *glossotomia* in cases of perjury involving a contract. The association of *glossotomia* and perjury is confirmed by the dreambooks, where the tongue was a good omen for those involved in legal professions or attending the lawcourts. See, for example: *The Oneirocriticon of Daniel*, trans. Oberhelman p.73, §102 and n.118.

¹⁴⁹⁵ *The Oneirocriticon of Achmet*, trans. Oberhelman p.109, §62.

¹⁴⁹⁶ On the date of composition, see *The Oneirocriticon of Achmet*, trans. Oberhelman 13-14 (Introduction: *The Author*), which place it between the early-ninth and late-eleventh centuries.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 351 (trans. Mango and Scott 491).

¹⁴⁹⁸ Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, ed. Cary and Foster 47.8.3-4; Richlin 1999.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Konstans spread the story soon after their overthrow: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 342 (trans. Mango and Scott 475-476).

and her sons were combined; Justinian mutilated and with the stigma of tainted speech, which had always been derided in elite-culture where verbal dexterity was highly praised.¹⁵⁰⁰

Tiberios-Apsimaros merely followed precedent, with involvement by the Green faction and elements of the military and senate allowing him to present his revolt as yet another populist movement. The tradition was ended by Justinian's return in 705, when he simply beheaded Leontios and Tiberios-Apsimaros. His second reign marked the failure of *rhinokopia* as an exclusionary mutilation, but introduced that most commonly identified with Byzantium.

Blinding

Concurrent with the execution of the interloper emperors Justinian instigated a purge of political opponents. Patriarch Kallinikos, who had aided Leontios' rebellion became the first recorded victim of political blinding (τύφλωσις) in Byzantium.¹⁵⁰¹ In 709 Archbishop Felix of Ravenna became the second.¹⁵⁰²

In total, twelve senior emperors were subjected to blinding.¹⁵⁰³ The first of these, Philippikos, was taken captive by soldiers of the Opsikion *thema* as he returned from the Zeuxippus baths on 3 June 713. He was taken to the *Ornatorion* of the Greens, blinded, and

¹⁵⁰⁰ According to Anna Komnene, Alexios I was mocked by the captive Basilakios for his lisp when pronouncing 'ῥῶ' sounds, and John Italos was criticised for mispronouncing his syllables like a Latin who had studied Greek without truly mastering it. Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 30, 164-165 (trans. Frankopan 26, 149). Choniates decried the promotions of '...attendants from foreign-language [speaking] nations who spoke broken Greek and drivelled in their speech...' Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 204 (trans. Magoulias 116).

¹⁵⁰¹ Kallinikos was subsequently exiled to Rome. Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 102-105; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 375 (trans. Mango and Scott 523); Leon Grammatikos, *Chronographia*, ed. Bekker 169.

¹⁵⁰² Justinian supposedly dispatched the fleet to punish certain Ravenese citizens who had been involved with Leontios' revolt and blinded Felix as part of this punitive expedition. Felix was then imprisoned in Constantinople. Other victims were reportedly subjected to amputations, or simply executed. More likely the purge aimed to prevent potential civil-disobedience, in memory of the humiliation of the *protospatharios* Zacharias by the inhabitants in 693. (Following the interpretation of events suggested by Noble 1984: 20.) *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Vogel I, 389. Curiously, no account is provided by either Theophanes or Nikephoros. They were either unaware or assigned it less importance than events taking place in Kherson involving Philippikos.

¹⁵⁰³ These were (in order of their blinding): Philippikos (713), Artabasdos (742/743), Constantine VI (797), Michael V (1042), Romanos IV (1072), Andronikos I (1185), Isaakios II (1195), Alexios V (1204), Alexios III (1211), Ioannes IV (1261), Andronikos IV (1373), and Ioannes VII (1373). For citations, see Table 1.

exiled without the public's knowledge. The alleged perpetrators became the next victims when they were blinded and exiled by Artemios-Anastasios within a fortnight of their coup.¹⁵⁰⁴ Political blinding then recurred during the civil war between Artabasdos and Constantine V (c.741-742/743). When Artabasdos captured Constantinople (741) he blinded several of Constantine's loyalists.¹⁵⁰⁵ Constantine returned the favour in November 742/743, retaking the city and blinding the *asekretis* Athanasios and *domestikos* Artabasdos.¹⁵⁰⁶ When Artabasdos, his elder son Niketas the *monostrategos*, and his younger son the co-emperor Nikephoros, had were captured in 742/743 all three were publicly paraded, blinded, and exiled to the Monastery of Chora.¹⁵⁰⁷ Constantine's cousin Sisinnios, *strategos ton Thrakesion*, was blinded forty days later, possibly for a suspected usurpation.¹⁵⁰⁸

Herrin contends that the decision to blind Artabasdos, rather than simply executing him, can be attributed to his coronation. It would have been inappropriate, Herrin argues, for Artabasdos to have been executed even though he had gained the throne through usurpation.¹⁵⁰⁹ If this was the reasoning employed by Constantine, it suggests that he had accepted Artabasdos' coronation and reign as 'legitimate', or recognised that a substantial percentage of the population had. Execution would have risked making Artabasdos a martyr and could potentially have provoked loyalist revolts, whereas blinding and degradation publicly undermined Artabasdos' charismatic authority and capacity to lead an army, whilst

¹⁵⁰⁴ Probably as scapegoats aiding the emperor's penitential and reconciliatory efforts, and to rid him of politically toxic and potentially treacherous supporters: see above, page 220.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 134-135. This information is not corroborated by Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 415 (trans. Mango and Scott 575), who states that those punished were subject to scourging, tonsure, and imprisonment. It should be remembered that Theophanes' account presents a more sympathetic picture of Artabasdos in light of the author's criticisms of Constantine V.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Other figures were reportedly subjected to flogging, degradation parades, and beheading. Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 136-137; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 419-420 (trans. Mango and Scott 580-581).

¹⁵⁰⁷ Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 136-137; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 420-421 (trans. Mango and Scott 581). On the punishment of Artabasdos and his family, see Speck 1981: 34-36, 292-295; Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 160.

¹⁵⁰⁸ Rochow 1991: 157-159.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Herrin 2000: 62.

demonstrating clemency.¹⁵¹⁰ Artabasdos' overthrow also fell within the period of non-fatal dethronements beginning with Philippikos' blinding and ending with Leon V's murder (820). Executing emperors was temporarily 'unfashionable', with less than one fifth of conspiracies in this period resulting in execution.

Blinding's wider political role was established at the end of the eighth century after its use in suppressing a sequence of conspiracies. The *strategos ton Armeniakon*, Alexios Mousele, and Nikephoros, son of Constantine V, were both blinded by Constantine VI in 792. Nikephoros had been involved in conspiracies previously, and Mousele was considered a potential threat due to his popularity with the army.¹⁵¹¹ Mousele's troops subsequently broke into revolt and blinded the commanders of the imperial force sent against them. Constantine emerged victorious in 793 after uniting the other *themata* against the Armeniakon (whose turmarshs he sentenced to death).¹⁵¹² These penalties were imposed under dire circumstances for the dynasty and seemingly represented a 'last resort' for Constantine.¹⁵¹³ Eirene then famously blinded Constantine when she assumed sole rule (797), and used the penalty against the remaining sons of Constantine V (799) when their conspiracy with the Slavs and Helladic *thema* was uncovered.¹⁵¹⁴

The moral ambiguities of the penalty became subject to increasing debate. Constantine VIII believed it more humane than other measures,¹⁵¹⁵ and Akropolites detailed the 'compassionate' application of the law by Ioannes III after the conspiracy of Isaakios

¹⁵¹⁰ Artabasdos' tonsure and confinement in Constantinople also meant that he was kept close at hand, where Constantine could monitor potential conspiracies centred on the family.

¹⁵¹¹ The Armeniakon *thema* had declared Mousele their commander against Eirene's wishes in 790 when they had refused to swear the oath of fidelity to her alone.

¹⁵¹² Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 469 (trans. Mango and Scott 644).

¹⁵¹³ Theophanes even states that Constantine had been entreated to do so by Eirene, who told him that he would assuredly be overthrown if he refused: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 468 (trans. Mango and Scott 643).

¹⁵¹⁴ The brothers had been exiled to Athens soon after Eirene's usurpation. It appears they had taken sanctuary in Hagia Sophia, either under the mistaken belief that the populace would revolt against Eirene and proclaim one of them emperor, or for fear that Eirene would instigate a purge and have them executed or blinded. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 473 (trans. Mango and Scott 650).

¹⁵¹⁵ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 59; ed. Renauld I, 26 (trans. Sewter 54).

Nestongos (c.1224/1225) since only Nestongos and Makrenos were blinded.¹⁵¹⁶ However, censure of emperors who used blinding existed in Roman traditions about ‘bad’ emperors,¹⁵¹⁷ and Constantine VI’s punishments of Nikephoros, and Alexios Mousele, were called ‘unjust’ by Theophanes who considered Constantine’s blinding by Eirene to be divine recompense.¹⁵¹⁸ Tzimiskes’ blinding of Nikephoros and Leon Phokas was termed by Bardas Phokas, as ‘cruel’ and ‘inhuman’.¹⁵¹⁹ Psellos’ *Chronographia* outlined the fickle character of Constantine VIII which caused him to employ blindings ‘irrespective of high or low rank’ and without distinguishing crimes from suspicions.¹⁵²⁰ In the following century, Andronikos I garnered a reputation for cruelly blinding his opponents, inspiring the epithet *μισοφάης* (‘hater of the light’).¹⁵²¹ Imperial authorisation was a pre-requisite,¹⁵²² and escalation of punishment from warning, to exile/imprisonment, to blinding, became a customary response to repeated plotting that fell short of civil war. This was the progression used against Leon Tornikios, who was first exiled to Iberia, then tonsured in Constantinople, and finally blinded on Christmas Day 1047.¹⁵²³ Manuel I similarly dealt with Andronikos I’s conspiracies

¹⁵¹⁶ They were blinded and subjected to amputation of a hand. Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 36-37 (trans. Macrides 169). The merciful treatment of conspirators was also mentioned in Akropolites’ funeral oration for Ioannes. Akropolites, *Opera*, ed. Heisenberg II, 22.

¹⁵¹⁷ Nero (poorly sighted himself) reportedly inherited a penchant for blinding from his father, who had gouged the eye of a senator at the *Forum* for being ‘outspoken’, and himself mocked a certain Clodius Pollio (possibly one of his victims) as ‘The One-Eyed Man’. Suetonius, *Nero* 5 (on the senator’s blinding); 26.2 (on the gouging of Clodius Pollio’s eyes); 51.1 (on Nero’s poor vision). Domitianus, also poorly sighted, gouged the eyes of a steward who plotted to kill him, and was feared for the ferocity of his gaze. (Suetonius, *Domitianus* 1.1; 17.2. Commodus ridiculed his victims as ‘one-eyed’; Elagabalus found amusement in inviting eight one-eyed men to banquet with him. *The Historia Augusta*, ed. Magie, *Commodus* I, 10.6; *Elagabalus* II. 29.3. In blinding in the Roman context, see Trentin 2011: 199-203; Trentin 2013: 101-103.

¹⁵¹⁸ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 468, 472 (trans. Mango and Scott 643, 648-649).

¹⁵¹⁹ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 119 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 167).

¹⁵²⁰ Furthermore, after inflicting these punishments, Constantine’s mood would change, he would be brought to tears by his actions, and beg for forgiveness. In Psellos’ opinion, this remorse was the only feature that distinguished him from Basileios II (Psellos’ ‘tyrant’ prototype). Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 58-59; ed. Renaud I, 26 (trans. Sewter 54). On Basileios II’s presentation as a tyrant in the *Chronographia*, see Kaldellis 1999: 43, 54.

¹⁵²¹ καὶ οὗτος μισοφάης ὢν καὶ ταῖς τῶν ἀνδρῶν κόραις ἀκορέστως ἀντικαθέμενος τοῦ φωτὸς τούτους ἀποστρεῖ. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 264 (trans. Magoulias 147). He also earned the lament, ‘O, the light of how many eyes have you extinguished with your hot flow?’ ὦ πόσων ἔσβησας κόρας θερμότερον προχέθεν. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 295 (trans. Magoulias 164).

¹⁵²² Lampsidis 1949: 39-41.

¹⁵²³ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 30 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 50-51), emphasising that Leon and his co-conspirator Ioannes Vatatzes were taken before the emperor and blinded without being given a chance to speak: Καὶ μηδὲ λόγου τυχόντες, χερσὶ δημίῳ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἀποβάλλουσιν... ‘Without being given a

against him, first rebuking him in private, then imprisoning him, and finally issuing orders for his capture and blinding (c.1167-1179).¹⁵²⁴ The use of the penalty had to be deemed necessary or else an emperor could be revealed to be immoral.

The next impositions of blinding against emperors demonstrated this principle. In 1042 Michael V became the next imperial victim. The ‘commoners and craftsmen’ of Constantinople rebelled over his supposed maltreatment of Empress Zoe, proclaimed Theodora, and dragged Michael from the sanctuary of the Stoudios monastery. Despite receiving an oath assuring his safety, sworn on ‘holy relics’, Michael was publicly blinded at the Sigma with his uncle, the *kaisar* Constantine, and died within months.¹⁵²⁵ The sources indicate little public sympathy for his plight.

Thirty years later,¹⁵²⁶ Romanos IV was similarly tonsured and blinded after defeat in the civil war against his stepson Michael VII, who had been proclaimed *autokrator* after Romanos’ failure against the Turks at Manzikert. Like Michael, Romanos perished soon after, yet his fate proved contentious. Simply, the popular *consensus* of 1042 had not been replicated against Romanos. The twelfth-century *Timarion*, cast him as the Iliad’s Kebriones, the brave warrior who breached the Argive wall only to be slain by a stone that knocked out his eyes.¹⁵²⁷ Romanos proves a pitiable figure even in Hades, ‘[his eyes] had been gouged out with iron’, he could be heard groaning from afar, and poison ‘oozed’ from his mouth. The reader is reminded that ‘instead of being restored... he was overwhelmed by

chance to speak they were blinded at the hands of the executioners...’. We may infer that Constantine IX feared that potential support could be roused for Tornikios if he were allowed to speak.

¹⁵²⁴ For Andronikos’ conspiracies, see above, page 259. Note also the Manuel’s punishment of Manuel Kantakouzenos who was first advised to refrain from ‘rashness’, then confined in prison, and finally blinded after a probable escape attempt: Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 293-294 (trans. Brand 219-220). Manuel denied responsibility for the blinding, yet none of Kantakouzenos’ gaolers were subject to punishment for implementing it without permission.

¹⁵²⁵ Michael had died of his wounds by August 1042. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 240-243; ed. Renault I, 114-115 (trans. Sewter 149-150).

¹⁵²⁶ June 1072.

¹⁵²⁷ *Timarion*’s description of Romanos lying ‘great in his greatness, forgetful of his horsemanship, resembling not a man that eats grain so much as a wooded peak’ is taken from the account of Kebriones’ death and the struggle to retrieve his body. Homer, *Iliad* XVI, 726-776. *Timarion*, ed. Romano 20 (trans. Baldwin 56).

a revolt and by treachery, being blinded... in spite of an oath.’¹⁵²⁸ Aside from the addition of poisoning,¹⁵²⁹ this version provides an accurate summation of events. Some of Michael’s contemporaries were equally shocked at Romanos’ treatment by him. Psellos hints at the backlash by providing an *apologia* for the decision and endeavouring to shield Michael from direct involvement. Alongside defamatory descriptions of Romanos as deceptive and self-serving he had supposedly rejected earlier offers of peace.¹⁵³⁰ Psellos confessed reluctance to discuss the blinding, contended that it should never have taken place, but conceded that political instability had necessitated it: an authorisation based on the needs of the state, rejecting ethical or legal impediments to Romanos’ mutilation.¹⁵³¹ Nevertheless, Psellos insisted that the emperor’s advisors (read Ioannes Doukas) authorised Romanos’ blinding without Michael’s knowledge,¹⁵³² and that Michael shed tears for Romanos and would have continued mourning had he not feared ‘public resentment’.¹⁵³³

Attaleiates, writing under Nikephoros III, had been involved in Romanos’ disastrous campaign and was more direct in apportioning guilt. He adopted structural and linguistic conceits associated with tragedy and martyrdom, casting Romanos in that vein.¹⁵³⁴ Romanos’ eyes, which ‘even beamed beauty out’, were praised at his first mention.¹⁵³⁵ He was someone who ‘laid down his life for the welfare of the Romans’, and was repaid by an

¹⁵²⁸ *Timarion*, ed. Romano 20-22 (trans. Baldwin 56-57).

¹⁵²⁹ Presumably believed to be the cause of his death, although this is not made clear. Possibly this addition to the ‘Diogenes legend’ was rumoured after his death, or promoted by Botaneiates to discredit Michael VII.

¹⁵³⁰ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 353-352; ed. Renauld II, 168 (trans. Sewter 362). See also Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 128-129, confirming the peace offer and ‘amnesty’ for his actions.

¹⁵³¹ ‘... an action which should not have happened, but – to repeat what I just said in only a slightly different way – which *had to happen at all costs*: the former on account of piety and religious scruple against cruelty, the latter on account of the state of things (*τὰ πράγματα*) and the precariousness of the moment.’ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 360-361; ed. Renauld II, 171-172 (trans. Sewter 365). Kaldellis 2015: 51, also considers this a moral justification parsed on the basis of the needs of the people and state.

¹⁵³² A charge repeated by *Skylitzes Continuatus*, ed. Tsolakakis 154-155; Zonaras, *Epitome*, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 705-706.

¹⁵³³ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 356, 360-363; ed. Renauld II, 170, 171-172 (trans. Sewter 363, 365-366). See also, Braounou-Pietsch 2010, for a discussion (and translation) of Psellos ‘Letter to Romanos’, in which Michael VII’s remorse and tears were adduced for a wider audience.

¹⁵³⁴ Papaioannou 2012: esp. 162-165.

¹⁵³⁵ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 99 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 180-181).

executioner who ‘belonged to the race of God-killers’ (an Christological comparison).¹⁵³⁶ The Jewish executioner’s involvement was not intended to distance the event from Romano-Orthodox hands, but to indicate the indignity of the act. The cruelty of Romanos’ blinding was contrasted with his amiable treatment by the Turks, and Attaleiates attributed blame to Michael: ‘As for you, O emperor, what was this order that you gave? ...you will give in to your rage and frenzied and insatiable lust to rule and show no respect either for his monastic status or for your mother’s breast, which you shared with his sons, your brothers.’¹⁵³⁷

The later *Material* of Bryennios, confirmed the sense of horror, asserting that Andronikos Doukas had asked the *kaisar* Ioannes to intervene as it would become a cause for divine retribution.¹⁵³⁸ Divine recompense in the form of Nikephoros’ usurpation was also alluded to by Attaleiates,¹⁵³⁹ which may indicate that Nikephoros’ propaganda exploited Romanos’ blinding as proof of Michael’s ‘illegitimacy’. And Nikephoros went further: in December 1079, he issued a *chrysobull* reviving Theodosios’ thirty-day delay before a capital sentence could be carried out.¹⁵⁴⁰ It (theoretically) restricted imperial powers, and exploited Michael’s unpopularity with the church by inviting the patriarch to regularly remind emperors of political exiles.¹⁵⁴¹ Crucially, the law was not addressed to Nikephoros, who already accepted its validity, but his successors.¹⁵⁴² It implied that lawful order was being restored, something Nikephoros’ predecessors had neglected and successors should

¹⁵³⁶ ... τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ψυχὴν θέντος ὑπὲρ πάσης τῆς Ῥωμαίων εὐετηρίας... Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 178 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 322-325).

¹⁵³⁷ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 176-177 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 320-321).

¹⁵³⁸ Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 138-139.

¹⁵³⁹ Ὀψεται δὲ πάντως καὶ σέ ποτε ὄμμα τιτανῶδες καὶ κρόνιον καὶ τὰς τύχας σοι πρὸς τὴν ὁμοίαν παραστήσει κακότητα. ‘One way or another, a day will come when an Evil Eye, Titanic and Kronian, will turn its gaze upon you and push your fortunes to the same evil fate.’ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 177 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 320-321).

¹⁵⁴⁰ Capital sentences included, ‘a fatal blow... the severance of a hand, or the *gouging of his eyes*...’ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 315 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 574-575). Emphasis added.

¹⁵⁴¹ It stipulated that his predecessor’s relatives and servants could not be punished or subjected to confiscations without due process, was confirmed by the senate and synod, and deposited at Hagia Sophia. Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 313-318 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 570-581; Dölger and Wirth 1977: § 1047. See also, Gouillard 1959-60: 29-41; Laiou 1994: esp. 178-181; Burgmann 1994; Angold 1995: 38.

¹⁵⁴² A point emphasised by Burgmann 1994: 255.

follow. The blinding of Romanos could not have been overlooked in reference to this law, and Laiou argues that its promulgation was a response.¹⁵⁴³ Consequently, Nikephoros exploited popular and elite opinion to undermine Michael's reputation and differentiate rhetorically his authority. The importance of legal sanction is evident in Doukai and Nikephorian propaganda. In the former, Romanos' blinding was performed for the people and state, in the latter Michael acted extra-legally and perjured himself.

The cultural impact of Romanos' blinding also influenced Alexios I's propagandists, who endeavoured to ameliorate his association with political mutilations. The *Alexias* begins by clarifying the record of Alexios' service under Michael and Nikephoros. Allegedly, Roussel's blinding was merely a ruse to quell his partisans after his capture. Roussel played along as Alexios mimed blinding him, and 'roared like a lion' to feign agony. Although he appeared to have been blinded, when his bindings were removed from his eyes they were whole and 'fiercely blazing'.¹⁵⁴⁴ Bryennios the Elder was captured by Alexios, but it was Borilos who escorted him to Constantinople, blinding him en-route.¹⁵⁴⁵ Basilakios was maimed in similar circumstances: Alexios offered assurance, but Basilakios ignored the offer, was captured, and blinded by Botaneiates' agents.¹⁵⁴⁶ The denials continue during Alexios' rule. The blinding in exile of Nikephoros Diogenes supposedly began as a rumour spread by Alexios in order to prevent Diogenes' partisans from reviving their conspiracy.¹⁵⁴⁷ However, 'certain men' decided to blind Diogenes for real alongside co-conspirator Kekaumenos Katakalon, without Alexios' authorisation. Anna admits uncertainty, claiming an inability to discover the truth,¹⁵⁴⁸ yet this belies her authoritative account and suggests

¹⁵⁴³ Laiou 1994: 180.

¹⁵⁴⁴ ...τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς πυρῶπὸν ἀπαστράπτοντας. Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 16-17 (trans. Frankopan 13-15).

¹⁵⁴⁵ This Borilos is the same figure that later called for Alexios to be blinded, sparking the Komnenian revolt. Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 27 (trans. Frankopan 23-24). A sequence corroborated by Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. Gautier 282-283.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 33 (trans. Frankopan 29).

¹⁵⁴⁷ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 277 (trans. Frankopan 255).

¹⁵⁴⁸ 'These events have been the subject of controversy ever since...' Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and

historical revisionism was at work. The blinding of Pseudo-Diogenes was ordered by Anna Dalassena, similarly distancing Alexios from involvement;¹⁵⁴⁹ and even Alexios' decisions to blind Michael Anemas and Gregoras Taronites, who were independently spared, were deemed 'pretences'.¹⁵⁵⁰

We would be excessively naïve to clear Alexios of involvement in all of these blindings, as Anna intends. Instead, it seems that he had developed a bad reputation as a result of his role in Roussel's blinding and the capture of victims under Nikephoros (who had exploited the cruelty of the penalty to help justify his usurpation). Elsewhere, Anna comments that the population of Adrianople had refused to acclaim her father during his rebellion because they still blamed him for Bryennios' fate; which reveals Alexios' association with the blinding rather than Borilos'.¹⁵⁵¹ Alexios then exacerbated this reputation with the handful of blindings of prominent figures during his reign. The misdeeds of his soldiers during the capture of Constantinople could not have lessened this violent image. Anna, writing after Ioannes II had eclipsed Alexios as a 'merciful' ruler, sought to revive him.

The negative perception of blinding at the end of the eleventh century nevertheless failed to prevent its use. Although Ioannes II and Manuel I were more restrained in imposing it,¹⁵⁵² the final decades of the twelfth century witnessed a significant revival. Four of the five emperors crowned immediately before the capture of Constantinople became victims.

Kambylis 279 (trans. Frankopan 257).

¹⁵⁴⁹ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 292-293 (trans. Frankopan 271).

¹⁵⁵⁰ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 377-378 (trans. Frankopan 350). See also, Adontz 1936: 24-26.

¹⁵⁵¹ A far more likely belief given that Alexios' fame, and responsibility for the victory and capture. Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 71 (trans. Frankopan 66).

¹⁵⁵² Ioannes blinded nobody, Manuel was only slightly less restrained: using the penalty against Theodoros Stypeiotes and Manuel Kantakouzenos, and issuing an order (that was never executed) for the future Andronikos I to be blinded after his second conspiracy against him came to light. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 111-115 (trans. Magoulias 63-66); Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 293-294 (trans. Brand 219-220); Kresten 1978.

Andronikos I was subjected to various tortures including the gouging of one of his eyes.¹⁵⁵³ Isaakios II was blinded and tonsured immediately after Alexios III's proclamation.¹⁵⁵⁴ And Alexios was then responsible for the blinding of Alexios V (October/November 1204).¹⁵⁵⁵ Angelos had Doukas blinded and left him for the Latins before fleeing to Thessaly.¹⁵⁵⁶ Doukas was captured, found guilty of treason against Alexios IV, and thrown from the Column of Theodosios.¹⁵⁵⁷ Angelos himself became the next imperial victim when he was captured by his son-in-law Theodoros I after the Battle of Antioch on the Maeander (1211), divested, tonsured, and blinded with the approval of the senate and army.¹⁵⁵⁸ In the next centuries, Michael VIII blinded Ioannes IV, and in 1373 Andronikos IV and Ioannes VII were maimed in one eye after their revolt against Ioannes V.¹⁵⁵⁹ Blinding's return, after its relative absence for most of the twelfth century, was probably due to the need to permanently disqualify opponents at a time of perpetual revolution. Its debarring reputation can be read in Akropolites' assertion that c.1237 Theodoros Komnenos Doukas claimed that he 'did not wish to be called emperor, because of the condition of his eyes, but named his son Ioannes emperor.'¹⁵⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵³ September 1185. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 349 (trans. Magoulias 192).

¹⁵⁵⁴ Isaakios was tonsured at the monastery at Vera, southern Thrace (1195). Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 452 (trans. Magoulias 248).

¹⁵⁵⁵ After the latter had usurped the throne from the restored Isaakios II (and Alexios IV), lost Constantinople to the Crusaders, and joined Angelos near Mosynopolis bringing Angelos' wife and daughter's with him.

¹⁵⁵⁶ It seems probable that more preferable future marriage alliances and genuine distrust were responsible for this betrayal. Angelos was still calling himself *basileus* and *autokrator*, probably considered another emperor who had been crowned at Constantinople to be a threat, and later married his daughter Euphrosyne (Doukas' wife) to Leon Sgouros the autocephalous ruler of Corinth (from c.1201/1202 to 1208), naming him *despotes* in exchange for protection and military aid in reclaiming the throne. See above, page 116, and footnote 570.

¹⁵⁵⁷ In the Forum Tauri. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 608-609 (trans. Magoulias 334). The curious method of execution (to my knowledge unattested for any other Byzantine usurper or emperor) appears to have been influenced by cultural practices known to Baldwin I as Count of Flanders. The story of Marcus Manlius, a Roman consul, who was thrown from the Tarpeian rock on suspicion of desiring to establish a 'tyranny', was popular in medieval France. Manlius' fate was known as a punishment for 'usurpers': Winn 2015: 191-216.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Οί δὲ τῆς συγκλήτου καὶ τοῦ στρατοῦ τὸ διαφέρον αἰτήσαντες καὶ λαβόντες αὐτὸν, αἰτίαν προσάψαντες τὴν αὐτῶν πρὸς τὸν σουλτάνον προδοσίαν καὶ τῶν χωρῶν τῶν Ρωμαϊκῶν, μετὰ δίκην στεροῦσι τοῦ φάουσι τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν... Skoutariotes, *Synopsis Chronike*, ed. Sathas 457. Skoutariotes' invocation of the senate and army thus affirms 'legality' through the notion of political *consensus*.

¹⁵⁵⁹ The revolt was in collaboration with Sultan Murad I's son, Savci Bey. Andronikos and Ioannes were lucky to receive such mild punishment as Murad had pressed for their executions alongside Savci: Nicol 1993: 277.

¹⁵⁶⁰ Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 61 (trans. Macrides 207). Theodoros had been blinded by the Bulgarian ruler Asan after his defeat at the battle of Klonitza in 1230. Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 43

Executioners were trained in several procedures.¹⁵⁶¹ Destruction with a knife or pins (έκκοπή) regularly caused death through secondary infections, potentially one of the reasons for its use.¹⁵⁶² ‘Blinding by fire’ (πήρωση) used a heated implement, to indirectly damage the retina and allowed some victims to retain a modicum of functional vision.¹⁵⁶³ The latter procedure was considered the least aesthetically damaging and the most ‘humane’, hence Michael VIII received sardonic praise for choosing it for Ioannes IV.¹⁵⁶⁴ There were no provisions for the prevention of infections, and bandages/bindings were primarily aesthetic.¹⁵⁶⁵ Victims were to be rendered helpless, since they would always require assistance in their daily life.

Blindness also held symbolic connotations in Byzantine society. Theophanes invoked the ‘sun-king’ ideology for Constantine VI by suggesting that two solar eclipses from that period were a direct response to his maiming.¹⁵⁶⁶ The imperial splendour, like the light of the sun, was being denied to humanity. The destruction of one’s eyes was in some sense a destruction of individuality. Imperial panegyric required remarks about the imperial visage, and the eyes were considered indicative of personality.¹⁵⁶⁷ Acts of *damnatio*

(trans. Macrides 182).

¹⁵⁶¹ The blinding of Romanos IV, for example, was said to have been badly performed because his unnamed Jewish executioner had not been properly trained: Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 178 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 322-323). See also, Lascarotos and Marketos 1992; Herrin 2000: 56-57.

¹⁵⁶² Lascarotos and Marketos 1992: esp. 135, 142.

¹⁵⁶³ The potential to retain functional vision was probably why Roussel appeared not to have been harmed by his ‘feigned’ blinding by Alexios I (performed with a heated iron) and explains Anna’s pun about his ‘eyes fiercely blazing’. Less commonly, boiling oil or vinegar were used, a method Doukas attributes for the partial blinding of Andronikos IV and Ioannes VII: Lascarotos and Marketos 1992: 138-140, 143.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 256-257, in recording the mutilation of Ioannes IV commented:... τοῦτο μόνον φιλανθρωπευσασμένων τῶν περι τὸν Ἐξώτροχον ἐξυπηρετουμένων τῷ μιᾶρῳ τολμήματι τὸ μὴ σιδήροις ἐκπυρωθεῖσι τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς λθμήνασθαι, ἀλλ’ ἠχείῳ τινὶ πυρωθέντι ἐπὶ τῶν ὄψεων φερομένῳ ἐξοπτῆσαι τῷ νεανίσκῳ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς, ἀπομαρανθέντας τῇ ἐκπυρώσει καὶ ἡρέμα σβεσθέντας τὸ ὀπτικόν. ‘...the only gesture of humanity offered by Exôtrochos and the other executors of this shameful attack, was damaging his eyes without using hot iron [pins], but burning the boy’s eyes by holding a heated cylinder before them; they were consumed by fire and slowly lost their sight.’

¹⁵⁶⁵ The transportation of Romanos IV to Constantinople, for example, did not include medical assistance of any kind. Attaleiates’ uncensored account states that the emperor’s wound remained untended and exposed, became infected, and infested with maggots. Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 179 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 324-325). On the solely aesthetic value of the binding cloths, see Lascarotos and Marketos 1992: 141.

¹⁵⁶⁶ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 472 (trans. Mango and Scott 649); Patlagean 1984: 423-424; Herrin 2000: 65.

¹⁵⁶⁷ According to Ammianus, upon proclaiming Julian the troops sought to assess his character by ‘gazing long

traditionally involved disfigurement of the face, and especially the eyes, on statues and coins.¹⁵⁶⁸ After Maxentius' death his imperial images were mutilated and their facial features show signs of repeated attack. The sensory 'power' of the images was being negated and signs of life expunged.¹⁵⁶⁹ Therefore, it is probably not a coincidence that blinding became established against the background of Iconomachy. The struggle over images led to numerous mutilations of religious and lay figures in this period.¹⁵⁷⁰ The blinding of icons was also attested as part of iconoclast practice¹⁵⁷¹ wherein the covering or destruction of the icon's eyes inhibited its power.¹⁵⁷² Other forms of facial disfigurement became an important part of this struggle: Theophilos ordered the faces of the iconophile 'Graptoi' saints tattooed with verses documenting their crime and punishment.¹⁵⁷³ As Ousterhout notes, '[this

and earnestly at eyes at once delightful and terrible... as if they were examining those ancient books which interpret physical characteristics': Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum*, 15.8.16. See also, Psellos' remark that Basileios II's eyes 'were neither deep-set (denoting cruelty and violence) nor too protuberant (a sign of indolence), but shone with a manly glow'. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 50-51; ed. Renauld I, 22 (trans. Sewter 48). Translation adapted. An anonymous *ekphrasis* commemorating the jousts of Manuel I gave special prominence to the emperor's eyes: 'The eyes of the sun-king have a novel look... They are like violets in hue, eyes such as Homer described in hexameters with reference to the eyes of Athena, who is wisdom, with flashing glances, moist with all desire, and "washed with milk", as the Scripture says, "as if by pools of waters."' trans. Jones and Maguire 2002: 106-107. The quotation is preceded by descriptions of how Manuel's hair was cut to reveal his eyes. His eyebrows did not press down heavily upon them, but were graceful and symmetrical. His cheeks were endowed 'with the full measure of desire that comes from the eyes.'

¹⁵⁶⁸ Varner 2004: esp. 3; Kristensen 2016: 335.

¹⁵⁶⁹ Varner 2004: esp. 216-219; Freedberg 1989; Trentin 2013: 101, noting '... it is the power of the gaze that motivates one to harm the eye(s) of an individual.'

¹⁵⁷⁰ In an incident in 764, a group of nineteen monks were subjected to a degradation parade and blinded, probably for their involvement in an attempted coup: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 437-438 (trans. Mango and Scott 605). Constantine V was reportedly responsible for numerous mass blindings of Iconophile monks, among a variety of other tortures and executions: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 442 (trans. Mango and Scott 610).

¹⁵⁷¹ The ninth-century Patriarch Ioannes Grammatikos (in)famously ordered a servant to gouge the eyes of an icon of Christ, the Mother of God and the Archangels at the monastery to which he was exiled by Theodora, allegedly remarking 'I cannot bear to look upon its form' (...ὡς «τὴν αὐτῆς οὐ δύναμαι μορφὴν ἐνορᾶν»). The destruction of the icons' eyes was said to have prevented their gaze from descending upon him. The story was found in the common source of *Theophanes Continuatus* and *Genesios: Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 157-158; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 224-225; *Genesios*, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 59 (trans. Kaldellis 75). On Ioannes' fate and the various narrative traditions surrounding his life after his exile, see Lemerle 1971: 144-145, n.152. It is also important to bear in mind the influence of later iconophile propaganda and narrative traditions on the presentation of the iconoclasts, and, in fact, a policy of covering or whitewashing icons seems to have been preferred to their outright destruction: Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 199-212.

¹⁵⁷² The principle of extramission, although not exclusively, explained one's ability to see. It held that the eye was active and sought out the object of its focus. To see an object was, in a sense, to understand and touch an object. Icons were not inanimate objects but were imbued with this same ability to perceive and understand those who entreated them. On Byzantine theories of extramission, see Nelson 2000.

¹⁵⁷³ On the tattooing of the *Graptoi*, Theodoros and Theophanes, see: *The Life of Michael the Synkellos*, ed. Cunningham 7-17, esp. 16 (*Introduction*), 84-97, esp. §20 (*Text*), 151, n.107 (*Commentary*); Jones 1987;

represented] an important symbolic moment in the history of iconoclasm, when the venerators of images are themselves defaced.’¹⁵⁷⁴ And, significantly, blinding was the antithesis of the biblical metaphor for gaining faith: Christ’s symbolic baptism of the blind men which also restored their sight.¹⁵⁷⁵

Exclusionary and sacrilegious connotations of blindness also emerge in sources that influenced Byzantine culture. Sightless were often linked with the gift of ‘inner vision’, recompense for their disability.¹⁵⁷⁶ Blindness was also indicative of divine punishment:¹⁵⁷⁷ transgressing sacred boundaries and glimpsing the Gods were frequent causes in mythology,¹⁵⁷⁸ and Oedipus blinded himself when he discovered Jocasta’s identity. The symbolic value of these traditions coexisted with contemporary Byzantine interpretations of blinding; hence Romanos IV’s comparison to Kebriones.¹⁵⁷⁹ In Byzantine dreambooks the eyes symbolised ‘faith, reputation, and spiritual illumination’; blindness connoted a loss of faith, short life, or public shaming; a blind emperor would lose his kingdom and die.¹⁵⁸⁰ The fourteenth-century dreambook attributed to Manuel II, offered two interpretations: first, that a blind man in one’s home indicated a conspiracy. If he recovered sight in one eye the secret

Ousterhout 2015: 100; Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 395. Genesios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 52 (trans. Kaldellis 68), says that the tattooing was ‘in the manner of the Scythians’. Either the practice was then highly unusual, or Genesios (or his source) sought to *other* the emperor’s choice of penalty to suggest barbarism.

¹⁵⁷⁴ Ousterhout 2015: 100.

¹⁵⁷⁵ In the Gospels, six blind men were healed by Christ and joined the Christian community. Two who already followed Jesus in Jericho (Matthew 9:27-34); two who sat by the way in Jericho (Matthew 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43); one at Bethesda (Mark 8:23-26); and a man who was born blind and healed at Siloam (John 9:1-12). The healing of Siloam, a ‘water miracle’ in which Jesus cured blindness by rubbing mud onto Siloam’s eyes and then washing it away, had obvious baptismal connotations and was often depicted in Byzantine miracle cycles. Hoskyns 1947: 363-365; Kazhdan et al 1991: I, 298.

¹⁵⁷⁶ Homer was referred to as the ‘Blind Bard’ by many ancient sources: Peirano 2013: esp. 258. The famous seers Teiresias (mythical) and Euenius (historical) were both blind. The latter, in legend, exchanged his sight for ‘the faculty of divination’ offered to him by Apollo and Zeus, and the story was used as a foundation myth by certain lines of seers. Flower 2008: 37 and n.40, 51.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Trentin 2013: esp. 94-106.

¹⁵⁷⁸ Teiresias was blinded because he unwittingly witnessed Athena bathing, Aipyros was blinded and died after entering the temple of Poseidon Hippios at Mantinea. Kelley 2007: 43.

¹⁵⁷⁹ The comparison of Romanos IV with Kebriones, for example.

¹⁵⁸⁰ But ‘large and beautiful’ eyes signified state prosperity and the defeat of foes. Additionally, cataracts were symbolic of impending military defeats for the emperor or the illness of his children. *The Oneirocriticon of Achmet*, ed. Oberhelman p.105, §52; p.106, §53.

would be half revealed, if both eyes the secret would be fully revealed.¹⁵⁸¹ And second, that ‘the eyes are judged as friends and beloved relatives. If someone dreams that he lost one of his eyes or even both of them, he will be deprived of much loved friends and blood relatives.’¹⁵⁸² Evidently, *Manuel* was invoking recent events within the Palaiologan dynasty (Andronikos IV’s usurpation and partial blinding) and connected the penalty with political morality. Dreambooks thus partially reaffirmed the historic religious symbolism, but unmistakably associated blindness with the mechanics of rulership and conspiracy. That dreambooks allowed for an emperor to be deposed reveals both a pragmatic acceptance of historic practice and their subversive potential. They were not strictly beholden to dynastic-legitimist propaganda but reflect contemporary thought about the impermanence of the imperial position. The pitiable social-stigma attached to sightlessness is implicit, and political blinding associated with shame and ostracism.

Although blinding was not absent in ancient Roman practice it was far less common than the death penalty.¹⁵⁸³ Lampsidis concluded that it was imported from Persia, where Procopius attests to its use in a variety of forms.¹⁵⁸⁴ The Carolingians appropriated Byzantine practice and occasionally prescribed blinding for rebellious relatives.¹⁵⁸⁵ The *Ekloga* introduced blinding (combined with exile) solely as a punishment for theft from a church

¹⁵⁸¹ *The Oneirocriticon of Manuel II*, ed. Oberhelman p.196, §5. On the dating and authorship, see *The Oneirocriticon of Manuel II*, ed. Oberhelman p.14-16 (*Authors, Dates and Texts*).

¹⁵⁸² *The Oneirocriticon of Manuel II*, ed. Oberhelman p.206, §22.

¹⁵⁸³ Nevertheless, like other mutilations it was not known in Roman law: Berger 1953: 489-490 (*Humiliores*); Patlagean 1984; Herrin 2000: 58; Humphreys 2015: 181.

¹⁵⁸⁴ Lampsidis 1949; Procopius, *History of the Wars* I.6, 16-17. On this passage, see Cameron 1985: 155. The methods ranged from boiling olive oil to heated needles. Blinding was prominently used against Shah Djamsap by his brother, the restored Kavadh I (c.499). For background and chronology, see Kia 2016: 253-254. The Sassanids used it against dynastic rivals: most prominently, in 309CE, the new-born Shapur II was crowned after the disbaring-blinding of his brothers by nobles seeking to control the throne. The unexpected elevation even led to the mythical tale that he had been crowned *in utero*. Furthermore, in 590, Shah Hormisdas was killed in a rebellion led by the satrap Bahram, but, before his execution, was blinded to prevent him from escaping or contesting rulership. Theophylaktos Simokattes, *Historia*, ed. de Boor 170-171 (trans. Whitby 111); Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 264-265 (trans. Mango and Scott 387).

¹⁵⁸⁵ King Bernard of Italy, for example, was seized at Chalon in April 818, found guilty of rebellion and condemned and blinded. He succumbed to his injuries two days later. The lay-conspirators were also blinded, and clerics deposed and imprisoned. On this episode and the penalty of blinding in the medieval West, see Bührer-Thierry 1998; Costambeys, Innes, and Maclean 2011: 204; Herrin 2000: 67; Stone 2012: 109, 168, 182.

sanctuary. By comparison, the more general crime of theft from a church necessitated only tonsure and exile.¹⁵⁸⁶ The *Farmer's Law* prescribed its use in three statutes vis-à-vis serious crimes detrimental to livelihood, community, and trade.¹⁵⁸⁷ Leon VI's *Novel 72*, regarding the criminal penalties for unlawfully gouging another's eyes, emphasised the penalty's perceived gravity: an offender would not receive like punishment, but the victim would be recompensed for the injury.¹⁵⁸⁸ The legal history thus confirms that victims were to be associated with figures accused of sacrilege or the worst kinds of theft and activities, necessitating ostracism.

Blinding contrasted the rhetorical-ideological artifice of imperial divine appointment with the mutilation's historic association with religious transgressions. Its frequent coupling with tonsure reinforced its 'sacrilegious' symbolism. Justinian II's initial disfigurement of two ecclesiastics and the penalty's adoption in the period of Iconomachy evidently sought to cast victims as heretics. Offenders were habitually marked as social pariahs, and additional meaning could be attached to the act dependent upon the interpreter's education.

Degradation ceremonies

Depending upon the prominence of the victim, and the political circumstances of the moment, the implementation of a penalty might be combined with a ceremonial 'parade of infamy'. The essential format was inherited from ancient Rome and constituted a traditional feature of triumphs, but infamy parades increasingly came to be performed independently of

¹⁵⁸⁶ *Ekloga* 17.15.

¹⁵⁸⁷ These concerned the theft of livestock, wheat, and wine, or causing the death of livestock in an attempted theft. Ashburner 1910: p.103, p.106, §42, §68, §69; Patlagean 1984: 409-410. The penalty was primarily linked with the loss of livestock through theft, which necessitated immediate blinding of the guilty party. By contrast, it was only to be used as a penalty for the theft of wheat or wine after the culprit was apprehended for a third time: first transgressions warranted whipping; second, reimbursement equal to twice the value of the stolen goods. It was evidently reserved for the more severe crimes appropriate to a pastoralist setting.

¹⁵⁸⁸ They were to receive half of the perpetrator's property: Patlagean 1984: 411. This reflects legal thought in the West, closely connected with nose- and tongue-cutting, in which victims received financial recompense: Herrin 2000: 60.

a ‘triumph’ per se.¹⁵⁸⁹ Termed ‘status degradation ceremonies’ by sociologists, these were communicative events that generated and exploited communal moral indignation towards identified persons in order to detrimentally affect their public identity. Parades communicated a victims’ guilt, forced them to adjust their behaviour by modifying their role within the community thereafter, or precipitated their withdrawal from society.¹⁵⁹⁰ In order to be successful, the ceremony and the victim had to be recognised as ‘standing out of the ordinary’, and comprehended as the antithesis of an ideal citizen.¹⁵⁹¹ Consequently, a range of humiliations could be employed as necessary, and variants existed to distinguish the degradation of the living from that of the dead. First, we shall examine the living.

A victim’s disgrace began before the parade when measures were taken to prepare him for public scorn. Flagellation, amputations, or beatings, might be performed during imprisonment. The most common preparatory element transformed the victim’s appearance by removing his hair and beard. As Maguire notes, the shearing of the victim’s hair, especially those with imperial pretensions, reversed a familiar *topos* of Komnenian imperial panegyric, namely the eulogising of the emperor’s hair.¹⁵⁹² The humiliations of Anemas and Taronites (c.1106/7), involved both men being shorn.¹⁵⁹³ Baldness was a regular source of mockery: when Andronikos I was shaved for his execution, he was said to resemble ‘an egg, shining before all’.¹⁵⁹⁴ Ioannes Doukas’ bald head made several appearances in Choniates’ *Historia*: reportedly inducing amusement at the moment of Isaakios II’s proclamation, and laughter when it shone ‘like a full moon’ at Alexios III’s coronation.¹⁵⁹⁵ By contrast, a child’s

¹⁵⁸⁹ McCormick 1986: 186-187, notes that by the ninth century these parades were usually enacted independently from a triumph.

¹⁵⁹⁰ Garfinkel 1956: esp. 421.

¹⁵⁹¹ Garfinkel 1956: 422.

¹⁵⁹² Maguire 2013: 422. Perhaps these important ideological symbolisms make sense of Ioannes II’s reported penchant for checking the style/cut of his relatives’ and subordinates’ hair: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 46-47 (trans. Magoulias 27).

¹⁵⁹³ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 374-375, 377 (trans. Frankopan 347, 350).

¹⁵⁹⁴ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 349 (trans. Magoulias 192).

¹⁵⁹⁵ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 345, 458-459 (trans. Magoulias 190, 251-252). On the Byzantines’ mockery of baldness, see Garland 1990: esp. 17-18; Magdalino 2007: esp. 59, 66.

first haircut, or a baptismal haircut, were celebrated ritual moments.¹⁵⁹⁶ Shaving was an eighth-century penalty for sexual crimes and (like tonsure) implied social abnormality.¹⁵⁹⁷ Beardlessness connoted shame after beards became symbols of masculinity in the sixth century and were depicted on coins as a means of distinguishing between senior emperors and junior colleagues.¹⁵⁹⁸ The former were traditionally portrayed with the full beard historically associated with philosopher emperors, signifying able rulership.¹⁵⁹⁹ The beardlessness of undereducated minors, or effeminate eunuchs thus provided a scornful context in which to ridicule failed imperial aspirations. In the late eleventh century the beard acquired additional importance as a symbol of cultural pride in opposition to the clean-shaven Latins.¹⁶⁰⁰ Thus the victim was ‘othered’ before the public parade had even begun.

There was no formal procedure or route that a parade had to take, although a small number of destinations became associated with particular penalties. Victims were marched through the ‘streets and marketplaces’ of the city before a final sentence was enacted. In practice this meant the ceremonial heart near the Senate and Great Palace, and emulated the routes chosen for triumphs.¹⁶⁰¹ Anemas was paraded to the Hippodrome, and the thirteenth-century humiliation involving Manuel Holobolos, involved a detour past Hagia Sophia in order to ‘intimidate the clergy’ supporting Arsenios.¹⁶⁰² The Hippodrome, Forum Bovis, Sigma, Covered Hippodrome, and Amastrion, constituted the most common termini if a mutilation or execution was to be enacted. The Hippodrome was also the preferred

¹⁵⁹⁶ On the significance of these events, see Rapp 2016: 12, 88-89, 259; Baun 2013; Dagron 2003: 46-47. Note also that Leon VI’s reconciliation with Basileios I was noted for the clipping of Leon’s hair as part of his restoration to precedence.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Patlagean 1984: 406; *Ekloga* 17.29, lists it as a penalty for men who had union with a virgin and were unwilling to marry her, or unable to remunerate her family.

¹⁵⁹⁸ On the shameful connotations of beardlessness, see *The Oneirocriticon of Achmet*, ed. Oberhelman 94-95, 99; *The Oneirocriticon of Daniel*, ed. Oberhelman 71; *The Oneirocriticon of Nikephoros*, ed. Oberhelman 129; *The Anonymous Oneirocriticon*, ed. Oberhelman 175; *The Oneirocriticon of Manuel II*, ed. Oberhelman 206.

¹⁵⁹⁹ On the ‘philosophical’ association of the beard, which presumably also held connotations of *paideia*, see Elsner 1998: 60-61.

¹⁶⁰⁰ Kazhdan et al 1991: I, 274.

¹⁶⁰¹ McCormick 1986. Phocas, for example, was paraded from the *Augusteon* along the *Mese*: Mango 2000: 173-186.

¹⁶⁰² Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 258-259; II, 502-505.

destination if an emperor decided to show mercy to a victim, in person. Each site provided space for the public to observe subsequent proceedings and held political symbolism as locations of popular (or imperial) power.

The ride of disgrace, in which the victim was mounted astride an ass or mule, was another recurring component. Mellinkoff has outlined its uses in a variety of contexts throughout time-periods and cultures.¹⁶⁰³ In 426, the execution of the usurper John was preceded by amputations and his procession through the hippodrome at Aquileia atop an ass.¹⁶⁰⁴ The supporters of Thomas the Slav were likewise paraded through the Hippodrome of Constantinople before being exiled,¹⁶⁰⁵ and Michael V to the Sigma on the back of a mule before being blinded.¹⁶⁰⁶ From the eighth century, entering the Hippodrome via the *Diippon* Gate was an additional indicator of disgrace: notably, the restorations of Justinian II and Constantine V were marked by races at which their defeated rivals were processed through this gate.¹⁶⁰⁷ Flags drew further attention, while forcibly riding backwards invited additional humiliation.¹⁶⁰⁸ The procession of Anemas and his co-conspirators involved their being driven through an unspecified palace courtyard, and the agorae, mounted backwards astride oxen.¹⁶⁰⁹ A foremost dishonour was to hold the tail. This offered no stabilising support for the rider or functional control over the animal but was visually dissonant ‘slapstick’ humour.¹⁶¹⁰ Donkeys and mules were symbols of dishonour chosen to demean the figures

¹⁶⁰³ Mellinkoff 1973.

¹⁶⁰⁴ Ζώντα δὲ Βαλεντινιανὸς Ἰωάννην λαβὼν ἔν τε τῷ Ἀκυληίας ἵπποδρομίῳ τὴν ἑτέραν ταῖν χερσῶν ἀποκοπέντα εἰσήγεν ἐπόμευσέ τε ὄνῳ ὀχούμενον, καὶ πολλὰ παρὰ τῶν ἀπὸ σκηνῆς ἐνταῦθα παθόντα τε καὶ ἀκούσαντα ἔκτεινεν. ‘And Valentinian took John alive, and he brought him out in the hippodrome of Aquileia with one of his hands cut off and caused him to ride in state on an ass, and then after he had suffered much ill treatment from the stage-performers there, both in word and in deed, he put him to death.’ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, III.3.4-9.

¹⁶⁰⁵ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 70-71; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 102-103; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 41 (trans. Wortley 44).

¹⁶⁰⁶ Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Perez Martin 17 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 26-27).

¹⁶⁰⁷ Mango 1950: 152.

¹⁶⁰⁸ Andronikos I so paraded the *protosebastos* Alexios ‘preceded by a flag tightened on a cane’: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 249 (trans. Magoulias 147-148).

¹⁶⁰⁹ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch 273-276 (trans. Frankopan 345-348). See also, Smythe 2006: 133.

¹⁶¹⁰ Mellinkoff 1973: 174.

astride them, who were usually associated with ‘noble’ equine sports.¹⁶¹¹ Attaleiates called the mule ‘pitiful and wretched’, ‘an object of ridicule’.¹⁶¹² Dreambooks associated them with exile and considered them ‘very evil’ because their mixed breeding and inability to have offspring made them ‘mischievous and mean’ (perhaps connecting their use in parades with sexual slander of the victim).¹⁶¹³ Bakhtin’s theory of the grotesque is also suggested, in connection with the medieval propensity for scatological humour, since lifting the tail exposed another of Bakhtin’s ‘body hells’, in the form of an animal already viewed with ridicule.¹⁶¹⁴

In hagiography, waste products of the body were celebrated aspects of the grotesque associated with madness and the devil, as something to be avoided.¹⁶¹⁵ The mentally ill lived near their own ordure, even consuming it.¹⁶¹⁶ Parades similarly invoked this framework of ‘grotesque realism’, with excrement assuming a mocking role concurrent with its ability to provoke disgust and ridicule.¹⁶¹⁷ Constantinou, commenting on a patient of a healing saint provides an approximation of this status: ‘[the victim] lies somewhere between life and death, still oozing and flowing. He is filthy, dirty, and smelly. His state is offensive to the senses, and therefore he is treated as taboo.’¹⁶¹⁸ Waste products served as manifestations of

¹⁶¹¹ Horses were associated with high-status and royalty in Byzantium. Royal sports like *tzykanion* (a form of polo adopted from the Sassanians) made use of the animal and for the most part high-officials and military members rode horses, with others in society using donkeys: Morrison and Sodini 2002: 200; Haldon 2005: 32. Legal codes, reinforced social status by denying Jews the right to ride horses: Kazhdan et al. 1991: I, 122.

¹⁶¹² ... ἡμίονοι τῶν εὐτελεστέρων καὶ ταπεινῶν φόρτον τοῦτον τιθέασιν καταγέλαστον... Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 17 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 26-27).

¹⁶¹³ *The Oneirocriticon of Achmet*, ed. Oberhelman 232; *The Oneirocriticon of Germanus*, ed. Oberhelman 157; *The Oneirocriticon of Manuel II*, ed. Oberhelman 196, 202. See also, *The Oneirocriticon of Daniel*, ed. Oberhelman 66, 68.

¹⁶¹⁴ It should be noted that Mellinkoff 1973: 175, has documented cases from elsewhere in medieval Europe in which the ride involved the victim being tied with their face forced against the animal’s anus. Although I am not aware of any comparable references to this practice in Byzantium, it is possible that this did happen, especially given the recourse to scatological elements in parades (see below).

¹⁶¹⁵ On the products of the body as an element of the grotesque: Bakhtin 1984: 317, noting that the functions of the material body, ‘eating, drinking, defecation, and other elimination ...as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, [and] swallowing up by another body [lay at the heart of grotesque realism].’ On these elements in hagiography (particularly that concerning healing saints), see Constantinou 2010: esp. 46-47.

¹⁶¹⁶ Constantinou 2010: 51-52.

¹⁶¹⁷ Bakhtin 1984: 152.

¹⁶¹⁸ Constantinou 2010: 49.

contempt which also altered the victim's appearance and 'othered' him.¹⁶¹⁹ Faeces darkened him, rendering him 'ugly', 'shameful', or 'malformed'.¹⁶²⁰ Darkened skin invited mocking comments like those directed towards Manuel I when a Venetian crew parodied his coronation.¹⁶²¹ The triumphal procession marking Georgios Maniakes' defeat, involved captives shaved, mounted, and with features obscured by faeces.¹⁶²² Andronikos I was pelted with excrement and urine, with the crowd using sponges to smear his face and eyes.¹⁶²³ The process was essentially a *damnatio* of the (imperial) visage: an inverted 'whitewashing' performed on a living victim in order to erase their identity.

The dominance of the state was also expressed through forced divestiture. Forced nudity was used against several of Phocas' victims, and against Andronikos I during his execution.¹⁶²⁴ Disrobing mirrored the destruction of status that these rituals aspired to achieve since the victim was publicly divested of the attire associated with his former identity, which he had been deemed unworthy of possessing (simultaneously reinforcing his loss of agency), and constituted a potent sexual shaming in accordance with Christian notions of original sin.¹⁶²⁵ Anemas and his co-conspirators were made to wear sack cloths typical of rituals of penance and submission, where their willing adoption was considered a praiseworthy debasement. By contrast, forced adoption for degradation ceremonies merely communicated a humiliating lack of agency. The recurrent theme of absurdity also allowed

¹⁶¹⁹ The public were actively encouraged to spit upon the victims, Theophanes, *Chronographia* 441 (trans. Mango and Scott 609-610).

¹⁶²⁰ On the Byzantine's aesthetic association of dark skin with ugliness, see Hatzaki 2009: 35. Dreambooks regularly refer to dark skin as symbolic of shame or disease, they connect it with periods of sorrow. Washing dirt off one's head or arms is said to indicate escaping from trouble, and white skin was deemed 'exceedingly auspicious': *The Oneirocriticon of Daniel*, trans. Oberhelman 66, 70; *The Oneirocriticon of Nikephoros*, trans. Oberhelman 125; *The Anonymous Oneirocriticon*, trans. Oberhelman 175.

¹⁶²¹ The dark-skinned Ethiopian parodying Manuel also inverted the sun-king *topos*, pronouncing, 'I am black and beautiful, because the sun has looked askance at me.' Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 86 (trans. Magoulias 50-51); Maguire 2013: 421.

¹⁶²² Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 14-23; ed. Renauld II, 4-17 (trans. Sewter 194-199).

¹⁶²³ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 349-350 (trans. Magoulias 192-193).

¹⁶²⁴ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 294 (trans. Mango and Scott 423).

¹⁶²⁵ On divestiture as a denial of identity, see Shepard 2013: 345-346. On the divestiture as a means of sexual shaming, see Maleon 2010a: 12.

inversions of gender norms via forced transvestitism. In 1047 the rebel Theophilos Erotikos was paraded in the Hippodrome wearing women's clothing.¹⁶²⁶ Outright sexual slander was also invited. *Theophanes Continuatus* described how the songs and melodies accompanying infamy parades were supplemented by dancing and music, and deemed these elements 'worthy of a brothel'.¹⁶²⁷ Anemas' parade was attended by a song in the 'vulgar tongue' concerning 'those rebels wearing horns': implying that Anemas and his co-conspirators were cuckolds.¹⁶²⁸ And Choniates' noted that Andronikos' paternity was bought into question by the crowds.¹⁶²⁹ Identity and legitimacy of birth, interrelated concepts (especially for 'noble' aristocrats) were ridiculed and redefined throughout the parade.

Yet another ritual disgrace might be enacted at the terminus if the emperor was present. The defeated opponent could be forced to perform *supplicatio* through *proskynesis*, entreating the emperor to show mercy by sparing his life. In form, the *supplicatio* closely resembled ritual acts of reconciliation and public penance (with the emperor in place of the divinity),¹⁶³⁰ but often without the reintegration or restitution of the supplicant into the community as an equal. The emperor's quasi-saintly, and judicial, charismata were undoubtedly strengthened by the imitation. Justinian's triumph of 534, celebrating the successful campaign against the Vandal King Gelimer, exploited both stages of this

¹⁶²⁶ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 429 (trans. Wortley 404); McCormick 1986: 179. Note also, that after the loss of Rhason (1129/1130) the commander Kritoplos was paraded through the streets of Constantinople dressed in women's attire, atop an ass. Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 12 (trans. Brand 19). On the use of women's attire in these parades, see Magdalino 2007b: 68.

¹⁶²⁷ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 245. In 601, when Maurice barely escaped public unrest on the occasion of the Feast of the Purification, the public placed a man resembling Maurice, dressed in black and crowned with garlic stalks, upon an ass and paraded him through the streets. This mocking ride was accompanied by a chant in the vernacular tongue: 'He found his heifer tender and soft,| and he fucked her like the proverbial young cock,| and fathered children like chips off the block. |Now no one dares speak; he's muzzled us all. | My holy Lord, my holy Lord, fearful and mighty,| let him have it on the head to stop his conceit,| and I'll bring you the great bull in thanksgiving.' Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 283 (trans. Mango and Scott 408). For other attestations of comic and mocking chants and verses, see Garland 1990: esp. 13-14; Maguire 2013: 418.

¹⁶²⁸ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 375 (trans. Frankopan 347).

¹⁶²⁹ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 350 (trans. Magoulias 193).

¹⁶³⁰ Dalewski 2008: 48.

ritual.¹⁶³¹ Gelimer was brought to Constantinople as a prisoner being led by Belisarius, who had recently been accused of ‘aspiring to tyranny’. Justinian used the triumph to communicate his own supremacy. Belisarius was made to process on foot, not horseback, a gesture unlikely to have been missed given the rarity with which prominent figures walked within the city.¹⁶³² He performed *proskynesis* with Gelimer in the Hippodrome, prior to Gelimer’s *calcatio*. The visual uniformity of the two figures’ gestures would have been striking, and there can be little doubt that observers would have understood Belisarius’ *supplicatio* alongside Gelimer as denoting anything other than joint subordination. Justinian’s political primacy was thus reinforced through this gesture at a time of political uncertainty, and Belisarius’ triumph became Justinian’s.¹⁶³³

After the entreaty, the emperor might implement the custom of *calcatio colli* (*trachelismos*), the ritual trampling of the neck, which signified the brutalisation of the defeated opponent, his absolute subjugation, and the emperor’s authority to grant life or death.¹⁶³⁴ In 610, Herakleios used *calcatio* to humiliate the usurper-emperor Phocas in front of a select audience of officials and supporters, before parading Phocas’ decapitated head through the city streets.¹⁶³⁵ In 706, Justinian II’s parade and execution of Leontios and Tiberios-Apsimaros in the Hippodrome included ritual trampling. Roman custom was combined with Christian kingship suggesting the usurpers’ sacrilege, for the crowd allegedly intoned Psalm 90: ‘You have set your foot on the asp and the basilisk, and you have trodden on the lion and the serpent!’¹⁶³⁶ *Calcatio* was used against Thomas the Slav after his betrayal

¹⁶³¹ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, ed. Dewing II, 278-283.

¹⁶³² McCormick 1986: 127 n.202.

¹⁶³³ The best study of the political motives and symbolism of the triumph is that of Börm 2013: noting, that there was no resistance or uproar to/against the popular general’s treatment by the emperor—a testament, perhaps, to Justinian’s successful reapportioning of blame for the massacre of the Nika Rioters. On the triumph of 534, see Pazdernik 2006: esp. 200-205; McCormick 1986: 125-129; Cameron 1985: 138-139.

¹⁶³⁴ Malone 2009: esp. 60-63.

¹⁶³⁵ On the sources (and potential locations) for this *calcatio*, see McCormick 1986: 70.

¹⁶³⁶ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 375 (trans. Mango and Scott 523). On the possible dates, see Head 1972: 116; McCormick 1986: 73.

to Michael II at Adrianople, and called a ‘custom’.¹⁶³⁷ Unusually for the period, Thomas’ degradation was not performed in Constantinople, but at Adrianople in front of the now reunified army. This staging concealed his popularity with the troops and emphasised the failure of his endeavour to those with questionable loyalty by having them bear witness.¹⁶³⁸ To my knowledge, the last reference to a *calcatio* pertains to Andronikos I, who entreated Alexios II to perform one in 1182 (independent of a parade).¹⁶³⁹

The parades have been explained as a temporary inversion of social hierarchy and identity, yet this is a slight mischaracterisation.¹⁶⁴⁰ In fact, parades enacted a ritual destruction of a person’s old identity, and revealed their new ‘true’ identity.¹⁶⁴¹ Humbling was total, reducing victims to the lowest in society. Social hierarchies were not temporarily inverted, but wholly redefined. An ‘aristocrat’ was no longer an aristocrat, but someone lower than the mob. Future restoration of status was not guaranteed and was irrelevant for the duration of the parade. Although restoration was a possible outcome, popular memory (and disfigurements) perpetuated a victim’s disgrace, ensuring ongoing shame and taunting, and permanently redefining his identity in the public sphere. The public humiliation of Herakleios’ brother Theodoros, as his sole punishment after questioning Herakleios’ marriage to Martina, is evidence of its perceived retributive value.¹⁶⁴² As McCormick notes,

[the] celebrations provide a counterproof to the positive evidence of the aristocracy’s desire to be seen in honourable positions in honourable parades. The humiliation... must have been an extraordinary one for the scions of the great families of Byzantium since, on more than one occasion,

¹⁶³⁷ Thomas was betrayed to Michael’s besieging army in October 823. *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 69; ed. Codoñer and Featherstone 102-103.

¹⁶³⁸ McCormick 1986: 144-146; Lemerle 1965: Anastasios, Thomas’ second adopted son and heir, received identical punishment after his capture at Byzantium: *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 70-71; ed. Codoñer and Featherstone 104-105.

¹⁶³⁹ Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville-Jones 36-37. This was undoubtedly part of his ritual displays of deference to Alexios II, performed when Andronikos had assumed real power upon entry to Constantinople in 1182.

¹⁶⁴⁰ Heher 2015a: esp. 19.

¹⁶⁴¹ Garfinkel 1956: 421-422, commenting that by the end, the victim was revealed as what, ‘after all’, they had always been.

¹⁶⁴² Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 68-69.

it replaced the death penalty.¹⁶⁴³

Structurally, degradation ceremonies inverted those of inauguration rituals.¹⁶⁴⁴ As we have seen, traditional sites/routes associated with consensus politics and investiture were utilised. Ritual elements of the *adventus* were reversed: pure white horses exchanged for beasts of burden,¹⁶⁴⁵ the legitimising acclamation transformed into insulting denunciations, crowns of garlic stalks or viscera replaced the imperial diadem,¹⁶⁴⁶ the imperial insignia were supplanted by humbling attire or nudity, affluence with effluence. The ritual reinforced power-relations of the emperor and public by having them ratify his authority in direct opposition to his defeated opponent. The usurper's failure was given ritual form which denounced him for 'unlawfully' acting against *consensus* and made him the target of it.¹⁶⁴⁷ Where inauguration ritually legitimised the *basileus*' election, degradation ritually legitimised a tyrant's deposition.

These events were 'filled with the spirit of carnival, which liberates the world from all that is dark and terrifying: it takes away all fears and is therefore completely gay and bright.'¹⁶⁴⁸ Consequently, the centripetal forces which had sparked the *ataxia* of conspiracy or civil war were temporarily masked, a new unity forged through the laughter and communal spirit directed against recognised enemies of state. In ancient Rome, the population was encouraged to participate in similar rituals engendering solidarity among the body politic through the shared execution of 'non-persons' like slaves, captives, or rebellious subjects.¹⁶⁴⁹ They became part of the penal system whilst retaining their character as public

¹⁶⁴³ McCormick 1986: 186.

¹⁶⁴⁴ Garfinkel 1956: 421, noting that by design they always must.

¹⁶⁴⁵ The contrast was especially apparent in the degradation of captives as part of triumphal processions. The captive troops of Georgios Maniakes, for example, were forced to ride on donkeys whilst the victorious general Stephanos the *sebastophoros*, rode a pure white horse. Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 428 (trans. Wortley 402-403); Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. 20 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 32-33).

¹⁶⁴⁶ Andronikos I was allegedly crowned with garlic stalks, Michael Anemas with animal intestines.

¹⁶⁴⁷ Beihammer 2013: 198, on this political function of the ceremonial as used by Isaakios II against Andronikos.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Bakhtin 1984: 26.

¹⁶⁴⁹ Robinson 2007: 196; Maleon 2010a:10.

spectacles glorifying the state. Yet, as Robinson notes, their judicial value remained critical, for they provided a contrast with private executions which might be perceived as murder, and gave popular sanction to public executions intended as deterrents.¹⁶⁵⁰ The community bore witness to the emperor's safeguarding/reconstitution of state *taxis* on their behalf, through the implementation of the law.

Emperors could not act as private individuals with personal complaints. Their grievances had to be presented as those of the whole community for the ceremony to succeed in providing the semblance of popular authorisation. Emperors had to identify themselves as representative of the *politeia*, its *ethos*, and will. They drew upon commonly held and verified experiences, and what they claimed to be true had to be understood as true by witnesses.¹⁶⁵¹ Failure to invoke *consensus*, risked suggesting that they acted unjustly and immorally, exposing *basileia* as tyrannical.¹⁶⁵²

Ostensibly, parades represented an opportunity for the people to 'interact' with the emperor (or his representatives) and express 'their' will in a ritual-freed context. Anna Komnene asserted 'people of all ages' were present, and narratives typically emphasised inclusivity through the agency of women in the crowd.¹⁶⁵³ The presentation of the populace as agents in the victim's humiliation was essential. In some narratives imperial representatives were wholly (or largely) absent, and the people act as denouncers enacting the law. Psellos' description of Michael V's parade,¹⁶⁵⁴ and Choniates' narrative of Andronikos', read as if the Constantinopolitan crowds acted spontaneously in forcibly

¹⁶⁵⁰ Robinson 2007: 196 and n.51, quoting A. Alison: 'Private execution in prison is pure judicial murder; for it is unattended with only the circumstance that can justify the taking away of life – the exhibition of an example which may deter others.'

¹⁶⁵¹ Garfinkel 1956: 423-424.

¹⁶⁵² See the comments of Magdalino 2007: 63-64: on the need for emperors to employ derision carefully and in specific contexts, or else risk condemnation.

¹⁶⁵³ ἅπαντα μὲν οὖν ἡλικία ἐς τὴν τοιαύτην θέαν συνέτρεχεν... Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 375 (trans. Frankopan 347).

¹⁶⁵⁴ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 236-243; ed. Renauld I, 113-116 (trans. Sewter 148-150). See also, Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 420-421 (trans. Wortley 395).

marching them. Michael was dragged from the Stoudios and through the streets by the ‘mob’, and Choniates mentions only the ‘people of the marketplace’ and Latin executioners as those overseeing Andronikos.¹⁶⁵⁵ Both authors bore witness to the scenes they described and scholarship has tended to accept these narratives *prima facie*.¹⁶⁵⁶ Andronikos’ parade has even been read as evidence ‘for the lack of imperial authority in Constantinople after the death of Manuel’.¹⁶⁵⁷ Yet, this recurring image of public spontaneity, which undoubtedly was intended, was a façade. Psellos recounts rebuking Michael and the *nobelissimos* Constantine in the presence of Theodora’s newly-appointed *eparchos*, guardsmen, and other notables, before the pair were dragged from the Stoudios.¹⁶⁵⁸ Andronikos had been kept prisoner for several days at the Anemas whilst Isaakios secured the Great Palace. He had been tortured, including by aristocrats he had persecuted.¹⁶⁵⁹ In both cases, delays allowed preparations to be made, and the crowd to be calmed/controlled. The division between private (elite/aristocratic) rebukes, preparatory tortures, and public parades, also tells us that these were carefully devised sequences.¹⁶⁶⁰ The presence of imperial guardsmen indicates that crowd controls were in operation.¹⁶⁶¹ Attacks during the parade were traditional and expected, so too the routes and destinations.¹⁶⁶² Neither case appears excessively extemporaneous. However, the suggestion of imperial absence in favour of public ‘spontaneity’ was useful, and confirms aspects of contemporary political thought: the people decided who the emperor was, they deposed the unworthy, and punished the immoral

¹⁶⁵⁵ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 349 (trans. Magoulias 193).

¹⁶⁵⁶ Charanis 1978: 72-73; C.M. Brand 1968: 73, ‘The city mob had not lost any of the liking for bloodshed... the circumstances of his elevation to the throne compelled him to allow the populace to destroy their former hero and saviour.’ Garland 1992: 39-40, ‘The ex-emperor was abused and mocked with great savagery by the citizens...’ Maleon 2010a: 17, ‘[Andronikos I’s] ordeal was not a strictly organised execution, but the gross manifestation of his subjects.’ Kaldellis 2015: 130, ‘There is no hint in our main source, Niketas Choniates, that this was anything but a popular action.’ For a more critical interpretation of events with regard to Andronikos, see Beihammer 2013: 197-198 (in large-part followed here).

¹⁶⁵⁷ Heher 2015a: 19.

¹⁶⁵⁸ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 230-235; ed. Renauld I, 109-112 (trans. Sewter 145-146).

¹⁶⁵⁹ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 342 (trans. Magoulias 192).

¹⁶⁶⁰ A detail astutely noted by Beihammer 2013: 198, in reference to Andronikos.

¹⁶⁶¹ As do the choices of termini. On crowd controls during triumphs and parades, see McCormick 1986: 94.

¹⁶⁶² The Sigma and Hippodrome respectively.

(although, in reality, they were often simply enacting the imperial will).

Alongside showcasing popular discontent with the victim(s), ‘spontaneity’ distanced emperors from acts potentially deemed cruel or abhorrent. Psellos regretted his collusion with the crowd against Michael, Choniates condemned those involved in Andronikos’ procession, and church officials were never present.¹⁶⁶³ Yet close reading and comparisons with other parades, indicates just how diligently ‘absent’ emperors monitored proceedings. Theodora’s representatives were present throughout and oversaw Michael’s handover to the crowd’s leaders:¹⁶⁶⁴ a normal occurrence, since we know that by the eighth century parades were organised with representatives of the *πολιται* and *δημόται*.¹⁶⁶⁵ Executioners arrived with fresh orders from Theodora, and senators accompanied the crowd’s leaders, even consoling Michael.¹⁶⁶⁶ Anemas’ procession equally suggested Alexios’ absence from proceedings. Yet Anna Komnene and her sisters observed from the Palace windows ‘in secret’ and were joined by Eirene. They entreated Alexios to intervene and spare Anemas’ sight before he passed ‘The Hands’, beyond which there could be no clemency. Alexios did so through a messenger.¹⁶⁶⁷ Alexios’ supposed response to the emotional *consensus* of the crowd aside, his merciful decision indicates either how attentively he monitored proceedings in order to achieve a last-minute intervention, or how prearranged parades were. Furthermore, there was an imperial presence, albeit at the Palace. Anna’s explanation of the judicial significance of ‘The Hands’ outlines that interventions were anticipated.¹⁶⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶³ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 234-235; ed. Renauld I, 112 (trans. Sewter 147), comments: ‘For my own part, I thought that their [the mob’s] turbulence would go no further. I was still fascinated by the drama of the thing.’

¹⁶⁶⁴ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 236-239; ed. Renauld I, 113-114 (trans. Sewter 148).

¹⁶⁶⁵ McCormick 1986: 135. Thus the ‘handover’ of prisoners from ‘imperial’ (judicial) representatives to ‘public’ representatives would have been a commonality of degradation parades.

¹⁶⁶⁶ Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri I, 238-241; ed. Renauld I, 114 (trans. Sewter 149); Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 17 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 26-27).

¹⁶⁶⁷ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 375-376 (trans. Frankopan 348). See also, Buckley 2014: esp. 232-235; Smythe 2013: 263-264, commenting on the classical construction and gender divisions of Anna’s first person account of this episode, and the orchestrated structure of the ceremony she describes.

¹⁶⁶⁸ ‘Either the pardon arrives on the near side of the hands, in which case the unfortunate criminals are snatched from danger; or they pass by the hands, and there is no more salvation. For my part, I attribute everything to the Providence of God, which on that occasion rescued the man from blinding. For it was God, it seems to me,

Anemas' alleged last-minute prayers for forgiveness, directed at the palace, suggest that it was generally understood that emperors would observe proceedings.¹⁶⁶⁹ Even if Michael's actions were exaggerated, Anna's readers were expected to understand the significance of his entreaties towards the palace. Andronikos I was purportedly seen observing the procession and execution of Constantine Makrodoukas and Andronikos Doukas from the upper floors of the Mangana, and Alexios III was seen looking down on Ioannes Komnenos(-Axouchos) from the Blachernai.¹⁶⁷⁰ We may wonder if these appearances were actually variations of the Komnenian *prokypsis* or reflect historic appearances in the *kathisma*.¹⁶⁷¹

Anemas' reprieve is additionally instructive of the propaganda value of clemency mid-ritual. Alexios' intervention portrayed as merciful an unpopular emperor associated with cruel blindings and other misdeeds. It magnified his *philanthropia* before a populace already united against Anemas, but who were 'moved to tears and lamentations' by his prospective blinding.¹⁶⁷² It also implied Alexios' unshaken sense of security after uncovering this conspiracy involving prominent Anatolian military families, and senators.¹⁶⁷³ In 607, Phocas had similarly granted mercy to the *demarchs* Theophanes and Pamphilos, who had

who on that day moved us to pity him.' Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 376 (trans. Frankopan 348-349). Note that Anna constructs the narrative so that all of the family were moved to pity by Anemas' plight; the inclusivity of the parade and its ritual-freed emotion was extended to the whole of society, including the imperial family. An emotional *consensus* was invoked, and Alexios responded to it.

¹⁶⁶⁹ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 375 (trans. Frankopan 347). It is interesting to consider that Anna creates a dualism at this point in the narrative since Alexios is said to have been deep in prayers (presumably for Anemas) from the start of the parade, but was moved to intervene when Anemas himself resorted to prayer. Might there be an inference that Alexios' decision to spare Anemas, stemming from the 'emotional *consensus*' was God-inspired, and thus provide proof of Alexios' authority and moral qualification in contrast to the pitiable and treacherous Anemas?

¹⁶⁷⁰ For Andronikos I, see Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 293 (trans. Magoulias 162). For Alexios III, see Mesarites, *Die Palastrevolution des Johannes Komnenos*, ed. Heisenberg 46, 48. We may add that in 1281 Michael VIII was seen observing the triumphal procession of prisoners from above, in the Blachernai Palace: Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent II, 651. See also, Macrides 2013a: 278; Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov 371-372 (*Studies*) listing other such appearances by emperors.

¹⁶⁷¹ On the ritual of *prokypsis*, see Jeffreys 1987; Magdalino 1993: 240. Jeffreys dates the ritual's origins to the reign of Manuel I, near the passage of the First Crusade (1147).

¹⁶⁷² ... ἅπαντα φύσις πρὸς δάκρυον καὶ οἰμωγὰς κενίηται... Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 375 (trans. Frankopan 347-348).

¹⁶⁷³ The plot of Ioannes Solomon, for which Anemas was paraded, had the support of Anemas' brothers, the Antiokhoi, Exzenos Doukas and Hylis, Niketas Kastamonites, the Kourtikioi, and Georgios Basilakios. Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 372 (trans. Frankopan 344); Cheynet 1990: 90-103, 366-368.

(treasonably) placed the *laurata* of Phocas' daughter, Domentzia, and son-in-law Priscus, on columns with his own.¹⁶⁷⁴ The *demarchs'* executions during the consular races were commuted thanks to the pleas of the populace.¹⁶⁷⁵ Where execution would have hurt Phocas' image (given the divided loyalties of the crowd) mercy allowed him to act in accordance with the popular will, appease it, and castigate treason.

What remains to be seen?

Ritual degradations of the deceased were similar to those of the living, and the body was used to ritually communicate shame and mortality. Control over the deceased's remains represented the ultimate form of power over their memory. Imperial funerals were grand procedures and observers commented when they were substandard.¹⁶⁷⁶ Ideally, ante-mortem preparations of the soul (baptism and penance) were the first stage.¹⁶⁷⁷ Post-mortem the deceased was washed, perfumed, and wrapped in burial-swaddling clothes, before (typically) being adorned with the *divitision*, *chlamys*, purple/red *kampagia*, and finally the diadem.¹⁶⁷⁸ The body was laid in *prothesis* facing east and, following acclamations for the successor, transported in formal procession from the palace to the mausoleum.¹⁶⁷⁹ The procession represented the final public ceremony of the deceased emperor, and offered an opportunity to renew support for the dynasty. Emotion was displayed by the crowd and those processing,¹⁶⁸⁰ as grief was to be shared. Finally, after funerary psalms were performed, the

¹⁶⁷⁴ Phocas interpreted this as treason and even changed the inscriptions of his coinage to denote *his* supremacy. Grierson 1973: III.1, 454; Morrisson 2013: 73.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 294 (trans. Mango and Scott 423); Bury 1889: 202.

¹⁶⁷⁶ Karlin-Hayter 1991a.

¹⁶⁷⁷ Karlin-Hayter 1991a: 121-126.

¹⁶⁷⁸ Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, ed. Reiske II, 84 (Moffatt and Tall II, 84). Variations in burial attire were permitted, however: Michael IV and Manuel I, for example, were buried in their monks' habits. Karlin-Hayter 1991a: 126-127. On the Greek and Roman influences on Byzantine funerary rites, see Koukoules 1951: IV, 141-185, and esp. 156-157; Tritsaroli and Valentin 2008: esp. 94.

¹⁶⁷⁹ Karlin-Hayter 1991a: 129-139.

¹⁶⁸⁰ Karlin-Hayter 1991a: 138.

body was interred and the diadem removed.¹⁶⁸¹ Interment signified the moment of succession. Private funerals followed the same pattern, but on a much reduced scale.¹⁶⁸² They usually took place two or three days after death, when the body was taken to church for the *epicede* psalm, and then to the cemetery for burial. By the fifth and sixth centuries prohibitions on burial grounds within cities gave way to church graveyards and designated categories of burial. There were ‘correct’ places for the body to be interred.¹⁶⁸³ Orthodox funerary rites and mortuary practices aided the eternal soul’s ascent.

The deliberate interruption and denial of these rites symbolically condemned the deceased’s soul and required witnesses. The hated *Caesar* Gallus, for example, was divested of his attire, beheaded, subjected to posthumous mutilations, and abandoned in public.¹⁶⁸⁴ The seventh-century *skribon*, Makrobios, was executed at the Hebdomon and displayed on a spear for conspiring against Phocas.¹⁶⁸⁵ And the purge that followed Justinian II’s restoration witnessed numerous impalements along the city walls near Blachernai.¹⁶⁸⁶ These locations were not incidental. Each was an accessible space in which the corpse could be easily seen, and held associations with wronged or legitimising factions. Gallus was left to rot in a public space, representative of those public persons he had wronged in the East. The choice of the Hebdomon for Makrobios’ execution provided a warning to disloyal troops, but also testifies to the military’s political importance at that time since they were granted the proof of his death and were being courted for Phocas’ continued protection. The walls of the city provided height so that Justinian’s victims were prominently displayed to passers-

¹⁶⁸¹ Karlin-Hayter 1991a: 140-141.

¹⁶⁸² On Byzantine burial practices more commonly, see Tritsaroli and Valentin 2008: 96; Kazhdan et al 1991: II, 808-809; Kyriakakis 1974; Velkovska 2001: esp. 36, 43.

¹⁶⁸³ Christian cemeteries were distinguished from Jewish, suicides were separate from natural causes, etc. Tritsaroli and Valentin 2008: 96-97; Kazhdan et al 1991: I, 396-397.

¹⁶⁸⁴ At Poetovio in Noricum, after his interrogation at Pola in Istria. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum*, XIV.11.23.

¹⁶⁸⁵ Other conspirators included the deposed empress Constantina and the *praefectus* Theodore. *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. Dindorf 696; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 297 (trans. Mango and Scott 426).

¹⁶⁸⁶ Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 100-105; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 375 (trans. Mango and Scott 523).

by, and represented a statement of his power over the inhabitants (who had originally deposed him and then refused him entry upon his return) and the city itself, which belied the reality of his then still tenuous position. An increasing number of locations were used over the centuries, but they were generally open spaces, highly visible, and conducive to exhibition. Chrysopolis, the Perama, and the walls of the city were particularly favoured. Additional disgrace could be apportioned by association with Jewish graveyards or communal burial pits used for petty criminals.¹⁶⁸⁷

Execution and parading were often penultimate stages of *damnatio memoriae*. Ioannes Komnenos(-Axouchos) was deposited at the southern gate of the Blachernai Palace as fodder for dogs and birds, ‘an act deemed cruel and inhuman by all’.¹⁶⁸⁸ His head was taken for the emperor’s inspection, and publicly displayed as a warning to those who had aided his revolt.¹⁶⁸⁹ A similar fate had evidently been intended for Nikephoros II whose remains were left exposed in a courtyard of the Great Palace before being interred. Karlin-Hayter believed this a combined degradation ceremony and funeral,¹⁶⁹⁰ in fact, it appears that Tzimiskes had wanted to parade Nikephoros’ corpse. He had already shown off the head, and his supporters were destroying Nikephoros imperial images throughout the city.¹⁶⁹¹ However, Tzimiskes was forestalled when Polyeuktos humbled him at Hagia Sophia. A parade would only have prompted further admonition, and Nikephoros’ swift removal to the Heroon of the Holy Apostles inside an improvised coffin speaks to Tzimiskes’ need to lessen his own wrongdoing rather than defame his quarry.¹⁶⁹²

Unlike saints, the dismemberment of a lay body drastically impacted its potential

¹⁶⁸⁷ Andronikos Doukas, for example, was impaled in a Jewish graveyard in 1184: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 294 (trans. Magoulias 163).

¹⁶⁸⁸ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 527 (trans. Magoulias 289). Translation adapted.

¹⁶⁸⁹ On the role of the populace in supporting Ioannes’ revolt, see Angold 2015: 121, 127-130.

¹⁶⁹⁰ Karlin-Hayter 1991a: 116.

¹⁶⁹¹ On the destruction of Nikephoros’ imperial images, which presumably must have occurred before Tzimiskes’ recourse to penitential efforts over the murder, see Ioannes Geometres, *Ethopoiia*, quoted and discussed in Bourdara 1982: 338-339.

¹⁶⁹² Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 90-91 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 140-141).

resurrection.¹⁶⁹³ Obviously, the head and face were important for the purposes of identification. Faces were depicted on coins and imperial art as a representation of the whole, and their destruction rendered the victim ‘malformed’. In Ancient Rome, the burial of a body without its head, was not considered a proper funeral, the same was true in Christian thought.¹⁶⁹⁴ The decapitated heads of opponents therefore assumed a prominent role in propagandist rituals of victory and *damnatio*. The decapitated heads of usurpers might become the focus of private court degradations.¹⁶⁹⁵ Beheading was always the principal method of prisoner execution and was commonly associated with the execution of ignominious criminals in Late Antiquity (a fact emphasised by Ammianus).¹⁶⁹⁶ In Rome, from the first century BCE, the heads of state enemies were exhibited in the *Forum*,¹⁶⁹⁷ a practice that continued under the itinerant court of Late Antiquity,¹⁶⁹⁸ and in Constantinople, at the Hippodrome. A total of nine senior emperors were beheaded in the period covered by this study, and all but Alexios II were then publicly displayed.¹⁶⁹⁹ Phocas had those of Maurice and his sons displayed in the *Hebdomon*, another signal of where Phocas’ powerbase lay and deference to those who had elevated him.¹⁷⁰⁰ Phocas’ overthrow and execution by Herakleios saw his corpse paraded through Constantinople with his excised genitals and right arm affixed atop spears.¹⁷⁰¹ And Artemios-Anastasios’ head was paraded

¹⁶⁹³ Hayes 2003: 21; Maleon 2010a: 14.

¹⁶⁹⁴ Kristensen 2016: 334, noting, however, that in ancient Rome the head could be buried alone, acting as a substitute for the whole body. This was not true for Christian burials.

¹⁶⁹⁵ Choniates is particularly detailed in his descriptions of this custom: Alexios II’s head was reportedly kicked around by Andronikos and his entourage, Alexios Branas’ was thrown about in the Palace by Isaakios II and members of court, and Vatatzes’ was kicked around by Alexios III. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 274, 388-389, 486 (trans. Magoulias 152, 213-214, 267).

¹⁶⁹⁶ Discussed in Varner 2006: 69; Kristensen 2016: 332.

¹⁶⁹⁷ Kristensen 2016: 327.

¹⁶⁹⁸ Circa 413, those of the usurpers Jovian and Sebastianus were shown in Rome and Ravenna. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 81 (trans. Mango and Scott 126).

¹⁶⁹⁹ Those decapitated were: Phocas, Leontios, Tiberios-Apsimaros, Justinian II, Artemios-Anastasios (in 719, following his revolt against Leon III), Nikephoros I, Leon V, Nikephoros II, and Alexios II.

¹⁷⁰⁰ Theophylaktos Simokattes, *Historia*, ed. de Boor 339 (trans. Whitby 229); Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 288-290, 291 (trans. Mango and Scott 412-414, 418-419).

¹⁷⁰¹ Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 34-39.

in the Hippodrome after his execution at the *Kynegion* during the races.¹⁷⁰² These activities constituted traditional components of triumphs, where the heads of enemies were paraded alongside captives. The usurper Maxentius' head was exhibited throughout Rome a day after Constantine's victory at Milvian Bridge, accompanied by ridicule from the crowd.¹⁷⁰³ Heher has shown that, after the fifth and sixth centuries, the parading of heads generally indicated the victim's involvement in civil war; they had been killed outside Constantinople, permitting a triumph to take place, and decapitation was generally a post-mortem mutilation, rather than their manner of death.¹⁷⁰⁴ Bardas Phokas suffered this fate,¹⁷⁰⁵ and so too Georgios Maniakes, whose head was first exhibited in the Hippodrome and then paraded during a triumph.¹⁷⁰⁶

After exhibition in the capital, heads were often sent around the empire to quell remaining opposition. Maxentius' head was paraded for his supporters in Carthage,¹⁷⁰⁷ that of the usurper Procopius was dispatched to the towns and cities of the east in order to end their rebellion,¹⁷⁰⁸ and the head of Justinian II was displayed in Ravenna.¹⁷⁰⁹ Although the public's ability to identify remains was dubious,¹⁷¹⁰ special efforts were made to preserve

¹⁷⁰² Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 126-129.

¹⁷⁰³ Kristensen 2016: 328.

¹⁷⁰⁴ Heher 2015a: 15-16.

¹⁷⁰⁵ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 175 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 216-217).

¹⁷⁰⁶ Maniakes' head had been suspended in the Hippodrome before being used in the triumphal procession. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Impellizzeri II, 18-21; ed. Renauld II, 6-7 (trans. Sewter 194-199); Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 428 (trans. Wortley 403); Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. Pérez Martin 20 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 32-33). According to legend, the Ottomans perpetuated this ritual with Constantine XI in 1453. Doukas, *Historia Turco-Byzantina*, ed. Grecu 375-377 (trans. Magoulias 231-232).

¹⁷⁰⁷ Carthage was a major centre of support for Maxentius' usurpation, and the chief source of Rome's grain supply. It was therefore vital that any lingering support for the charismatic figure was crushed swiftly and effectively. Kristensen 2016.

¹⁷⁰⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum*, 14.11.23.

¹⁷⁰⁹ Agnellus, *The Book of Pontiffs*, trans. Deliyannis p.267, §142.

¹⁷¹⁰ Victims were important persons, unlikely to have been easily recognisable except to their fellow notables. Given that the emperor's effigy was widely distributed (and in a generalised format), we might only imagine the difficulty faced by the public in identifying conspirators, or usurpers who controlled but a few cities and never minted coinage. It was for exactly this reason that attire denoted rank and status, it provided an easier method of identification. From a distance, therefore, any suitably mutilated head (or attired body) would surely have been an adequate substitute for such a deception. We have accounts in which even imperial guardsmen were unable to identify the emperor by sight, without his imperial attire to distinguish his status: see, for example, Liudprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, ed. Chiesa §11 (trans. Squatriti 50-53).

body parts for ritual degradation. The heads of Onomagoulos and his commander, Georgios, were preserved in vinegar for transport to Leon III.¹⁷¹¹ And in 1189, the head of a Pseudo-Alexios II was dispatched to Isaakios II whose brother noted its close resemblance to the deceased emperor.¹⁷¹² In theory, showing heads to the public provided proof that the victims really were dead, preventing rumours about their possible escape from gaining credibility, and ruling out the emergence of pretenders after their death.¹⁷¹³ As one source stated of the tenth-century usurper Constantine Doukas: '[his head was displayed] so that those who had placed their hopes in the *doux* might be shamed at their failure'.¹⁷¹⁴

After it was determined that remains had been exhibited for long enough, in the majority of cases they were removed for private burials. Tiberios, the son of Justinian II, who had been denuded, paraded to the postern at Blachernai and publicly executed, was entombed at the Holy Anargyroi.¹⁷¹⁵ Leon III was conveyed with his family to Prote and interred alongside his son Theodosios.¹⁷¹⁶ There was even an attempt to bury the supposedly universally reviled Andronikos I whose remains were removed from the vaults of the Hippodrome, where they had been thrown after his execution, and taken to the Monastery of Epheros.¹⁷¹⁷ However, Isaakios refused even that burial and Andronikos remained unburied at the time Choniates was writing: a perpetual *damnatio*.¹⁷¹⁸

¹⁷¹¹ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 398 (trans. Mango and Scott 549-550).

¹⁷¹² Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 422 (trans. Magoulias 232).

¹⁷¹³ Kristensen 2016: 327, discussing the posthumous uses of Maxentius' remains, draws a parallel with the rumours surrounding the "true" fate of Osama bin Laden after his body was buried at sea by American Special Forces in May 2011. The official release of photographic evidence was considered to counteract these rumours. Deaths unseen by the populace were unconfirmed and could be exploited; hence Maxentius' head was retrieved and paraded.

¹⁷¹⁴ *The Life of Saint Basileios the Younger*, ed. Sullivan, Talbot, and McGrath 102-103.

¹⁷¹⁵ Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, 110-113.

¹⁷¹⁶ *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 40-41; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 64-65.

¹⁷¹⁷ Isaakios forbade Andronikos' interment at the Mausoleum he had prepared at the church of the Forty Martyrs: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 332 (trans. Magoulias 183).

¹⁷¹⁸ Choniates claims that Andronikos' remains were still visible at the time he was writing. Although we cannot offer a precise date, we may reasonably assume that this was before his revision of the original manuscript, and before he had fled Constantinople in 1204: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 352 (trans. Magoulias 194). On this *damnatio*, see Beihammer 2013: 174. On the possible locations of the Monastery of Epheros, see C.M. Brand 1968: 334, n.108.

Throwing the corpse into the sea or a river was another established, if irregular, method of degradation. It placed victims ‘elsewhere’, at the boundary of the space inhabited by daily life, and facilitated the rapid decay of remains. When Constantine’s victory at Milvian Bridge resulted in Maxentius drowning in the Tiber, later accounts exploited the circumstances.¹⁷¹⁹ Eusebius invoked Pharaoh’s drowning in the Red Sea,¹⁷²⁰ whereas *Panegyrici latini XII* framed the Tiber as an agent of divine power that wanted to partake in Constantine’s victory.¹⁷²¹ The discarding of executed criminals and defeated enemies in the Tiber played an important role in Roman memory politics. Sulla’s enemies, along with the emperors Vitellius and Elagabalus, were treated thus, and Maxentius’ ritual degradation entered into memory-history.¹⁷²² In Constantinople, the Bosphoros replaced the Tiber. Phocas executed Maurice and his sons at the Harbour of Eutropius:¹⁷²³ observers became unwitting participants in the victims’ fates, and the shore of Chalcedon was filled with spectators.¹⁷²⁴ The *Catalogus sepulchrorum* also lists the remains of Leontios, Tiberios-Apsimaros, and Justinian II amongst those thrown to the sea. Corpses remained exposed for several days before burial, if removed at all. Maurice and his sons were interred at St. Mamas;¹⁷²⁵ Leontios and Tiberius-Apsimaros were buried on Prote, but (symptomatic of his image) the

¹⁷¹⁹ The battle took place outside Rome on the 28 October 312.

¹⁷²⁰ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, §38.4. See also, Kristensen 2016: 334.

¹⁷²¹ Divine favour in the pagan context. ‘Sacred Tiber, once advisor to your guest Aeneas, next saviour of the exposed Romulus, you allowed neither the false Romulus to live long nor the City’s murderer to swim away. You who nourished Rome by conveying provisions, you who protected her by encircling walls, rightly wished to partake of Constantine’s victory, to have him drive the enemy to you, and you slay him.’ *Panegyrici latini*, 12[9].18.1 (trans. Nixon and Rodgers 321). See also, Kristensen 2016: 334-335.

¹⁷²² Kristensen 2016: 334.

¹⁷²³ ‘The bodies of the dead were hurled to the waves of the sea as a pitiful game, and one could behold the sea’s current, so to speak, now bestowing the freshly slain bodies upon dry land, now enfolding them with eagerly returning counter-thrusts towards the receptive sea.’ Τὰ μὲν οὖν σώματα τῶν τεθνεώτων ἐπίδακρυ παίγνιον τοῖς-τῆς θαλάσσης ἀκοντίζονται κύμασι· καὶ ἦν ἰδεῖν τὸ ρεῖθρον ὡς ἔπος εἰνος εἰπεῖν τὸ θαλάττιον ποτὲ τῇ χέρσῳ τὰ νεοσφαγῆ φιλοτιμούμενον σώματα, ποτὲ φιλυποστρόφοις τισίν-ἀντωθήμασι πρὸς τὴν ὑποδεξαμένην ἐναγκαλιζόμενον θάλατταν. Theophylaktos Simokattes, *Historia*, ed. de Boor 337-338 (trans. Whitby 228). Translation adapted. On the Harbour of Eutropius, in Chalcedon, see Janin 1964: 228-229.

¹⁷²⁴ ‘The shores of Chalcedon were filled with the crowds who received the narrative of their own folly, as they gazed at the sea-waves’ naked exhibition of the emperors’ bodies like depictions of misfortunes.’ Theophylaktos Simokattes, *Historia*, ed. de Boor 338 (trans. Whitby 228).

¹⁷²⁵ Grierson, Mango, and Ševčenko 1962: 47.

destiny of Justinian's corpse is unrecorded.¹⁷²⁶ The negative connotations of consignment to the sea led to the accusation that Phocas, Justinian II, and Andronikos I tied victims of their purges in sacks before throwing them in.¹⁷²⁷ This variation of *poena cullei*, the Roman penalty for parricide which had been reinstated by Justinian I, was officially abolished by the *Basilika* and its abuse evidently formed a shorthand for the immorality and brutality of tyrants.¹⁷²⁸ It is notable that each of these defilements took place outside the city and its harbours, assigning them a different 'space' and suggesting that a cultural taboo prevented Constantinople's spiritual 'pollution' (victims were washed away).

Although generally used in connection with public rituals, consignment to water also occurred surreptitiously, especially when a crowd might have turned against an emperor. Following Justinian I's suppression of the Nika rioters, Hypatius and Pompeius were spared a parade that could easily have revived anti-imperial sentiment, but were executed and disposed at sea after reportedly begging Justinian for mercy. Their deaths were then announced throughout the city in an effort to undermine lingering support. We may wonder if the story of their appeal for mercy was not deliberately spread in order to emphasise Justinian's resolve to any foolhardy agitators.¹⁷²⁹ Similar considerations of popular opinion undoubtedly led Andronikos I to dispose of Alexios II in the same way. Alexios' decapitated head was allegedly buried clandestinely in the Katabate district and his body dumped at sea in a weighted coffin that remained unseen and unrecoverable.¹⁷³⁰ Yet Alexios'

¹⁷²⁶ Grierson, Mango, and Ševčenko 1962: 50-51. Although it is conceivable that the remains of all three were cast to the sea, extant contemporary sources do not list this as part of their executions and degradations. Instead, they assert that both Leontios and Tiberius-Apsimaros were simply beheaded in the Hippodrome, and Justinian was beheaded and his remains sent to Italy as proof of his death.

¹⁷²⁷ ...ἄλλους ἐν τῷ βυθῷ σάκκοις ἐμβαλὼν ἀπέριπτε... Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 104-105; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 296-297, 375 (trans. Mango and Scott 426, 523); Roger of Hovenden, *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*, ed. Stubbs II, 202, reports that Empress Maria was strangled and then thrown into the sea in a sack, on Andronikos' orders.

¹⁷²⁸ *Corpus Iuris Civilis, Digest*, ed. Schöll and Kroll §48.9.

¹⁷²⁹ The story may have served to present Justinian as a resolute figure in the face of such a large-scale revolt. Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Thurn 400 (trans. Jeffreys 280). On the Nika Riot and the historical sources, see Greatrex 1997.

¹⁷³⁰ Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville-Jones 52-53; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 274 (trans. Magoulias 152).

‘disappearance’ was a misstep; the proclamation of several Pseudo-Alexios’ necessitated confirmations of his execution, and exposed enduring loyalties to Manuel’s line.¹⁷³¹

Immolation provided a more complete destruction of the body, preventing funerary rites altogether. Cremation was forbidden to Christians on the basis of its associations with paganism and denial of resurrection.¹⁷³² Most often associated with the execution of heretics from the seventh century onwards, the *Basilika* replaced *poena cullei* with burning at the stake or pyre as the penalty for parricide.¹⁷³³ It held demonic connotations,¹⁷³⁴ and served as a temporal manifestation of eternal suffering in Hell. Its victims were consequently amongst societies most reviled. Like deposition at sea, immolation is rarely recorded in association with treason and usurpation:¹⁷³⁵ suggesting these methods’ reservation for use against particularly despised figures or prominent rivals whose deaths an emperor needed the public to tacitly endorse. The *Forum Bovis*, *Amastrianon*, and *Sphendone* of the Hippodrome were used most often, ensuring a plentiful audience, and Anna Komnene’s account of the burning of Basileios the Bogomil (c.1098) expresses the excited anticipation of the crowd.¹⁷³⁶

¹⁷³¹ Although it is possible that Andronikos feigned Alexios’ execution and the disposal of his corpse, and that Alexios had either been secretly exiled or had escaped Constantinople, there is simply no way of proving this given the limited source material available and the influence of Andronikian and Angeloi propaganda surrounding the event. Of more importance was the contemporary willingness to believe that Alexios survived. Four Pseudo-Alexios II’s are attested in the sources, emerging between the accession of Andronikos I and the deposition of Alexios III. Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville-Jones 52-53; Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 420-421, 422-423, 462-463 (trans. Magoulias 231-232, 232-233, 253-254). See also, Cheynet 1990: 118, 123-124, 130. On Andronikos’ confirmation that Alexios had been executed, see Eustathios of Thessalonike, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Melville-Jones 52-53.

¹⁷³² Prokurat, Golitzin, and Peterson 1996: 100-101, noting that cremation remains somewhat taboo even in the modern Orthodox Church.

¹⁷³³ Justinian II first instituted its use against Paulicians who refused to adopt orthodox beliefs. The earlier laws of Justinian I had called for the execution of Manicheans but did not prescribe a particular method of execution: Head 1972: 63-64; Hamilton, Hamilton, and Stoyanov 1998: 13, and n.42; 175-178.

¹⁷³⁴ Anna Komnene describes in detail the public execution by burning of the eleventh-century Basileios, an adherent of the Bogomil heresy. As Kazhdan noted, Anna’s concern in describing the execution was not the victim’s fate (from Anna’s perspective, her father, as a defender of Orthodoxy, had done the right thing in executing this heretic who may have greatly damaged the *oikoumene* had he been allowed to live), but rather a fear that ‘demons’ might be unleashed to save Basileios from the flames. Choniates’ description of the immolation of Mamalos connects it with ‘demonic books’, and the accusation of treason was linked to outlawed occult practices. However, Choniates expressed pity for the victim who was unwillingly corralled towards the pyre with pikes. He scornfully commented that the whole procedure resembled ‘tauroscythian cruelty’, that avenging demons were being offered a burnt sacrifice. Kazhdan 1994: 213-215.

¹⁷³⁵ The present study identifies only nine instances in which its use is documented against a defeated emperor, usurper, or conspirator (all nine are referenced in the main text, below).

¹⁷³⁶ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 492-493 (trans. Frankopan 462-463).

Immolations of less prominent persons are also recorded on the Asian shore of the Bosphoros, in the Anaratai suburb.¹⁷³⁷

In 605, the *patricius* Elpidius was consigned to flames after his participation in a wide ranging conspiracy against Phocas, involving the deposed Empress Constantina, was uncovered.¹⁷³⁸ The same fate befell the hated finance ministers of Justinian II; a certain Stylianos, who was believed to be acting on the orders of the co-emperor Alexandros, after his attempted assassination of Leon VI; Basileios ‘the Copperhand’ after his second revolt posing as the deceased Constantine Doukas; and Mamalos who had conspired against Andronikos I.¹⁷³⁹ The story that Michael II was to be thrown to the furnaces of the Palace baths on Christmas Day, was seemingly a later invention justifying his usurpation and emphasising Leon V’s cruelty.¹⁷⁴⁰ Only three emperors were immolated, none of them living. Soon after execution and mutilation, the corpse of Phocas was dragged to the Forum Bovis and thrown onto a pyre.¹⁷⁴¹ After the restoration of icons (843), Theodora ordered Constantine V’s remains exhumed, burned at the *Amastrianon*, and cast into the sea (supposedly in emulation of his treatment of the relics of St. Euphemia).¹⁷⁴² Nikephoros I

¹⁷³⁷ Leon Diakonos, *Historia*, ed. Hase 64-65 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 113-114), recounting the case of a mother and daughter who were executed (by immolation) for throwing stones at the emperor Nikephoros II as he returned to the Great Palace after the procession of the Ascension of the Saviour in 967.

¹⁷³⁸ The conspirators had aimed to execute Phocas during the Hippodrome races and promote the *praefectus praetorio* Theodore. The conspirators, including Constantina, were tortured for information. Theodore was flogged to death, Constantina and her daughters were taken to the harbour of Eutropius and executed. The other conspirators were reportedly beheaded. *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. Dindorf I, 696-697; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 295, 297-298 (trans. Mango and Scott 423, 426), Theophanes offers two partially contrasting accounts.

¹⁷³⁹ On Theodotos and Stephanos, the finance ministers: Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 96-99; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 369 (trans. Mango and Scott 515). On Stylianos’ attempted assassination of Leon VI on 11 May 903 at the mid-Pentecost feast at St. Mokios church: *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. Karlin-Hayter 66-67; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 181 (trans. Wortley 176). On Basileios: Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 228 (trans. Wortley 220). On Mamalos: Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 310-312 (trans. Magoulias 172-173).

¹⁷⁴⁰ Michael’s proposed fate stood in contrast to the public nature of such executions, and the initial choice of Christmas Day would have been extremely unusual for an assassination that would not have resulted in a proclamation/coronation. On this episode, see above, page 217.

¹⁷⁴¹ Nikephoros, *Historia*, ed. Mango 34-39; *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. Dindorf I, 701; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 299 (trans. Mango and Scott 426).

¹⁷⁴² On this ‘burial’, see Grierson, Mango, and Ševčenko 1962: 53, and n.143. For the desecration of the relics of St. Euphemia: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 439-440 (trans. Mango and Scott 607).

was burnt after his death in battle against the Bulgarian Kahn Krum, although his skull was retained as a trophy.¹⁷⁴³

Like the processions of the living, those of the dead inverted recognised ritual formats and symbolisms to engender public condemnation of the victim. The parading of excised body parts reversed imperial triumphs and funerary processions: glory and grief were substituted for indignity and opprobrium. The decision to display limbs, genitals, and heads, demystified the victim, exposing his mortality and shame, and destroyed familiar symbols of the imperial sacral charisma. The target was denied a true Christian burial, forever impeding their chances of resurrection, and methods of anonymous burial ensured that nothing remained to become the focus of a cult of personality; victims were physically erased from the public record.

He'll be back? Apolitical afterwords

The penalties imposed on defeated opponents were believed to preclude their ever assuming power. Yet, unless opponents were executed, after the eighth century their return was not inconceivable. Justinian II's restoration marked the first failure of political mutilation and forever presented aspirants with a precedent for a physically 'imperfect' person's accession. Of course, Justinian did not present things in that manner. Instead, his coinage indicated an uninterrupted reign.¹⁷⁴⁴ His maimed nose was disguised with a golden prosthetic, and was depicted uninjured in post-restoration iconography.¹⁷⁴⁵ The artistic conventions of physical integrity were retained, brazenly denying the stigma of imperfection which evidently still functioned. In the histories, Justinian's reign was divided into two periods and, consequently,

¹⁷⁴³ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 491 (trans. Mango and Scott 673-674); Grierson, Mango, and Ševčenko 1962: 55.

¹⁷⁴⁴ Bellinger 1966: 122.

¹⁷⁴⁵ Head 1972: 112-113.

(for these authors) he had achieved an impossible return. Yet Justinian had never believed himself ineligible or overthrown and immediately after his banishment to Kherson a prophecy of return circulated.¹⁷⁴⁶ The promulgation of the prophecy articulated an uncomfortable fact for usurpers: unless their predecessor was dead, they always had to fear his restoration. The factions had made the same point to Phocas at his coronation, ‘Go back. Learn the protocol. Maurice is not dead.’¹⁷⁴⁷ The emperors Isaakios II, Andronikos IV, and Ioannes VII were similarly subjected to physical mutilation (blinding) that theoretically disbarred them, yet were restored to the throne (Isaakios), or gained the throne through rebellion in emulation of Justinian (Andronikos and Ioannes).

The four represent the only cases of imperial restoration after political mutilation. They reveal the difficulty of contesting ‘physical integrity’. However, these successful challengers do suggest that, under certain circumstances, integrity was not an impregnable criterion. Each shared common features and Justinian II became the prototype. Around 704, he was made aware that Tiberios-Apsimaros intended to have him executed in Kherson. Pre-empting his executioners, Justinian fled north to the town of Doros, and then appealed to the Khazar *Khagan*, Ibousiros Gliabanos, for refuge. He was treated with imperial honour and secured a marriage alliance with the Khagan’s sister, who took the baptismal name Theodora. The choice of name once again suggested Justinian’s intention to reclaim the throne by invoking the political and cultural memory of the first Justinian and Theodora, figures known to have faced a popular uprising by the Constantinopolitans and brutally crushed it.¹⁷⁴⁸ However, the Khagan soon betrayed Justinian: he had been bribed by Tiberios-Apsimaros and now plotted Justinian’s death. Alerted by Theodora, Justinian fled to the

¹⁷⁴⁶ Allegedly made by the future Patriarch Kyros. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 372 (trans. Mango and Scott 520).

¹⁷⁴⁷ ὕπαγε, μάθε τὴν κατάστασιν· ὁ Μαυρίκιος οὐκ ἀπέθανεν. Theophylaktos Simokattes, *Historia*, ed. de Boor 335 (trans. Whitby 226). Translation adapted.

¹⁷⁴⁸ On Justinian’s exile, and his marriage to Theodora, see Head 1972: 102-107.

Bulgarian Khan Tervel.¹⁷⁴⁹ In exchange for the title of *kaisar* and a prospective marriage to Justinian's daughter, Anastasia, Tervel provided troops for Justinian's successful restoration. They marched on Constantinople and took the city by subterfuge after several failed entreaties to the populace.¹⁷⁵⁰

In 1203, the instatement of Isaakios II and Alexios IV was achieved in an almost identical manner. The diversion of the Fourth Crusade to Constantinople, on behalf of Alexios IV, prompted Alexios III's absconsion. Isaakios was swiftly restored by a faction headed by the treasurer Constantine Philoxenites and the Varangians in order that he negotiate favourable terms with the crusaders proclaiming his son as emperor: a proclamation the city had already rejected.¹⁷⁵¹

Andronikos IV and Ioannes VII were equally reliant upon foreign troops to overthrow Ioannes V. Andronikos, who had been partially blinded with his son and removed from precedence after his attempted coup in 1373,¹⁷⁵² instigated another attempt in 1376. He approached the Genoese in his confinement at Pera, exploiting Ioannes V's ceding of Tenedos to the Venetians,¹⁷⁵³ and also entreated Murad I (realising that Ottoman authorisation would be necessary for any attempt against the throne). Andronikos offered Murad allegiance, tribute, and a marriage alliance to his sister, in exchange for Ottoman cavalry.¹⁷⁵⁴ They attacked Constantinople and imprisoned Ioannes V, along with

¹⁷⁴⁹ Autumn/Winter 704.

¹⁷⁵⁰ Nikephoros, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. Mango 102-103; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor 375 (trans. Mango and Scott 523).

¹⁷⁵¹ Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 550 (trans. Magoulias 301-302). For the rejection of Alexios IV by the populace (and by Alexios III's envoys), see Robert de Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. and trans. Dufournet 108-109.

¹⁷⁵² On this first attempt, see Loenertz 1939; Charanis 1942/43: 293-295; Dölger 1961; Nicol 1993: 277-278; Necipoğlu 2009: esp. 119-121.

¹⁷⁵³ Venetian control of Tenedos threatened Genoese commercial interests: Nicol 1988: 305-307. Andronikos had also been instrumental in preventing the ceding of Tenedos to the Venetians in 1370, probably acting under the influence of Genoese backers: Necipoğlu 2009: 121 n.6, 125-126 and n.26.

¹⁷⁵⁴ Necipoğlu 2009: 121-122.

Andronikos' brothers Manuel and Theodoros. Andronikos refused to execute them,¹⁷⁵⁵ immediately granted extensions to the colony at Pera, and ceded Tenedos to the Genoese as reward for their assistance.¹⁷⁵⁶ Although Necipoğlu has identified a faction comprising members of court and the Constantinopolitan populace who favoured Andronikos' accession and his pro-Ottoman/anti-Venetian stance, it was foreign support that secured the throne.¹⁷⁵⁷ Ioannes VII's short-lived usurpation of his restored grandfather's throne in 1390, was achieved in similar fashion. He approached the Genoese and Bayezid I for assistance and took Constantinople when his supporters opened the Charsios Gate.¹⁷⁵⁸

All four successions, even when they had the backing of a populist faction, were reliant upon foreign troops and the emperors involved had previously exercised sole rule or had been named co-emperor. Desperate circumstances and lucrative rewards for foreign allies, thus enabled the promotion of maimed emperors with dynastic claims and access to a network of notables, or the potential to resurrect those networks.

To these successful examples, we may add a handful of episodes in which a mutilated or imperfect figure was proclaimed by Byzantines. The sons of Constantine V were foci for several confirmed, and alleged, conspiracies against Constantine VI and Eirene even after tonsure, exile, and escalating mutilations.¹⁷⁵⁹ Basileios 'the Copperhand' exploited regional loyalty to the deceased usurper Constantine Doukas by adopting his identity and anti-dynastic sentiments in the wake of the famine of 928, to incite revolt for a second time. The fact that he had been deprived of a hand was evidently not an impediment for his supporters.¹⁷⁶⁰ And the blind Pseudo-Ioannes IV of Trikokkia was proclaimed by Laskarid

¹⁷⁵⁵ The decision not to execute them was reportedly in contravention of Murad's wishes. Chalkokondyles, *Historia*, ed. Darkó I, 56-57 (trans. Kaldellis I, 96-99); Doukas, *Historia*, ed. Grecu 73 (trans. Magoulias 79-80).

¹⁷⁵⁶ Necipoğlu 2009: 122.

¹⁷⁵⁷ Necipoğlu 2009: 123-126.

¹⁷⁵⁸ Ignatius of Smolensk, in *Russian Travellers*, ed. Majeska 100-103.

¹⁷⁵⁹ See Table 1.

¹⁷⁶⁰ *Georgios Monachos Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 912; *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker 421; Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn 228 (trans. Wortley 220).

loyalists who, despite his condition, pledged to die for his cause.¹⁷⁶¹ In these instances, the potential of real power, and political disaffection, allowed charismatic figures (or political puppets) to be proclaimed although considered by others to be physically ‘ineligible’. Their failures should be understood in two ways: firstly, as an incidental reinforcement of prevailing dogmas of integrity; secondly, and more significantly, as unrealised instances of physically imperfect figures being thrust into power because their loyalists considered them genuinely viable.

Finally, there is significant evidence that mutilation did not automatically end one’s career. Even some who suffered severe disfigurements lived long lives and returned to high-ranking positions. Hagiochristophorites returned to the bureaucracy without feeling shame, and Ioannes IV survived for decades. Even victims of blinding were not precluded from holding governmental or military posts. After the loss of one eye in an accident, the *sebastokrator* Andronikos’ son, Ioannes, was recompensed by the emperor Manuel I with promotion as *protovestiaros*, and elevation to the ranks of the *protosebastoi*.¹⁷⁶² The totally-blind Alexios Komnenos, a second cousin of Isaakios II, had been blinded by Andronikos I but was reappointed to lead a fleet in 1186. Choniates’ assertion that Alexios was considered unfit for duty was evidently a polemical explanation of the fleet’s subsequent failure rather than a genuine assessment of his physical capabilities.¹⁷⁶³ Later, the Epirot Theodoros Komnenos Doukas remained the real power behind his son.¹⁷⁶⁴ And in 1324 the renowned general Alexios Philanthropenos, blinded by Andronikos II for his rebellion in 1295, was returned to service after renewing fidelity. His heroic reputation remained unaffected.¹⁷⁶⁵

¹⁷⁶¹ Pachymeres, *Relations Historiques*, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 259-67.

¹⁷⁶² Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. Meineke 126 (trans. Brand 99).

¹⁷⁶³ The campaign ended in abject failure when the fleet and its ground troops were captured by Isaakios and the ‘pirate’ Megareites. Those captured were allegedly taken to Sicily as labourers, swore loyalty to Isaakios, or were subjected to torture and mutilation in Cyprus. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten 369 (trans. Magoulias 204).

¹⁷⁶⁴ Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. Heisenberg 61 (trans. Macrides 207).

¹⁷⁶⁵ Nicol 1993: 158.

These examples emphasise how easily a treasonous party under one emperor could be restored to favour by a successor, their wrongs erased but still written on the body. Even the disbarring potential of penalties was subjective and we may wonder how frequently victims were reappointed.¹⁷⁶⁶

Chapter Summary

The imposition of a penalty, or the mutilation imposed on an unsuspecting imperial victim was adapted to the particular circumstances of a usurpation and was never strictly dependent upon legal prescriptions. Reconciliations remained a viable means of avoiding punishment altogether and bringing an end to civil conflict. They projected the supremacy of imperial power through ritual formats that involved a defeated opponent paying deference to the emperor who was then seen to ‘restore’ their membership to the Romano-Christian community. Reconciliation permitted that community to be reconstituted with minimal (or no) penalties for those responsible for its disintegration. This method of conflict resolution became increasingly important under the Komnenoi, and especially the Palaiologoi, when dynastic conflicts and the political-territorial division of the empire among family members and prominent aristocrats engendered infighting. Penalties like tonsure and exile remained potential options throughout the history of the empire, and were typically preferred for minor or first infractions, or coupled with political mutilations in response to more serious offences.

Disfigurements served as disabling and disbarring penalties that intended to punish and preclude further wrongdoing. Their popularity vacillated with some becoming traditional penalties and then falling into disuse. Penalties were drawn from existing cultural

¹⁷⁶⁶ There is need for a comprehensive study to address this omission in our understanding of the lives and responsibilities of the blind and physically disabled in Byzantine society. The topic has been well-covered for Ancient Greece, and blindness in Roman society is being increasingly scrutinised, yet Byzantium remains underexplored (Efthymiadis 2017). Trentin 2013, provides a useful introduction to the state of this research for Greece and Rome.

practices represented in the legal codes, or from cross-cultural interaction with neighbouring civilizations. All of them held symbolic connotations that associated victims with particular forms of crime.¹⁷⁶⁷ Blasphemy, perjury, sexual deviancy, or theft, were typically invoked and identified conspirators with immoral persons considered to be among the very worst in society. Since one's appearance was a sign of character, and injuries were believed to have been warranted by God, victims were understood to have distanced themselves from divine favour. Since victims of mutilations were indelibly marked they became warnings of what could happen to others. Old identities were denied through the imposition of a penalty because the public would henceforth be encouraged to view these persons with disgust and opprobrium on account of their deformity and transgressions.

Degradation parades, performed independently of a punishment, or attendant with a punishment, ritually delegitimised a victim. Usurpers were publicly shamed through a parody of inauguration rites, and an engineered *consensus* was directed against them. The preceding fragility of the imperial office was concealed through this demonstration of 'popular' unity. Emperors might feature solely as observers, which allowed them to claim that the people had determined the penalty and had ratified imperial authority through their denunciation of the victim. The latter's identity was ritually invalidated and replaced with a new (shameful) identity, he was 'othered' and isolated from the community. At a parade's terminus, if the emperor chose to be present, imperial power could be communicated through the imposition of *calcatio* or *supplicatio*. The dominance of the people and the state, in the form of the *basileus*, was demonstrated over someone who had been revealed as an illegitimate and immoral tyrant. Deceased opponents were subjected to similar rituals, with body parts being used as proof of death and imperial victory.

The imposition of a penalty had to take contemporary sensitivities into account.

¹⁷⁶⁷ On this type of 'legal symbolism' throughout medieval Europe, see Metzler 2013: 28; Groebner 2008.

Recourse to clemency, seemingly in response to public opinion (perhaps on occasion actually in response to public opinion), allowed emperors to demonstrate their exceptional virtue of *philanthropia* and demonstrate that they were attuned to the populace's wishes and needs, where punishment might reveal them to be petty or unjust: signs of tyranny. Perceived injustice, or excessive punishment, risked a public backlash. The unexpected blinding of Romanos IV invited criticism of Michael VII that was exploited by Nikephoros III's propagandists as proof of the emperor's 'injustice'. It introduced a period of disapproval with the penalty, which can be seen in the use and accounts of blindings in the decades that followed. It was probably not a coincidence that blinding fell out of favour under Alexios I's immediate successors, when the Komnenian dynasty had linked itself so closely to the other aristocratic families: blinding one of their own would have undermined the notion of aristocratic perfection promoted elsewhere and exacerbated resentments; castration had fallen out of use in the eleventh century for similar reasons.

Finally, it is noteworthy that so many of the historical narratives give detailed accounts of the fates of the defeated and deposed. The particulars of punishments are generally recorded: to which destination victims were paraded, the order in which penalties were applied, which body parts were damaged, etc. Since most authors had spent careers in government service, and had to deal with these issues as a matter of course, an interest in the Roman legal tradition and the application of 'correct' sentencing was a natural corollary. Furthermore, authors often belonged to the same section of society as prominent members of conspiracies and thus shared their concerns; the penalties imposed against one member of that group were a potential fate for other members. Communicative-legitimist efforts should not be overlooked either: detailed accounts attest to the success of regimes in 'advertising' a victim's punishment and fate, and served to legitimise an emperor by comparison. Ritualised enactments of the law and imperial authority against those who had harmed state

taxis were worthy of recording, and served as a warning to those who might raise the spectre of revolt in the future.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

‘The glory of ruling’ did not make all things permissible. Emperors were subject to an ongoing process of evaluation and popular ratification, in opposition to political rivals. At each stage of a usurpation rituals and propaganda allowed the usurper to engender a dialogue with the populace. Moral leadership on behalf of the community was what both sides sought to convey because the exercise of power was legitimised with respect to ‘moral’ norms and emperors were overthrown when the representative *consensus* groups found them wanting.

Success in usurping the throne was dependent upon the dynamic balance of power of the consensus groups of state and their support for a particular candidate. Meritocratic and republican ideologies, stemming from the Roman tradition, persisted in political thought and in the historical narratives. These ideas competed with hereditary-dynastic theories of rule that allowed individuals possessed of ‘superior’ lineage to claim a ‘right’ to the throne. However, the latter theories were only ever weakly established and could always be contested in practice. Vaguely defined notions of moral rulership, founded on Christian principles and the imperial virtues, provided the basis with which to assess the degree to which a reigning emperor or usurper exercised ‘lawful authority’. When an emperor failed to act in accordance with normative behaviours associated with moral rulership he could be accused of slipping into tyranny, oppressing the people, and opposed. A usurper could justify his intervention in the political realm on the basis that an emperor should always behave in a manner that protected the people from possible injustices, and which emulated the divine example. This was implicit within rhetorical formulations addressed to emperors concerning their status as living law, and in the oaths of loyalty sworn by their subjects in which service to the emperor and service to the state were not automatically synonymous.

An emperor who failed to be seen to be acting for the common good allowed a

usurper to proclaim his own superior leadership and virtues. Economic, military, and political disapprobation lay at the heart of this propaganda, serving as evidence of imperial wrongdoing and the descent of the state due to mismanagement. Typically a usurper would present himself as reluctant to engage in a revolt. This was communicated through rhetorical accounts of his selection, or through a ritualised display of reluctance in the moments before his investiture and proclamation. These efforts served to reveal the moral superiority of the reluctant candidate who had been chosen to lead the state against his own inclinations, but in accordance with popular and divine will. His reign, it was inferred, would be a model of ideal rulership since he had shown humility and introspection when confronted with the prospect of his being raised to the imperial office, and had also demonstrated his deep respect for the law and concern for the wellbeing of the people by initially resisting the calls to rebel. If successful, he emerged blameless from a revolt since he was merely serving the will of the God as expressed by the entreaties of the people; he was legitimate from the outset.

From the perspective of the usurper's supporters, his proclamation represented his transition to imperial rule and his investiture ritually communicated this transformation from private citizen to *basileus* by conferring prerogatives associated with *basileia*. The acclamation of acknowledgement constituted a popular ratification of his authority, and allowed him to appropriate insignia that imitated those worn by the emperor in Constantinople. He could then make promotions and establish a rival court in order to manage his empire and strengthen his hold on authority.

The capture of Constantinople and the Great Palace revealed his possession of real power, and enabled him to enact a coronation. The ceremony provided a symbolic 'universal' ratification since his authority was then shown to have been accepted by all of the representative groups of state, at the capital (symbolic of the empire). The sacral charisma of the imperial office was additionally conferred upon him at the moment of his investiture

by the patriarch. The format of the ceremony was open to subtle modifications which allowed usurpers to communicate aspects of their imperial ideology and (re)define the sources of their authority. Basileios I and Michael VIII used a second coronation as an opportunity to distance themselves from the misdeeds that had established their rules, and to seek divine authorisation for their ascensions, whereas Herakleios and Ioannes VI appealed to the authorising authority and the historical tradition of coronation to correct deficiencies in previous coronations performed outside the capital. Investitures were subjective since they could not confer authority but merely demonstrated that it was dependent upon the consent of the people.

The mechanisms of usurpation meant that misdeeds were invariably committed by a usurper in coming to power. Although oaths provided a tendentious excuse for rebellion on the basis of defending the interests of the state in opposition to those of a particular emperor, breaking them still connoted an act of perjury that distanced one from God. The perjurer was understood to have committed a sin and was liable to be excommunicated and suffer eternal damnation as a result. Bloodshed and civil war represented the other major sources of wrongdoing. They endangered the immortal soul and damaged state *taxis* by dividing the *oikoumene* and undermining social relations. Like the emperor whose subordinates committed misdeeds on his behalf, the misdeeds of a rebel's supporters became his responsibility. His supporters were misled by him, distanced themselves from the Roman community through their illegal activities, and became almost barbarian by comparison.

If he succeeded, the usurper could perform acts of repentance in order to atone for his sins and the wrongdoing committed on his behalf. This atonement might take private or public form, and could be forced upon a usurper by a patriarch before the latter would agree to participate in a coronation. A performative ritual of repentance, modelled on the examples of King David, and Theodosios I, was available for emperors to embrace. Through publicly-

witnessed, ritual-freed, gestures of humbling remorse and contrition that deviated from normal imperial behaviour, it served to ritually re-establish imperial moral authority and legitimise rulership by showing that an emperor was acting in accordance with divine law. It revealed his transformation from rule by force (the tyrannical acts performed during his usurpation), to lawful authority (the implied future respect for moral norms as *basileus*). The concern shown by authors to recording emperor's private acts of repentance was inspired by cultural and literary developments, but testifies to the interest in, and perceived importance of, imperial repentance. The immortal soul was at stake, and the emperor acted as a model for emulation: if his authority was founded on misdeeds and he did not atone for them then the state was put at risk of divine retribution.

Since guilt could be transferred from reign to reign, a failure to be seen to have suitably atoned might force dynastic successors to perform acts on their predecessor's behalf. These served to validate the successor's concern for truth and justice, legitimising their authority through their correction of a misdeed in which they had played no part. Vicarious redemption was achieved through symbolic gestures towards the memory of previous emperors, particularly through the use of imperial remains, and by bringing to justice other perpetrators of the crime. These gestures of atonement allowed schisms to be healed and connections to preceding dynasties to be forged. Ultimately this enabled the creation of networks of support for the new dynasty and provided the semblance of dynastic continuity as the most senior figure of the preceding dynasty was ritually 'adopted' (or 'appropriated') by the new dynasty.

The treatment of defeated opponents was not beholden to legal prescriptions and took a variety of forms. Reconciliation was a recurring possibility and became an essential tool of conflict resolution under the Komnenoi and Palaiologoi, in connection with their propensity for dynastic infighting. Imperial offers of reconciliation were common during the

initial phases of a rebellion, and at the beginning of a new emperor's reign when he sought to find favour with the enemies of his predecessor. Formal rituals were innovated and facilitated the restoration and reintegration of the rebel as a member of the community through the public performance of shared acts or gestures with the emperor, the senior representative of the community. The sequence allowed the misdeeds performed by a rebel to be forgiven since he first displayed subordination through his enactment of deferential deeds like *proskynesis* or via association with humbling attire and other ritual gestures. Performative similarities with rituals of kin-making enhanced the ritual's restorative symbolism.

Punitive measures were attuned to contemporary sensibilities, preferences, and even to the mood of the populace, who were believed to have authorised an emperor's use of them. Christianity encouraged these alternatives to execution, allowing mutilations to be considered a more merciful fate, and permitting emperors to espouse their *philanthropeia* and clemency. Political mutilation transformed a victim by altering his appearance in order to render him 'othered', and served to theoretically disbar him from ever holding office. This exclusionary function stemmed from the belief that physical integrity was necessary in order for an emperor to imitate Christ and perform his quasi-sacral duties. The penalties associated victims with moral-behavioural transgressions by visually associating them with people accused of the very worst crimes in Byzantine society, and especially with sexual and sacrilegious transgressions. They symbolically reversed the moral imperial ideal and served as an expression of the victim's illegitimacy. The ritual degradation parades exploited similar symbolisms to publicly establish and project the extent of a usurper's immorality. The formats of investiture rites were inverted in order to ritually invalidate a usurper's claims to be the legitimate *basileus*. What emerged at the end of the ritual was an individual who had been subjected to the scorn and ridicule of the populace. His identity was forever altered and

established in memory-history. His denunciation by the crowd served to legitimise the emperor by comparison. It acted as an expression of popular *consensus* against a victim who was shown to have acted against the will of the people and thus to have never been a legitimate emperor. The moral and elective principles that underpinned imperial authority were used to expose a tyrant.

Tables

Table 1: A provisional list of attempted usurpations and their outcomes (306-1453)

Note: usurpations that succeeded in installing an emperor are marked in bold type. Prosopographical references are listed alongside the primary sources and are drawn from: A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale, and J. Morris 1971-1992. *Prosopography of the Late Roman Empire* (PLRE); R.J. Lilie, et al. 1998-2013. *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit* (PMBZ); M. Jeffreys, et al. 2016. *Prosopography of the Byzantine World* (PBW); J.-C. Cheynet 1990. *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance, 963-1210* (Cheynet 1990); K. Varzos 1984. *Η Γενεαλογία των Κομνηνών* (Varzos 1984); and E. Trapp, et al. 1976-1996. *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit* (PLP). For the period 963-1210 there are discrepancies between the counts given in the present work and Cheynet 1990. This is a result of the broader subject matter of Cheynet's work (rebellions more generally) and of differing interpretations of the primary material.

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
Constantine I [306-337]	
(Oct 306 – Oct 312) Maxentius, son of Maximianus <i>Augustus</i>	<p><u>Description</u>: Proclaimed by the <i>praetorians</i> at Rome. Initially styled himself '<i>princeps invictus</i>', in emulation of Octavian-Augustus. Later claimed the title of <i>Augustus</i>.</p> <p><u>Fate</u>: Defeated at the Milvian Bridge and drowned in the Tiber (28 Oct 312). Posthumously subjected to a degradation parade in Rome. Remains paraded in North Africa.</p> <p><u>Sources</u>: Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i> 2.9.2. - 2.16.4; Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Büttner-Wobst II, 617-620; PLRE: I, 571 (Maxentius).</p>
(308-310/311) Domitius Alexander, <i>Vicarius</i> of Africa	<p><u>Description</u>: Proclaimed himself in opposition to Maxentius who had called for Domitius to demonstrate loyalty by sending his son to Maxentius as a hostage.</p> <p><u>Fate</u>: The <i>praefectus praetorio</i> Rufius Volusianus and Zenas, the <i>paucissimis cohortibus</i>, defeated and captured Domitius. He was strangled in captivity.</p> <p><u>Sources</u>: Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i> 2.12.2. - 2.14; PLRE: I, 43 (Alexander 17).</p>
(333/334) Calocaerus, <i>magister pectoris camelorum</i>	<p><u>Description</u>: Proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> on Cyprus.</p> <p><u>Fate</u>: He was defeated by Dalmatius the <i>ensor</i>, tried, and then executed at Tarsus.</p> <p><u>Sources</u>: Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 29 (trans. Mango and Scott 49); PLRE: I, 177 (Calocaerus).</p>
Constantius II [337-361], with Constans I [337-350], and Constantine II [337-340]	
(Jan 350 – Aug 353) Magnentius and Decentius	<p><u>Description</u>: Magnentius was proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> by the troops at Augustodunum and was responsible for the assassination of Constans before February 350.</p> <p><u>Fate</u>: Defeated by Constantius' forces in July 353. Recognising that their cause was lost, the pair committed suicide within a week of each other.</p> <p><u>Sources</u>: Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i>, 2.42-43; Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 39-45 ; PLRE: I, 532 (Magnentius); PLRE: I, 244-245 (Decentius 3).</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(Jun 350) Julius Nepotianus, nephew of Constantine I	<p><u>Description:</u> Was proclaimed emperor and captured Rome from Magnentius' adherent the <i>Praefectus urbi</i>, Titianus.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was killed on 30 June 350 when Maxentius dispatched the <i>Magister Officiorum</i>, Marcellinus, against him.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i>, 2.43.2-4; <i>Chronicon Paschale</i>, ed. Dindorf I, 349; PLRE: I, 624 (Nepotianus 5).</p>
(Mar 350 - Dec 351) Vetranio, <i>Magister Militum Imperium</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Vetranio was proclaimed by the troops of Illyricum in response to the elevation of Magnentius. Constantina may have asked him to proclaim himself, in a loyalist effort to check Magnentius' possible advances against her brother, Constantius II. Initially Vetranio sided with Constantius and received finances for his campaign, but, faced with reverses, he entered into negotiations with Magnentius.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was divested of his imperial attire and title and entered into retirement after performing a public reconciliation ceremony with Constantius (25 December 350).</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i>, 2.44.2-4; Philostorgius, <i>Kirchengeschichte</i>, ed. Bidez III, 22 (trans. Amidon 57); Sozomen, <i>Histoire Ecclésiastique</i>, ed. Bidez et al. 198-201; Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 38; PLRE: I, 954 (Vetranio 1).</p>
(Aug-Sep 355) Silvanus, <i>magister peditum</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaims himself <i>Augustus</i> at Colonia Agrippina on 11 Aug 355 after being slandered to Constantius II.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Dragged from a Christian shrine on 7 Sep 355 and assassinated by soldiers who had been bribed by Constantius.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Ammianus Marcellinus, <i>Rerum Gestarum</i>, 15.2.3; 15.5; PLRE: I, 840-841 (Silvanus 2).</p>
(Feb 360 – Nov 361) Julian, <i>Caesar</i>, brother-in-law of Constantius II	<p><u>Description:</u> Julian had been appointed <i>Caesar</i> by Constantius II on 6 Nov 355, in response to Claudius Silvanus' usurpation in Gaul. He was proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> of the West in February 360 (at Paris) after Constantius ordered troops from Gaul to join his eastern campaigns.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Although he attempted to gain Constantius' recognition for his promotion, the two <i>Augusti</i> marched against each other in 361. An outright battle was only forestalled when Constantius died of natural causes on 3 Nov 361, having officially recognised Julian as his successor upon his deathbed.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Ammianus Marcellinus, <i>Rerum Gestarum</i>, 20.5-8; Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 50-52; PLRE: I, 477-478 (Iulianus 29).</p>
Julian [361–363]	
Jovian [363–364]	
Valentinian I [364–375] in the West, with Valens [364–378] in the East	
(Sep 365 – May 366) Procopius, <i>comes</i> , a relative of Julian; and Marcellus, <i>protector</i> , a relative of Procopius	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> at the palace in Constantinople on 28 Sep 365 with the support of the soldiers of the <i>Divitenses</i> and <i>Tungricani</i>, after hearing that Valentinian and Valens were planning to arrest him. He had previously been guaranteed the succession by Julian.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Defeated by Valens after a mass desertion and beheaded on 27 May 366. His head was paraded at cities that had been loyal to him.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Ammianus Marcellinus, <i>Rerum Gestarum</i>, 26.5-9; Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i>, 4.4.2 - 4.8.4; PLRE: I, 742-743 (Procopius 4).</p>
(May/June 366) Marcellus, appointed <i>Caesar</i> by Procopius	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed himself <i>Augustus</i> in May/June upon the death of Procopius.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Marcellus was captured by Valens and executed with his principal supporters soon after.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Ammianus Marcellinus, <i>Rerum Gestarum</i>, 26.10.1-5; Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i>, 4.8.3-4; PLRE: I, 551</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(c.372-375) Firmus, son of the Moorish prince Nubel, a military officer	<p>(Marcellus 5).</p> <p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> by the troops in Africa after a tax dispute. <u>Fate:</u> His armies were defeated and he committed suicide to prevent his capture. <u>Sources:</u> Ammianus Marcellinus, <i>Rerum Gestarum</i>, 29.4-6; Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i>, 4.16.3-6; PLRE: I, 340 (Firmus 3).</p>
Valens [364-378] in the East, with Gratian [367-383] and Valentinian II [375-392] in the West	
(Spring 383 – Aug 388) Magnus Maximus, <i>comes</i> ; and Flavius Victor, his son	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> in a military revolt by the troops of Britannia. <u>Fate:</u> Maximus was captured in a surprise attack by Theodosius I, divested of his imperial attire, and publicly executed on 28 Aug 388 after his crimes against the state had been read out. Flavius committed suicide upon hearing of his father's defeat. <u>Sources:</u> Ammianus Marcellinus, <i>Rerum Gestarum</i>, 31.4.9; Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i> 4.35.2-4.47; PLRE: I, 588 (Maximus 39)</p>
Theodosius I [379-395] in the East, with Honorius [393-423] in the West	
(Aug 392 – Sep 394) Eugenius, <i>magister</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> in Aug 392 by the <i>Magister Militum</i> Arbogast who had assumed real power after the death of Valentinian II. <u>Fate:</u> He was captured and beheaded in a surprise attack by Theodosius I. His head was affixed to a spear and paraded around his troops' encampment. <u>Sources:</u> Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i> 4.54-58; <i>Chronicon Paschale</i>, ed. Dindorf I, 394; PLRE: I, 293 (Eugenius 6).</p>
Partition of Empire (395)	
Honorius [393-423] in the West, with Arcadius [395–408] in the East	
(406/407) Marcus	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> by the troops in Britannia. <u>Fate:</u> Executed by the troops and replaced with Gratianus. <u>Sources:</u> Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i> 6.2.1; PLRE: II, 719-720 (Marcus 2).</p>
(406/407) Gratianus	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> by the troops in Britannia after the execution of Marcus. <u>Fate:</u> Executed by the troops after four months and replaced by Flavius Claudius Constantine [III]. <u>Sources:</u> Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i> 6.2.2; PLRE: II, 518-519 (Gratianus 3).</p>
(407 - Sep 411) Flavius Claudius Constantine [III] and Constans [II], his son	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> by the troops in Britannia after the execution of Gratianus and established himself at Arles. <u>Fate:</u> He was tacitly recognised as <i>Augustus</i> by Honorius in 409 when he was sent an imperial robe by the emperor. However, he was besieged at Arles by Honorius' troops in 411, sought asylum in a church, and received the tonsure. He surrendered to Honorius with his son Julius but they were executed. His head was displayed at Ravenna in Sep 411. <u>Sources:</u> Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i> 6.2.2. - 6.13.1; PLRE: II, 316-317 (Constantinus 21).</p>
Honorius [393-423] in the West, with Theodosius II [408-450] in the East	
(409-411) Maximus, <i>domesticus</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> at Tarraco (Hispania) by Flavius Claudius Constantine [III]'s general Gerontius.</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
	<p><u>Fate:</u> After the death of Gerontius in 411, Maximus was deposed by the troops. He either fled to join ‘the barbarians of Hispania’, or was executed.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> PLRE: II, 744-745 (Maximus 4).</p>
(409/410-411) Constans [II], son of Flavius Claudius Constantine [III]	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> by his father Flavius Claudius Constantine [III] in late 409 or early 410, in response to the usurpation of Maximus.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Attacked and killed at Vienne in 411.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i> 6.4.1. - 6.13.1; Jordanes, <i>Romana et Getica (Romana)</i>, ed. Mommsen 324; PLRE: II, 310 (Constans 1).</p>
(409 - Summer 410) Priscus Attalus, <i>eparchus</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> by Alaric at Rome, after his second siege of the city.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Deposed by Alaric following the latter’s reconciliation with Honorius in 410. Detained until 412, when he joined the Visigoths.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i> 6.7.1. – 6.12.3 ; Philostorgius, <i>Kirchengeschichte</i>, ed. Bidez XII.3 (trans. Amidon 155-156); PLRE: II, 180-181 (Attalus 2).</p>
(411-413) Jovinus and Sebastianus, his brother	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> at Mundiacum (Germania) in 411 with the support of Burgundian, Alan, and Frankish troops.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Jovinus surrendered to Athaulfus in 413. He was beheaded at Narbo as he was being taken to Honorius. His head was displayed at Ravenna.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Philostorgius, <i>Kirchengeschichte</i>, ed. Bidez XII.6 (trans. Amidon 159); Jordanes, <i>Romana et Getica (Romana)</i>, ed. Mommsen 165; PLRE: II, 621-622 (Iovinus 2).</p>
(412-413) Sebastianus, brother of Jovinus	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> by his brother Jovinus in 412, against the wishes of Athaulfus.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was captured by Athaulfus and beheaded. His head was displayed with that of his brother, at Ravenna.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Philostorgius, <i>Kirchengeschichte</i>, ed. Bidez XII.6 (trans. Amidon 159); Jordanes, <i>Romana et Getica (Romana)</i>, ed. Mommsen 165; PLRE: II, 983 (Sebastianus 2).</p>
(c.412 – March 413) Heraclianus, <i>comes Africae, consul</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Rebelled in Africa and intended to be proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> (may actually have been proclaimed <i>Augustus</i>).</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Was defeated in battle near Ultriculum after sailing to Italy. He fled to Carthage where he was murdered in March 413.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Jordanes, <i>Romana et Getica (Romana)</i>, ed. Mommsen 325; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 81 (trans. Mango and Scott 126); PLRE: II, 539-540 (Heraclianus 3).</p>
(414-415) Priscus Attalus, former usurper/ <i>Augustus</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> for a second time, by the Visigoths.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Abandoned by his Visigoth supporters he was captured by Honorius. Two of the fingers on his right hand were amputated and he was exiled to the island of Lipara.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Philostorgius, <i>Kirchengeschichte</i>, ed. Bidez XII.4-5 (trans. Amidon 157-158); PLRE: II, 180-181 (Attalus 2).</p>
Valentinian III [423-455] in the West, with Theodosius II [408-450] in the East	
(Nov 423 - May 425) Johannes, <i>primicerius</i>	<u>Description:</u> Seized power in Rome when no new <i>Augustus</i> was proclaimed.

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
<i>notariorum</i>	<p><u>Fate:</u> Was captured in 425 after defeat against Theodosius II and Valentinian III. He had a hand amputated and was executed in the Hippodrome at Ravenna (426) after a degradation parade.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Procopius, <i>History of the Wars</i>, II.3.4-9; PLRE: II, 594-595 (Ioannes 6).</p>
Marcian [450-457] in the East, with Valentinian III [423-455] in the West	
(Mar-May 455) Petronius Maximus, son-in-law of Theodosius II	<p><u>Description:</u> Murdered Valentinian III on 16 Mar 455 and proclaimed himself emperor in the West on the next day.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Assassinated in Rome during Gaiseric's attack on the city (allegedly stoned to death by the mob).</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> PLRE: II, 749-751 (Maximus 22).</p>
(June-Aug 455) Avitus, <i>Magister Militum Praesentalis</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor by Theodoric II at Arles after the death of Petronius Maximus, and marched on Rome.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was recognised by the Roman senate, and Marcian, as <i>Augustus</i> in the West.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> PLRE: II, 196-198 (Avitus 5).</p>
Marcian [450-457] in the East, with Avitus [455-456] in the West	
(456 - Apr 457) Majorian, <i>Magister Militum</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> As <i>comes domesticorum</i> Majorian rebelled against Avitus, with Ricimer. He defeated and deposed Avitus at the Battle of Placentia (Oct 456) and had him murdered soon after. Majorian was appointed <i>Magister Militum</i> in 457 (probably by Leo I), and was proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> of the West in April with the approval of Leo.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was confirmed as <i>Augustus</i> in December 457.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> PLRE: II, 702-703 (Majorianus).</p>
Leo I [457-474] in the East, with Majorian [457-461] in the West	
(461-465) Libius Severus, senator	<p><u>Description:</u> Ricimer deposed, divested, tortured, and beheaded Majorian in August 461. He eventually proclaimed Libius Severus as <i>Augustus</i> of the West in November, at Ravenna.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was recognised as emperor by the Roman senate, but never officially by Leo I (despite collaboration between their courts).</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Jordanes, <i>Romana et Getica (Romana)</i>, ed. Mommsen 335; PLRE: II, 1004-1005 (Severus 18).</p>
Libius Severus [461-465] in the West, and Leo I [457-474] in the East	
Anthemius [467-472] in the West, with Leo I [457-474] in the East	
(470) Romanus, <i>patricius</i> , former <i>magister officiorum</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting to assassinate Anthemius in association with the <i>Magister Militum</i> Ricimer, and accused of aspiring to imperial power.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Arrested, tried, and beheaded.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> PLRE: II, 947 (Romanus 4).</p>
(471) Aspar, <i>Magister Militum</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting to assassinate Leo I and proclaim a rival emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Executed with his son, Ardabur, inside the palace at Constantinople.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Procopius, <i>History of the Wars</i>, III.6.22-271; PLRE: II, 164-169 (Aspar).</p>
(472) Arvandus, <i>praefectus praetorio per Galliarum</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of treason for conspiring against Anthemius with the Visigothic king Euric. Probably intended to be proclaimed.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Arrested and tried in Rome. Sentenced to death, but this was commuted to exile during the legal thirty day delay.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> PLRE: II, 157-158 (Arvandus).</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(Apr-Jul 472) Olybrius, patricius, former consul	<p><u>Description:</u> In 472 Olybrius was sent by Leo I to mediate between Anthemius and Ricimer, however, Ricimer proclaimed Olybrius as <i>Augustus</i> of the West in April, and Anthemius was murdered in July.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was recognised as emperor by the Roman senate, but not by Leo I.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Jordanes, <i>Romana et Getica (Romana)</i>, ed. Mommsen 338-339; <i>Chronicon Paschale</i>, ed. Dindorf I, 464; PLRE: II, 796-798 (Olybrius 6).</p>
Olybrius [472] in the West, and Leo I [457-474] in the East	
(Mar 473 – c. Jun 474) Glycerius, <i>comes domesticorum</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor by Gundobarus (Ricimer's nephew), and the imperial guard, at Ravenna in 473.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> His authority appears to have been recognised only in Northern Italy. He abdicated to Leo I's appointee Julius Nepos in 474, without resistance. He was divested, and consecrated as bishop of Selona, in Delmatia.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Jordanes, <i>Romana et Getica (Romana)</i>, ed. Mommsen 338; PLRE: II, 514 (Glycerius).</p>
Julius Nepos [473-475/480] in the West, with Leo I [457-474] in the East	
Leo II [474]	
Zeno [474-491]	
(Oct 475 – Sep 476) Romulus Augustulus, son of Orestes the <i>Magister Militum</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor by his father in 475 in Italy, after Julius Nepos had fled to Delmatia.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Deposed by Odovacer at Ravenna after the murder of his father and uncle. On account of his youth, Romulus was permitted to live with family members on an estate in Campania and was granted an annual stipend.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Jordanes, <i>Romana et Getica (Romana)</i>, ed. Mommsen 344; PLRE: II, 811-812 (Orestes 2); PLRE: II, 949-950 (Romulus 4).</p>
(Jan 475 – Aug 476) Basiliscus, brother-in-law of Leo I	<p><u>Description:</u> He successfully assumed the throne in Constantinople (475-476) after winning the support of the Ostrogoth troops under Theodoric Strabo, and the Isaurians under Illus. Basiliscus and the empress-dowager Verina, with the support of the <i>magister officiorum</i> Patricius, and the <i>magister militum per Thracias</i>, convinced Zeno that he would be assassinated if he did not flee Constantinople. Zeno fled to Isauria and his supporters in Constantinople were slaughtered by Basiliscus' allies. Basiliscus received a coronation and promoted his son Marcus as <i>Caesar</i>. He administered the government from Constantinople and sent Strabo and Illus against Zeno.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Zeno rallied his Isaurian loyalists in effort to retake the throne and eventually bribed Strabo and Illus to join his cause. In 476, upon hearing that Zeno had entered Constantinople and the Great Palace, Basiliscus fled with his family to the Great Church. Zeno had them divested of their imperial insignia whilst inside the church and granted them an oath of assurance. They were exiled to Limnai in Cappadocia where they died of exposure.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Evagrius Scholasticus, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>, ed. Parmentier 100-108 (trans. Whitby 132-142); Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Thurn 301-303 (trans. Jeffreys 209-210); PLRE: II, 212-214 (Basiliscus 2).</p>
Fall of Western Roman Empire (476)	
(479) Marcianus, son-in-law of Leo I, and son of Western Emperor Anthemius	<p><u>Description:</u> Instigated a popular revolt with the intention of proclaiming himself emperor. Had support from his brothers Romulus and Procopius, and from Theodoric Strabo.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> His supporters were bribed, and he was driven from the Great Palace. He sought asylum at the church of the Holy Apostles and was exiled to Caesarea.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Evagrius Scholasticus, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>, ed. Parmentier 122-123 (trans. Whitby 161); Theophanes,</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(c.483/484) Marcianus, son-in-law of Leo I, and son of Western Emperor Anthemius	<p><i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 126-127 (trans. Mango and Scott 195); PLRE: II, 717-718 (Marcianus 17).</p> <p><u>Description:</u> Discovered attempting to escape his confinement in Caesarea during the Isaurian revolt of 483-484. He probably intended to renew his ambitions for the throne.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was ordained a presbyter and exiled to Papyrius in Cappadocia.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Evagrius Scholasticus, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>, ed. Parmentier 122-123 (trans. Whitby 161); PLRE: II, 717-718 (Marcianus 17).</p>
(Jul 484 - 488) Leontius, <i>Magister Militum per Thracias</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Was despatched to suppress the Isaurian revolt of Illus in 484, but was subsequently persuaded to join the revolt and was proclaimed emperor (19 Jul 484).</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Finally defeated in 488, Leontius was beheaded at Seleucia-on-Calycadnus. His head was sent to Constantinople and displayed on a stake near St. Konan's at Skylai.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Thurn 316-317 (trans. Jeffreys et al 214-218); Evagrius Scholasticus, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>, ed. Parmentier 123-124 (trans. Whitby 162); Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 132 (trans. Mango and Scott 196-204); PLRE: II, 670-671 (Leontius 17).</p>
Anastasius I [491-518]	
(491-492) Flavius Longinus, brother of Zeno, <i>Magister Militum</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Entered into rebellion with the intention of establishing himself as Zeno's successor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Exiled to Alexandria, and may have been ordained.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Evagrius Scholasticus, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>, ed. Parmentier 125 (trans. Whitby 164-166); Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 137 (trans. Mango and Scott 210); PLRE: II, 689-690 (Longinus 6).</p>
(512) Areobindus, former <i>Magister Militum per Orientem</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed by the Constantinopolitan crowds.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Areobindus fled to the Perama to avoid his proclamation and does not appear to have been punished. Those citizens responsible for the unrest and proclamation were variously punished.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Thurn 333-334 (trans. Jeffreys 228); John of Nikiu, <i>Chronicle</i>, trans. Charles 129; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 159 (trans. Mango and Scott 240); PLRE: II, 143-144 (Areobindus 1).</p>
(513/514) Vitalianus, <i>Magister Militum per Thracias</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor after a military pay dispute involving the <i>foederati</i>, and marched against Constantinople.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Reconciled with Anastasius after exchanging oaths.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Thurn 332-333 (trans. Jeffreys 226-227); Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 157-158 (trans. Mango and Scott 238-239); PLRE: II, 1171-1176 (Vitalianus 2).</p>
Justin I [518-527]	
(518) Theocritus, <i>comes domesticorum</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Upon the death of Anastasius, Theocritus distributed largess in an effort to buy support for his proclamation in opposition to Justin.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Executed by Justin's loyalists inside the Great Palace.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Thurn 337 (trans. Jeffreys 230-231); <i>Chronicon Paschale</i>, ed. Dindorf I, 519; PLRE: II, 1065 (Theocritus).</p>
Justinian I [527-565]	

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(532) Nika Riot: Hypatius, nephew of Anastasius I	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor by the Constantinopolitan crowds, initially prompting Justinian to flee.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Hypatius was taken prisoner, executed, and his remains cast into the sea. The crowd supporting his proclamation were slaughtered.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Procopius, <i>History of the Wars</i>, I.24.19-31; Evagrius Scholasticus, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>, ed. Parmentier 163 (trans. Whitby 213); Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Thurn 397-398 (trans. Jeffreys 278); Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 181-186 (trans. Mango and Scott 276-280); PLRE: II, 577-581 (Hypatius 6).</p>
(536-537) Stotzas	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor in a military rebellion in Africa.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Suffered desertions and was defeated by Germanus at the Battle of Cellas (537). Fled to join the Vandals.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Procopius, <i>History of the Wars</i>, II.11-17; III.39.12; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 203-205 (trans. Mango and Scott 297-299); PLRE: IIIb, 1199-1200 (Stotzas).</p>
(537) John Cottistis	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaims himself emperor at Dara.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Assassinated by loyalist soldiers and local aristocrats after four days.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Procopius, <i>History of the Wars</i>, I.26.5-12; PLRE: IIIa, 639-640 (Ioannes 24).</p>
(25 Nov 562) The banker Marcellus, Ablabius, the curator Aetherius, Sergius	<p><u>Description:</u> Uncovered bearing swords, having planned to murder Justinian in the <i>triclinium</i>. Claim that Belisarius was involved in the conspiracy, but this is unlikely.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Ablabius disclosed the details of the plot. Marcellus killed himself to prevent capture. Sergius sought sanctuary at the church of the Mother of God at Blachernai but was expelled, taken prisoner and interrogated. A <i>silentium</i> was convened and the conspirators' penalties read out. Belisarius was placed under house arrest.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Thurn 427-428 (trans. Jeffreys 301-303); Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 237-238 (trans. Mango and Scott 349-350); PLRE: IIIb, 816 (Marcellus 4); PLRE: IIIa, 2-3 (Ablabius 1); PLRE: IIIb, 1128 (Sergius 6); PLRE: IIIa, 21-22 (Aetherius 2).</p>
Justin II [565-574]	
(566) Justin, <i>augustalis</i> (cousin of Justin II)	<p><u>Description:</u> Uncovered plotting for the throne.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Banished to Alexandria, later beheaded. Head sent to Constantinople.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Evagrius Scholasticus, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>, ed. Parmentier 196-197 (trans. Whitby 256-257); Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 244 (trans. Mango and Scott 360); PLRE: IIIa, 750-754 (Iustinus 4).</p>
(Sep/Oct 566) Aetherius and Addaeus, (senators)	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered trying to poison Justin II. Probably intended to proclaim a rival emperor. Aetherius had been involved in the conspiracy of 562.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Beheaded.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Evagrius Scholasticus, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>, ed. Parmentier 197 (trans. Whitby 256-257); Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 242 (trans. Mango and Scott 356); PLRE: IIIa, 14-15 (Addaeus); PLRE: IIIa, 21-22 (Aetherius 2).</p>
Tiberius II [574-582]	
(Oct 578) Justinian, <i>magister militum</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Uncovered plotting for the throne.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was fined fifteen <i>centenaria</i> and pardoned.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Kaegi 1981: 62; PLRE: IIIa, 744-747 (Iustinianus 3).</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(Oct 579/580/581) Justinian, <i>magister militum</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Uncovered plotting for the throne with Justin II's widow Sophia.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He received a reprimand from the emperor and was pardoned.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Kaegi 1981: 62; PLRE: IIIa, 744-747 (Justinianus 3).</p>
Maurice [582-602]	
(20 Apr 588) Germanus, <i>dux per Phoenicia</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor at Monokarton (Antioch), in a military pay dispute at Easter.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> When order had been restored Germanus was tried and found guilty of treason. Originally sentenced to death, this was commuted by Maurice who rewarded Germanus for preventing the troops from pillaging.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophylaktos Simokattes, <i>Historiae</i>, ed. de Boor 115-116 (trans. Whitby 74); Evagrius Scholasticus, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>, ed. Bidez and Parmentier 224-225 (trans. Whitby 294-296); Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 260 (trans. Mango and Scott 382); PLRE: IIIa, 529-530 (Germanus 6).</p>
(Oct-Nov 602) Phocas	<p><u>Description:</u> Phocas was proclaimed emperor in a military revolt on the Danube frontier. He marched on Constantinople and the government collapsed within a month.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Maurice abdicated and fled the Constantinople with his family. He was taken from the monastery in which they had sought asylum and publicly executed in November at the Harbour of Eutropius, together with his six sons. Their bodies were thrown into the sea. Phocas was acclaimed emperor by the Greens upon entering the city, and was crowned emperor by Patriarch Kyriakos on 25 Nov 602.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophylaktos Simokattes, <i>Historiae</i>, ed. de Boor 326-339 (trans. Whitby 219-229); <i>Chronicon Paschale</i>, ed. Dindorf I, 692-693; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 288-290, 291 (trans. Mango and Scott 412-414, 418-419); PLRE: IIIb, 1030-1032 (Phocas 7).</p>
(Oct/Nov 602) Philippicus, <i>comes excubitorum</i> , brother-in-law of Maurice	<p><u>Description:</u> Faced with Phocas' revolt, a prophecy was circulated which indicated that Philippicus was plotting for the throne.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Philippicus fell out of favour with Maurice (he may have been placed under house arrest), but was later reconciled with the emperor in private, after performing <i>proskynesis</i> and embracing.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophylact Simocatta, <i>Historiae</i>, ed. de Boor 29 (trans. Whitby 196); Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 283, 284-286 (trans. Mango and Scott 408, 409-411); PLRE: IIIb, 1022-1026 (Philippicus 3).</p>
(Nov 602) Germanus, father-in-law of Maurice's son and heir Theodosius, <i>patricius</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Was offered the throne by elements of the soldiery inside Constantinople as Phocas approached the city, and sought proclamation by the Greens.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> His proclamation was not supported by the Greens, so he swore loyalty to Phocas.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophylaktos Simokattes, <i>Historiae</i>, ed. de Boor 333-334 (trans. Whitby 225); Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 289 (trans. Mango and Scott 413); PLRE: IIIa, 531-532 (Germanus 11).</p>
Phocas [602-610]	
(Late 603) Germanus, father-in-law of Maurice's son and heir Theodosius, <i>patricius</i> ; and Constantina, former <i>Augusta</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Germanus sought to be proclaimed emperor with the support of Constantina and the Green faction.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Germanus' plan to buy the support of the Greens failed. Constantina and her daughters fled to Hagia Sophia where they were granted asylum by Patriarch Kyriakos. Phocas granted the women an oath of assurance and sent them into monastic confinement. Germanus was captured, tonsured, and kept under house arrest.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Chronicon Paschale</i>, ed. Dindorf I, 696; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 293 (trans. Mango and</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(605) Germanus, father-in-law of Maurice's son and heir Theodosius, <i>patricius</i> ; and Constantina, former <i>Augusta</i> ; with elements of the army led by the <i>praefectus</i> Theodorus	<p>Scott 421-422); PLRE: IIIa, 531-532 (Germanus 11); PLRE: IIIa, 337-339 (Constantina 1).</p> <p><u>Description:</u> Germanus and Constantina were discovered plotting for the throne after a rumour was spread that Theodosius, the son and heir of Maurice was still alive. Military figures were also implicated in the conspiracy including Theodorus the <i>praefectus</i> of the East.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Constantina and her three daughters were executed at the Harbour of Eutropius. Germanus and his daughter were killed in their monastic confinement on Prote. Theodorus was flogged to death. Other figures were subjected to amputations, execution, and exile.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Chronicon Paschale</i>, ed. Dindorf I, 696; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 295, 297 (trans. Mango and Scott 423, 426); PLRE: IIIa, 531-532 (Germanus 11); PLRE: IIIb, 1275 (Theodorus 151).</p>
(608 - Oct 610) Herakleios, son of the exarch of Africa	<p><u>Description:</u> In 608 Herakleios' father renounced his oath to Phocas and entered into rebellion. Niketas, Herakleios' younger cousin, marched through Egypt while Herakleios sailed on Constantinople, via Sicily and Cyprus. Herakleios was proclaimed emperor and crowned (for the first time) during his revolt, at Kyzikos in August or September 610. He gained entrance to Constantinople after the defenders deserted Phocas. The <i>comes excubitorum</i> Priscus, Phocas' son-in-law and <i>de facto</i> heir, switched allegiance to Herakleios.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Phocas was executed by Herakleios himself (5 Oct 610). The corpse was beheaded and mutilated, before being paraded through Constantinople to the Forum Bovis and burned. Herakleios was crowned emperor (for a second time) by Patriarch Sergios at the Church of St Stephen.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 297-299 (trans. Mango and Scott 426-428); Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i>, ed. Mango 34-41; <i>Chronicon Paschale</i>, ed. Dindorf I, 699-701; PLRE: IIIa, 586-587 (Heraclius 4).</p>
Herakleios [610-641]	
(610-611) Komentiolos, brother of Phocas, <i>patricius</i> , commander of the eastern armies	<p><u>Description:</u> Refused to acknowledge Herakleios' authority and planned to claim the throne after the death of his brother.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was assassinated while wintering his troops at Ancyra.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> PLRE: III, 326 (Comentiolus 2).</p>
(617) John of Compsa, <i>Magister Militum</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Rebelled at Naples and intended to claim the imperial title.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Defeated and killed by the Eleutherius, the <i>exarch</i> of Ravenna.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Liber Pontificalis</i>, ed. Vogel I, 106; PLRE: IIIa, 702-703 (Ioannes 240).</p>
(635/637) Ioannes Athalarichos, the illegitimate son of Herakleios, and Theodoros, <i>magistros</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of plotting to depose Herakleios and proclaim Athalarichos emperor in a bloodless coup involving prominent Armenian nobles at court.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Conspirators have their noses and hands maimed. Athalarichos was exiled to Prinkipos, and Theodoros to Gaudomelete (Malta).</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i>, ed. Mango 58-59, 72-73; Sebeos, trans. Thomson 93, 107; PLRE: IIIa, 706 (Ioannes 260).</p>
Constantine III (Herakleios Constantine) [641]	
Heraklonas [641]	
(May -Sep 641) Konstans II, son of Constantine	<u>Description:</u> Valentinus had been sent to the east to distribute a donative on behalf of Constantine III which was

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III; through the intervention of Valentinos, commander of the troops in the east	<p>intended to secure their loyalty for the accession of Constantine's son Konstans II in the face of dynastic infighting against Heraklonas and Martina. When Constantine died Valentinos marched on Constantinople in defence of Konstans' rights.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Valentinos was able to force Heraklonas and Martina to crown Konstans co-emperor. He was appointed <i>comes excubitorum</i> and then aided the popular rebellion that overthrew Heraklonas and Martina. Heraklonas and his brothers had their noses mutilated and were exiled to Rhodes (Marinos was additionally castrated); Martina had her tongue cut and was exiled. Konstans became sole emperor and was married to Valentinos' daughter.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i>, ed. Mango 78-85; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 341 (trans. Mango and Scott 475); John of Nikiu, <i>Chronicle</i>, trans. Charles 197; PLRE: IIIa, 333 (Konstans 2); PLRE: IIIa, 1354-1355 (Valentinus 5).</p>
Konstans II [641-668]	
(644) Valentinos, father-in-law of Konstans II, commander of the troops "of the East"	<p><u>Description:</u> Marched on Constantinople with the intention of being proclaimed emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was killed in the attempt.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 343 (trans. Mango and Scott 476); PLRE: IIIa, 1354-1355 (Valentinus 5).</p>
(646-647) Gregorius, <i>patrikios</i> , and <i>exarch</i> of Carthage	<p><u>Description:</u> Rebelled in North Africa and had himself proclaimed emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Was defeated in battle with the Arabs and went into exile.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 343 (trans. Mango and Scott 477-478); PLRE: IIIa, 554 (Gregorius 19).</p>
(667-669) Saborios, <i>strategos ton Armeniakon</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Enters into revolt in Anatolia and was probably proclaimed emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Was killed at Hadrianople (in Asia Minor) when he lost control of his horse.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 348-349 (trans. Mango and Scott 488-489); PMBZ (Saborios 6476).</p>
(668-669) Mizizios, <i>strategos/comes</i> (of the Opsikion?)	<p><u>Description:</u> Was involved in the assassination of Konstans II in Sicily and was proclaimed emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Constantine sent a fleet which defeated the usurper. Mizizios was beheaded, and his head was sent to Constantinople.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 351-352 (trans. Mango and Scott 490-491); <i>Liber Pontificalis</i>, ed. Vogel I, 190; Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 221-222; PMBZ (Mezezius 5163).</p>
Constantine IV [668-685]	
Justinian II [685-695] (1st)	
(695-698) Leontios, former <i>strategos ton Helladikon</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor at Constantinople in a popular revolt over Justinian II's governance.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Justinian II was deposed, had his nose and tongue mutilated, and was exiled to Kherson. Leontios was crowned emperor by Patriarch Kallinikos.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i>, ed. Mango 94-99; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 368-369 (trans. Mango and Scott 514-515); PMBZ (Leontios 4547).</p>
Leontios [695-698]	

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(698) Tiberios III (Apsimaros), <i>droungarios</i> of the Kibyrrhaeot theme	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor by the Kibyrrhaeot theme after the failed expedition to retake Carthage. He sailed on Constantinople and besieged the city for several months. He eventually gained access when the ‘Greens’ and elements within the imperial guard joined his cause.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Leontios was deposed, had his nose mutilated, and was tonsured at the monastery of Delmatos. Tiberios-Apsimaros was crowned emperor by Patriarch Kallinikos.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i>, ed. Mango 100-101; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 370-371 (trans. Mango and Scott 517); PMBZ (Tiberios 8483).</p>
Tiberios III (Apsimaros) [698-705]	
(701) Philippikos-Bardanes,	<p><u>Description:</u> Suspected of plotting for the throne; an eagle omen (indicative of future rule) was attributed to him.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was exiled to Kephalaria.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 372 (trans. Mango and Scott 519); PMBZ (Philippikos 6150).</p>
(702/3-705) Justinian II	<p><u>Description:</u> Justinian escaped his guards at Kherson and secured the assistance of Khan Tervel of Bulgaria. Supplied with troops to support his restoration, he marched on Constantinople and gained entrance to the city via an unguarded postern gate.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Tiberios-Apsimaros was taken prisoner after fleeing the city. He was publicly paraded with Leontios during the Hippodrome games. The pair were subjected to a <i>calcatio</i> and beheaded. Justinian was restored and counted the period of his exile as part of his reign.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i>, ed. Mango 100-105; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 375 (trans. Mango and Scott 523); PMBZ (Iustinianos 3556).</p>
Justinian II [705-711] (2nd)	
(710-711) Giorgios	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor at Ravenna in opposition to Justinian, after the murder of the <i>exarch</i> John Rizocopo.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was probably executed: his father, who was imprisoned in Constantinople, was tortured to death.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Liber Pontificalis</i>, ed. Vogel I, 389.</p>
(711) Philippikos-Bardanes	<p><u>Description:</u> Philippikos had been exiled under Tiberios but was restored by Justinian as part of the emperor’s expedition to retake Kherson. Philippikos’ troops revolted and proclaimed him emperor, and with support from the Khazars Philippikos marched on Constantinople.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Justinian was captured trying to rally troops as he fled to Armenia. He was beheaded, and his head was sent to Constantinople and then to the West (Ravenna). Justinian’s body was thrown to the sea. Tiberios, Justinian’s six-year-old son and co-emperor, was dragged from the sanctuary of the church of the Mother of God at Blachernai, divested of imperial attire, and had his throat slit. The boy was buried at church of the Holy Anargyroi. Philippikos was crowned emperor by Patriarch Kyros.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i>, ed. Mango 110-113; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 379-381 (trans. Mango and Scott 528-530); PMBZ (Philippikos 6150).</p>
Philippikos-Bardanes [711-713]	
(Jun 713) Artemios-Anastasios II, <i>asekretis</i>; with help from the <i>strategos ton Thrakesion</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Artemios-Anastasios was proclaimed emperor on 3 June after a conspiracy in Constantinople involving representatives of the <i>Thrakesion</i> and <i>Opsikion</i> armies had deposed Philippikos.</p>

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Theodoros Myakios, and comes tou Opsikiou Georgios Bouraphos	<p><u>Fate:</u> Philippikos was captured, blinded, and exiled as he returned from a feast at the Zeuxippus. Artemios-Anastasios was crowned emperor by Patriarch Ioannes VI.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 383 (trans. Mango and Scott 533); Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i> ed. Mango 114-117; Leon Grammatikos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Bekker 170; PMBZ (Anastasios 236); PMBZ (Theodoros 7519); PMBZ (Georgios 2107); PMBZ (Ruphos 6435).</p>
Anastasios II [713-715]	
(May 715) Theodosios III, tax official in Hellas	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor in May by the troops of the <i>Opsikion</i> and marched on Constantinople. The army gained access via the Blachernai gate with assistance from some of the defenders. Artemios-Anastasios abdicated when an oath of assurance reached him at Nikaia (where he had been preparing to campaign in the east).</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Artemios-Anastasios was tonsured and exiled to Thessalonike; his supporters reportedly faced no punitive measures. Theodosios was crowned emperor by Patriarch Germanos.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 385 (trans. Mango and Scott 536); Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i> ed. Mango 118-119; PMBZ (Theodosios 7793).</p>
Theodosios III [715-717]	
(717) Leon III, strategos ton Anatolikon	<p><u>Description:</u> Leon refused to accept the authority of Theodosios III, proclaimed himself emperor in Anatolia, and entered into revolt with Artabasdos, the <i>strategos ton Armeniakon</i>.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Theodosios was forced to abdicate after learning that Leon had captured his son at Nicomedia. Theodosios and his son were tonsured and exiled. Leon entered Constantinople as emperor on 25 March, and was crowned by Patriarch Germanos.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 389-390 (trans. Mango and Scott 539-540); PMBZ (Leon 4242).</p>
Leon III [717-741]	
(718) Basileios Onomagoulos; Sergios, <i>protospatharios</i> , <i>strategos</i> of Sicily	<p><u>Description:</u> Basileios was proclaimed emperor on Sicily by the <i>strategos</i> Sergios during the siege of Constantinople by the Arabs.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was handed over to imperial forces and beheaded. His head was sent to Constantinople, and his supporters were variously subjected to nose-cutting, amputations, and other punitive measures.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i>, ed. Mango 124-125; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 398-399 (trans. Mango and Scott 549-550); PMBZ (Basileios 849); PMBZ (Sergios 6594).</p>
(719) Artemios-Anastasios II	<p><u>Description:</u> Was proclaimed emperor at Thessalonike in a revolt involving the <i>magistros</i> Niketas Xylinites and the bishop of Thessalonike, which was supported by the Bulgarians under Khan Tervel.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Artemios-Anastasios marched on Constantinople but was betrayed to the emperor by the Bulgarians when the city rejected his proclamation. Artemios-Anastasios, Xylinites, and the bishop, were all beheaded.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i>, ed. Mango 126-127; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 400-401 (trans. Mango and Scott 552); PMBZ (Anastasios 236).</p>
(c.Feb-April 727) Kosmas	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor in a popular revolt amongst the population of Hellas and the Cyclades.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Sailed against Constantinople in April and was defeated in a naval battle before the city. Kosmas was publicly beheaded.</p>

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(729-730) Tiberios Petasius	<p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 405 (trans. Mango and Scott 560); PMBZ (Kosmas 4093).</p> <p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor in Italy, supposedly in reaction to Iconoclasm.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Captured and beheaded. His head sent to Constantinople.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Liber Pontificalis</i>, ed. Vogel I, 148; PMBZ (Tiberios 8492).</p>
(737) Biseros (Pseudo-Tiberios)	<p><u>Description:</u> Claimed the throne as Tiberios, the son of Justinian II.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Unkown.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 411 (trans. Mango and Scott 570); PMBZ (Tiberios 8491).</p>
Constantine V [741-775]	
(c.741/742-743) Artabasdos comes tou Opsikiou, and brother-in-law of Constantine V; with Nikephoros, his son	<p><u>Description:</u> Artabasdos had supported Leon III against Theodosios III, and had married Leon's daughter Anna. Soon after Constantine's accession Artabasdos proclaimed himself emperor in Asia Minor and broke into revolt.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Artabasdos defeated Constantine's forces as the emperor marched east in preparation to campaign against the Arabs. Constantine fled to Amorion, while Artabasdos marched on Constantinople and was welcomed into the city. Artabasdos was crowned by Patriarch Anastasios. Nikephoros, Artabasdos' younger son, was then crowned co-emperor. Constantine organised a counter-offensive c.742/743, defeated Artabasdos' older son Niketas the <i>monstrategos</i>, and recaptured Constantinople when Artabasdos and Nikephoros fled to Pouzane (in Asia Minor). The pair were later captured and subjected to a degradation parade with Nikephoros and their supporters in the Hippodrome at Constantinople. All three were blinded and tonsured, and their supporters were variously subjected to execution, mutilations, and confiscations.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i>, ed. Mango 136-137; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 415-421 (trans. Mango and Scott 575-581); PMBZ (Artabasdos 632).</p>
(742/743) Sisinnios, <i>strategos ton Thrakesion</i> , cousin of Constantine V	<p><u>Description:</u> Believed to be planning a usurpation, forty days after the parade of Artabasdos.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Taken prisoner and blinded.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i>, ed. Mango 136-137; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 420-421 (trans. Mango and Scott 581); PMBZ (Sisinnios 6753).</p>
(July-Aug 765) Constantine, <i>patrikios, logothetes tou dromou</i> ; and Strategios, <i>spatharios, domestikos ton exkoubitoron</i> ; with seventeen other officials	<p><u>Description:</u> A conspiracy to promote a rival to Constantine V was uncovered.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Subjected to a degradation parade with co-conspirators on 25 Jul 765 in the Hippodrome. Constantine and Strategios were beheaded at the Kynegion. Their confederates were blinded and exiled.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i>, ed. Mango 158-159; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 438 (trans. Mango and Scott 605); PMBZ (Konstantinos 3822); PMBZ (Strategios 7130).</p>
Leon IV [775-780]	
(May 776) Nikephoros, <i>kaisar</i> , brother of Leon IV	<p><u>Description:</u> Uncovered plotting against Leon with <i>spatharioi, stratores</i>, and other officials.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> A <i>silention</i> was held and all those found to be involved were beaten, tonsured, and exiled to Kherson and its environs.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 450-451 (trans. Mango and Scott 621); PMBZ (Nikephoros 5267).</p>
Constantine VI [780-797] with Eirene [780-790]	
(Oct/Nov 780) Nikephoros, former <i>kaisar</i> ; and the	<u>Description:</u> Soon after the death of Leon IV a conspiracy involving prominent military officials and members of the

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other sons of Constantine V	<p>palace guard was uncovered that intended to proclaim Nikephoros emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Those officials involved in the conspiracy were beaten, tonsured, and exiled. Nikephoros and the other sons of Constantine V were tonsured and made to administer the holy communion on Christmas Day.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 454 (trans. Mango and Scott 627); PMBZ (Nikephoros 5267); PMBZ (Christophoros 1101); PMBZ (Niketas 5403); PMBZ (Anthimios 487); PMBZ (Eudokimos 1635).</p>
(782) Elpidios, <i>strategos</i> of Sicily	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed himself emperor at Sicily.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was defeated in battle against the <i>patricius</i> Theodoros and fled to Arabs in North Africa.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 455-456 (trans. Mango and Scott 628); PMBZ (Elpidios 1515).</p>
(Sept-Oct 790) Eirene	<p><u>Description:</u> With the emperor well into his maturity, Eirene sought to maintain her grasp on power. She confined Constantine in the palace and tonsured his supporters. She then attempted to remove Constantine from authority by having the soldiery swear loyalty to her and acclaim her first.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> The soldiers of the Armeniakon rejected Eirene's oath and demanded the release of Constantine. Eirene was forced to comply, was granted an <i>apatheia</i> by the emperor, and confined to a palace near the Harbour of Eleutherios. Many of her supporters, including the influential eunuch Staurakios, were exiled to the Armeniakon theme. Eirene was restored to prominence by her son in January 792.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 464-467 (trans. Mango and Scott 638-641); PMBZ (Eirene 1439).</p>
(Aug 792) Nikephoros, former <i>kaisar</i> , and the other sons of Constantine V	<p><u>Description:</u> In response to Constantine's failed expedition against the Bulgarians (July), elements of the military conspired to proclaim Nikephoros emperor in Constantinople.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> The plot was uncovered and Nikephoros was blinded. The other sons of Constantine V had their tongues cut. All were moved to St Mamas.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 468 (trans. Mango and Scott 643); PMBZ (Nikephoros 5267); PMBZ (Christophoros 1101); PMBZ (Niketas 5403); PMBZ (Anthimios 487); PMBZ (Eudokimos 1635).</p>
(Aug 792) Alexios Mousele, former <i>strategos ton Armeniakon</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Believed by Eirene to be plotting to proclaim himself with support from the rebellious Armeniakon units.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Blinded with the sons of Constantine V.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 468 (trans. Mango and Scott 643); PMBZ (Alexios 193).</p>
(19 Aug 797) Eirene	<p><u>Description:</u> Eirene instigated a conspiracy to oust Constantine as he returned from campaigning in Asia Minor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Constantine was taken captive by loyalists of Eirene and confined at the Great Palace, in the Porphyra. Eirene was restored to sole rule and had Constantine blinded. He is believed to have died within months.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 472 (trans. Mango and Scott 648-649); Leon Grammatikos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Bekker 200-202; Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Bekker III, 304; PMBZ (Eirene 1439).</p>
Eirene [797-802]	
(October 797) Nikephoros, former <i>kaisar</i> , and the other sons of Constantine V	<p><u>Description:</u> Soon after Constantine's deposition and blinding, the sons of Constantine went to Hagia Sophia in order to have one of them proclaimed emperor. They were joined by the Constantinopolitan crowds and may have been granted asylum.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Eirene gave them an oath of assurance, delivered via the eunuch Aetios. They left the church and were exiled to Athens.</p>

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(March 799) The sons of Constantine V – Christophoros, Niketas, Anthimos, and Eudokimos; possibly including Nikephoros	<p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 473 (trans. Mango and Scott 650-651); PMBZ (Nikephoros 5267); PMBZ (Christophoros 1101); PMBZ (Niketas 5403); PMBZ (Anthimos 487); PMBZ (Eudokimos 1635).</p> <p><u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting to escape their confinement in Athens and proclaim one of the sons as emperor with help from the commanders of the Helladikon theme and the Slavs under Akameros.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Christophoros, Niketas, Anthimos, and Eudokimos were blinded on Eirene's orders.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 473-474 (trans. Mango and Scott 651); PMBZ (Nikephoros 5267); PMBZ (Christophoros 1101); PMBZ (Niketas 5403); PMBZ (Anthimos 487); PMBZ (Eudokimos 1635).</p>
(June 800) Staurakios, <i>patrikios, logothetes tou dromou</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Staurakios was accused by the <i>domestikos ton scholon</i> Niketas of plotting to usurp the throne. Eirene rebuked him and he retired to Cappadocia where he instigated a revolt in June.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Staurakios died of natural causes (although this is dubious) only two days after the rebellion began. His supporters were exiled and suffered unspecified punishments.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 475 (trans. Mango and Scott 653); PMBZ (Staurakios 6880)</p>
(31 Oct 802) Nikephoros I, patrikios, logothetes tou genikou	<p><u>Description:</u> A conspiracy was formed in 802 when Eirene considered marriage to Charlemagne. With Charlemagne's ambassadors still in Constantinople, Nikephoros was proclaimed emperor on 31 October by influential <i>patrikioi</i> and senators. They gained access to the palace by subterfuge with the assistance of the guards at the Chalke gate. Nikephoros was proclaimed throughout the city.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Eirene was deposed and remained under house arrest in the city. Nikephoros was crowned emperor on 1 November by Patriarch Tarasios.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 476-477 (trans. Mango and Scott 655); PMBZ (Nikephoros 5252).</p>
Nikephoros I [802-811]	
(c. 802) Eirene, former empress; and Aetios, former <i>strategos ton Anatolikon</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Uncovered conspiring with a group of monks to restore Eirene to the throne.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Aetios suffered no punishment, but Eirene was exiled to Athens. She was later moved to Lesbos where she reportedly died c.803.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Michael the Syrian</i>, ed. Chabot III, 12; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, trans. Mango and Scott 658, n.11; PMBZ (Eirene 1439).</p>
(Jul –Sep 803) Bardanes Tourkos, <i>monostrategos</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor by the Asiatic themata on the 19 July in a revolt prompted by Nikephoros' fiscal reforms.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Bardanes wrote to the emperor in order to put an end to the rebellion. He was granted an oath of assurance by Nikephoros and Patriarch Tarasios and was tonsured at Monastery of Herakleios in Bithynia. He was then sent into exile at his monastery on Prote, where he was later blinded.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 479-481 (trans. Mango and Scott 657-660); PMBZ (Bardanes 766).</p>
(Feb 808) Arsaber, <i>patrikios, quaestor</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered planning a usurpation with support from unspecified military officials.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Arsaber was beaten, tonsured, and exiled to Bithynia.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 483-484 (trans. Mango and Scott 664); PMBZ (Arsaber 600).</p>
Staurakios [811]	
(2 Oct 811) Michael I, kouropalates, brother-in-	<p><u>Description:</u> After the defeat of the Byzantine forces during Nikephoros I' Bulgarian campaign, Michael was</p>

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law of Staurakios	<p>proclaimed emperor by the people, senate, patriarch, and military in Constantinople against the wishes of the badly injured and dying Staurakios.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Staurakios was compelled to take the tonsure and died of his injuries soon after. Michael was crowned by Patriarch Nikephoros on the same day (2 Jul).</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 492-494 (trans. Mango and Scott 674-677); Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 5 (trans. Wortley 4); PMBZ (Michael 4989).</p>
Michael I [811-813]	
(Early 812) Nikephoros, former <i>kaisar</i> , and the other sons of Constantine V	<p><u>Description:</u> In light of Khan Krum's victories in Thrace and the fall of Debeltos, certain soldiers of the western <i>tagmata</i> planned to proclaim one of the blinded sons of Constantine V in opposition to Michael.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> The brothers were exiled to Aphousia.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Kazhdan et al 1991: II, 1476; Treadgold 1997: 430; PMBZ (Nikephoros 5267); PMBZ (Christophoros 1101); PMBZ (Niketas 5403); PMBZ (Anthimios 487); PMBZ (Eudokimos 1635).</p>
(22/23 Jun – 11 Jul 813) Leon V, <i>strategos ton Anatolikon</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor by the assembled military commanders after the defeat of the Byzantine forces sent against Khan Krum at Versinikia.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Michael I abdicated upon hearing of Leon's advance. He and his family claimed asylum at the palace church of the Pharos, divested themselves of their imperial attire (which they sent to Leon), and took the tonsure. Leon subsequently ordered that Michael's sons be castrated, and had them exiled to Prote.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 502 (trans. Mango and Scott 685); <i>Genesis</i>, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 4 (trans. Kaldellis 6); <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 19-20; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 32-33; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 5, 7 (trans. Wortley 4, 6-7); PMBZ (Leon 4244).</p>
Leon V [813-820]	
(25 Dec 820) Michael II, former <i>domestikos ton exkoubitoron</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Michael was discovered plotting to usurp the throne and imprisoned. He was sentenced to be executed; according to his propagandists Leon intended him to be burned alive in the furnaces of the palace baths on Christmas day, later commuted to 26 Dec (this is dubious). Michael was able to contact his supporters while in confinement and they arranged to depose Leon and proclaim Michael.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Michael's supporters disguised themselves as clerics and entered the church of St Stephen at Daphne. When Leon entered the church on Christmas Day for the morning services, they attacked and killed him. Leon's corpse was beheaded and dragged through the streets to the Skyla. It was mutilated before a crowd in the Covered Hippodrome, hung from a harness, and paraded to the docks where it accompanied Leon's wife and children to their exile on Prote. Leon's four sons were castrated, and Theodosios died as a result. The corpses of Leon and Theodosios were buried on Prote. Michael was taken from his prison cell, seated upon the imperial throne, and proclaimed emperor. He was crowned by Patriarch Theodotos on the same day.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes Continuatus, ed. Bekker 34-41; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 54-65; <i>Genesis</i>, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 15-22 (trans. Kaldellis 18-27); PMBZ (Michael 4990).</p>
Michael II [820-829]	
(Early 821 – Oct 823) Thomas the Slav; and	<u>Description:</u> Entered into revolt against Michael in Asia Minor soon after the murder of Leon V. He was proclaimed

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Anastasios, his adopted son	<p>emperor and crowned by Job the patriarch of Antioch. He marched against Constantinople, laying siege to the city in December 821 and from the spring of 822, but failed to gain access. His siege was broken after the intervention of the Bulgarians on Michael's side. Michael then went on the offensive and defeated Thomas at Arkadiopolis.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Thomas was captured at Arkadiopolis when his troops surrendered him to Michael in exchange for their being pardoned. Thomas was divested of his insignia and subjected to a degradation parade at Arkadiopolis. He was made to perform <i>proskynesis</i> and <i>supplicatio</i> in front of his troops, and then subjected to a <i>calcatio</i>. He was beheaded and his body mutilated. The head was sent to Byzantium where Thomas' co-emperor, his second adopted son, Anastasios was resisting Michael's troops. Anastasios was betrayed and executed in similar fashion soon after.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 50-71; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 76-105; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 29-41 (trans. Wortley 32-44); Lemerle 1965; PMBZ (Thomas 8459).</p>
(826-827) Euphemios, <i>tourmarches</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor by the fleet at Sicily after being slandered to Michael and killing the governor. He allied with the Arabs in North Africa, and captured Syracuse.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was defeated in by loyalist forces at Syracuse and executed.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 82-83; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 120-123; PMBZ (Euphemios 1701).</p>
Theophilos [829-842]	
(829) Manuel, <i>domestikos ton scholon</i> , uncle of Empress Theodora	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of plotting to usurp the throne by the <i>logothetes tou dromou</i> Myron.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Fled to the Arabs and was later formally reconciled with Theophilos before a ceremony at the church of the Mother of God.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 118-120, 148; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 170-173, ; Leon Grammatikos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Bekker 219-221; <i>Georgios Monachos Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 796-798; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 71 (trans. Wortley 72); PMBZ (Manuel 4707)</p>
(838-839) Theophobos, <i>strategos</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor by his Persian troops at Sinope.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Theophobos corresponded with Theophilos in an attempt to excuse his usurpation. Theophilos granted him an amnesty and the two were reconciled in a ceremony at the Great Palace.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Genesios</i>, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 40-41 (trans. Kaldellis 54); <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 124-125; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 178-181; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 74, 80 (trans. Wortley 75, 81); PMBZ (Theophobos 8237).</p>
(c.836/840) Alexios Mousele, <i>kaisar</i> , son-in-law of Theophilos	<p><u>Description:</u> Slandered and suspected of conspiring to usurp the throne after the birth of Theophilos' son and heir, Michael III.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Tonsured at a monastery in Chrysopolis.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 64-65 (trans. Wortley 66-67); PMBZ (Alexios 195).</p>
(838) Martenakios	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of aspiring for the throne; a prophecy was circulated.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Tonsured.</p>

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(c.841/842) Theophobos	<p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Genesisios</i>, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 49 (trans. Kaldellis 65); <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 121-122; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 174-175; PMBZ (Martenakios 4843).</p> <p><u>Description:</u> Accused of aspiring for the throne.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Arrested, confined in the Boukoleon prisons, beheaded in secret.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Genesisios</i>, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 42 (trans. Kaldellis 55-56); PMBZ (Theophobos 8237).</p>
Michael III [842-867]	
(Nov 855) Theoktistos, <i>logothetes tou dromou</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of aspiring for the throne via a marriage into the dynasty. Intended to blind Michael.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Dragged from the imperial palace and executed at the Skyla. The empress protested his execution.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Genesisios</i>, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 61-63 (trans. Kaldellis 78-79); <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 168-170; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 238-243; PMBZ (Theoktistos 8050).</p>
(c. May 866) Unspecified senators	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting to overthrow Michael in order to promote a rival emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Prevented by the accession of Basileios I as co-emperor.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 207; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 294-295.</p>
(866 - 23/24 Sep 867) Basileios I, <i>magistros</i>, co-emperor	<p><u>Description:</u> Basileios was a favourite of Michael III. In 866 he was adopted by the emperor and granted the title of <i>magistros</i>. In April he was responsible for the death of the <i>kaisar</i> Bardas during the Cretan campaign, when his confederates slew Bardas in the presence of Michael III and paraded his corpse. Basileios was crowned co-emperor at Hagia Sophia on 26 May 866.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> When Basileios' position was threatened by the favour Michael III was showing to Basiliskianos, whom Michael also intended to promote to co-imperial status, Basileios had Michael murdered at the palace of St Mamas on 23/24 Sep 867. Basileios received a second coronation by the Patriarch, associated his sons as co-emperors and assumed authority.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Genesisios</i>, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 75-81 (trans. Kaldellis 93-100); <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 205-211; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 292-299; <i>Vita Basilii</i>, ed. Ševčenko 38-101; <i>Georgios Monachos Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 830-833; PMBZ (Basileios 832).</p>
(Summer-Winter 866) Symbatios, <i>strategos</i> ; and Peganes, <i>strategos ton Opsikion</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Commenced a loyalist revolt in Asia Minor on behalf of Michael III after Basileios was proclaimed co-emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> They suffered desertions in the winter and attempted to flee to Plateia Petra and Kotyaeion. They were defeated by imperial forces and were sent to the palace in chains. Michael ordered them whipped and mutilated. Symbatios was blinded, had a hand amputated, and was exiled. Peganes was blinded, had his nose cut, and was exiled. They were reportedly recalled and restored after Basileios had assumed sole rule.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 307-308; <i>Vita Basilii</i>, ed. Ševčenko 232-235; PMBZ (Symbatios 7169); PMBZ (Peganes 2263).</p>
Basileios I [867-886]	
(?) Leon Apostypes, <i>strategos ton Thrakesion</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of conspiring to overthrow Basileios and proclaim himself emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> His sons killed the individual responsible for the accusation against them and then attempted to flee to Syria with their father. They were intercepted in Cappadocia. The sons were killed but Leon was taken prisoner and sent to</p>

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	Constantinople. He was found guilty and blinded. He also had a hand amputated and was later exiled to Mesembria. <u>Sources:</u> <i>Vita Basilii</i> , ed. Ševčenko 74-77.
(Autumn 883) Leon VI	<u>Description:</u> Accused by Santabarenos of plotting to kill Basileios and claim <i>basileia</i> . <u>Fate:</u> Divested of imperial attire and confined in the Palace of Margarites. Basileios reportedly considered blinding Leon. A ritual reconciliation of Basileios and Leon was achieved on 21 July 886. <u>Sources:</u> Genesios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 81 (trans. Kaldellis 100); <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i> , ed. Bekker 348-350; <i>Vita Basilii</i> , ed. Ševčenko 324-331; <i>Georgios Monachos Continuatus</i> , ed. Bekker 846-847; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i> , ed. Thurn 168-169 (trans. Wortley 161-162); PMBZ (Leon 24311).
(Mar 886) Ioannes Kourkouas, <i>domestikos</i> of the Hikanatoi; and 60+ senators	<u>Description:</u> A conspiracy was uncovered to depose Basileios I and promote a rival (probably Kourkouas). <u>Fate:</u> The conspirators were tried and found guilty. They were variously subjected to confiscations beatings, and tonsure, and were paraded through the fora of the city before being sent into exile. <u>Sources:</u> <i>Vita Basilii</i> , ed. Ševčenko 160-161; <i>Georgios Monachos Continuatus</i> , ed. Bekker 847; PMBZ (Ioannes 22824).
Leon VI [886-912]	
(c.897) Leon Zaoutzes, son of Stylianos Zaoutzes; Christophoros Zaoutzes; and others	<u>Description:</u> Instigated an uprising against Leon while he is hunting outside the city. <u>Fate:</u> Leon sailed back to the Great Palace to secure it against the conspirators. He dismissed the <i>droungarios</i> Ioannes, and the Zaoutzes family were out of favour for a time. A reconciliation was arranged by the <i>magistros</i> Leon Theodotakes. <u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i> , ed. Bekker 360; <i>Georgios Monachos Continuatus</i> , ed. Bekker 858-859; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i> , ed. Thurn 178-179 (trans. Wortley 173); PMBZ (Leon 24344); PMBZ (Christophoros 21261).
(899/900) Basileios the <i>epeiktes</i> , nephew of Stylianos Zaoutzes; with Nikolaos, the <i>Hetaireiarches</i>	<u>Description:</u> Discovered conspiring with the <i>droungarios</i> of the watch, and Nikolaos the <i>hetaireiarches</i> , against Leon; probably intended to proclaim a rival. <u>Fate:</u> Basileios was summoned from Macedonia, tried, and found guilty. He was subjected to a degradation parade and exiled to Athens. The <i>droungarios</i> and <i>hetaireiarches</i> were arrested and exiled. <u>Sources:</u> <i>Georgios Monachos Continuatus</i> , ed. Bekker 858-859; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i> , ed. Thurn 179-180 (trans. Wortley 173-174); PMBZ (Basileios 20911); PMBZ (Nikolaos 25910).
(c.899/900) Alexandros, co-emperor, brother of Leon VI	<u>Description:</u> Accused of conspiring to overthrow Leon and assume sole rule. <u>Fate:</u> Alexandros was parted from his wife as punishment. <u>Sources:</u> <i>Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP</i> , ed. Karlin-Hayter p.55, 73-75; PMBZ (Alexandros 20228).
Alexandros [912-913]	
Constantine VII [913-959]	
(June 913) Constantine Doukas, <i>domestikos ton scholon</i>	<u>Description:</u> Doukas was entreated by Patriarch Nikolaos to claim the throne after the death of Alexandros. He came to Constantinople and was proclaimed by his soldiers and the crowds in the Hippodrome before attempting to gain entrance to the Great Palace.

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	<p><u>Fate:</u> He was killed trying to force entrance to the Great Palace via the Chalke gate. His corpse was decapitated and his head taken to Constantine VII. Some of his supporters claimed asylum at Hagia Sophia but were dragged from the altar and tonsured at the Stoudios monastery. Others were flogged, blinded, and exiled. Beheadings were performed in the Hippodrome and a degradation parade arranged, featuring Doukas' decapitated head. Afterwards many of his supporters were impaled along the road to Chrysopolis.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 383; <i>Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP</i>, ed. Karlin-Hayter p.131-133; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 197-199 (trans. Wortley 191-194); PMBZ (Konstantinos 23817).</p>
(Late 918 – early 919) Leon Phokas, <i>domestikos ton scholon</i> ; Constantine, <i>parakoimomenos</i> , a relative of Leon	<p><u>Description:</u> Leon was accused of conspiring with the <i>parakoimomenos</i> Constantine against Constantine VII; probably intended to marry Empress Zoe.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was forestalled by the conspiracy of the emperor's tutor Theodoros on behalf of Patriarch Nikolaos, and dismissed by the new regency.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 379-400; Leon Grammatikos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Bekker 292-300; PMBZ (Leon 24408); PMBZ (Konstantinos 23820).</p>
(919-920) Romanos I, <i>droungarios, basileiopator, co-emperor</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Romanos exploited the infighting of Constantine VII's regency council to assume the throne. After the defeat of Leon Phokas' expedition against the Bulgarians in 918 Zoe was reported to be considering a marriage to Leon in order to quell opposition to her regency. A coup was enacted early in 919 when Constantine VII's tutor wrote to Romanos requesting his assistance in removing Zoe and Leon from power, on Constantine's behalf. Patriarch Nikolaos was restored to the regency. However, soon after, Romanos was approached by Phokas to restore himself and Zoe to authority. Romanos betrayed the conspiracy and took control of the Great Palace with his naval forces in March, claiming that Constantine VII had authorised this. He assumed real power.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Romanos was swiftly promoted <i>meas hetaireiarches, basileiopator</i>, and finally co-emperor; he was crowned by Constantine and assumed first place in the acclamations on account of his need to administer affairs.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 379-400; Leon Grammatikos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Bekker 292-300; PMBZ (Romanos 26833).</p>
(Summer 919) Leon Phokas, former <i>domestikos ton scholon</i> ; with loyalists of Empress Zoe	<p><u>Description:</u> Commenced a revolt in Asia Minor on behalf of Constantine VII, after hearing of Romanos' promotion as <i>basileiopator</i>.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> A <i>chrysobull</i> was issued declaring Leon a tyrant and apostate. His troops were bribed and deserted him. Leon fled to the fortress of Ateo but was denied entrance and soon captured by his former loyalists. He was sent to Constantinople and blinded en-route.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 395-397; Symeon Magister, ed. Wahlgren 310-311; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 209 (trans. Wortley 203); PMBZ (Leon 24408).</p>
Romanos I [920-944] with Constantine VII [913-959]	
(Aug 920) Empress Zoe	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of planning to murder Romanos I with poison in order to ensure her restoration.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Zoe was tonsured at the monastery of St Euphemia.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 397-398; Symeon Magister, ed. Wahlgren 313; Leon Grammatikos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Bekker 302; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 211-212 (trans. Wortley 204-205);</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(920) Theophylaktos, <i>patrikios</i> ; Theodoros, Constantine's tutor; Symeon, Theodoros' brother	<p>PMBZ (Zoe 28506).</p> <p><u>Description:</u> Accused of conspiring to overthrow Romanos and appoint a rival. <u>Fate:</u> Exiled to the Opsikion theme. <u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 211-212 (trans. Wortley 204); PMBZ (Theophylaktos 28194); PMBZ (Theodoros 27684); PMBZ ((Symeon 27482).</p>
(920) Stephanos, <i>magistros</i> ; Theophanes Teicheotes; Paulos, the <i>Orphanotrophos</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered conspiring to proclaim Stephanos emperor. <u>Fate:</u> All were tonsured and exiled to Antigone. <u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 398; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 213 (trans. Wortley 207); PMBZ (Stephanos 27224); PMBZ (Theophanes 28086); PMBZ (Paulos 26331).</p>
(920/922) Arsenios, <i>patrikios</i> ; Paulos Manglabites, an imperial official	<p><u>Description:</u> A conspiracy was uncovered during an imperial procession to the Tribunal. <u>Fate:</u> Romanos and Constantine returned to the Great Palace to secure it against the conspirators. Arsenios and Paulos were arrested blinded and exiled, their property was confiscated. <u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 410; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 213 (trans. Wortley 207); PMBZ (Arsenios 20608); PMBZ (Paulos 26332).</p>
(Dec 921) Constantine VII, (co-)emperor; Anastasios, <i>sakellarios</i> and <i>archon ton Chrysochoeion</i> ; Theodoretos, <i>koitonites</i> ; Demetrios, <i>basilikos notarios tou Eidikou</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Uncovered plotting to restore Constantine to sole rule. <u>Fate:</u> Constantine's co-conspirators were variously beaten, subjected to degradation parades in Constantinople, exiled, and tonsured. <u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 400; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 214 (trans. Wortley 207-208); <i>Georgios Monachos Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 892; PMBZ (Anastasios 20299); PMBZ (Theodoretos 27607); PMBZ (Demetrios 21470).</p>
(c. 920s) Basileios 'the Copperhand' (Pseudo-Constantine Doukas)	<p><u>Description:</u> Instigated a rebellion while claiming to be the usurper Constantine Doukas. <u>Fate:</u> Defeated, captured, and suffered amputation of a hand. He commissioned a copper prosthesis to replace it. <u>Sources:</u> <i>Georgios Monachos Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 912; <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 421; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 228 (trans. Wortley 220); PMBZ (Basileios 20927).</p>
(Early 927) Kosmas, <i>patrikios</i> , <i>logothetes tou dromou</i> ; Ioannes, secretary	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of plotting to proclaim Ioannes emperor. <u>Fate:</u> Kosmas was tortured and dismissed from office. Ioannes received the tonsure at the monastery of Monokastanos. <u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 221 (trans. Wortley 214); PMBZ (Kosmas 24112); PMBZ (Ioannes 22938).</p>
(932) Basileios 'the Copperhand' (Pseudo-Constantine Doukas)	<p><u>Description:</u> Revived his rebellion while claiming to be the usurper Constantine Doukas. <u>Fate:</u> Defeated, captured, and burned to death at the Kynegion. <u>Sources:</u> <i>Georgios Monachos Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 912; <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 421; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 228 (trans. Wortley 220); Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 228 (trans. Wortley 220); PMBZ (Basileios 20927).</p>
(20 Dec 944) Stephanos and Constantine Lekapenos, co-emperors, sons of Romanos I	<p><u>Description:</u> Conspired to overthrow Romanos I's reign in order to exercise greater authority after it appeared that Constantine VII was to be restored to precedence by their father. <u>Fate:</u> Romanos I was tonsured and exiled to the Prinkipos islands. The brothers formed an uneasy triumvirate with</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
	Constantine VII. <u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i> , ed. Bekker 434-436; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i> , ed. Thurn 234-235 (trans. Wortley 226); PMBZ (Konstantinos 23831); PMBZ (Stephanos 27251).
(25 Jan 945) Constantine VII, (co-)emperor	<u>Description:</u> Constantine's alliance with the Lekapenoi brothers lasted only forty days. The <i>Augusta</i> Helena reportedly convinced him to remove them from office and accused them of planning to poison Constantine. Constantine did so with the support of the Phokades, Tornikoi, and Bardas Peteinos. He finally assumed sole rule. <u>Fate:</u> Stephanos was exiled to Lesbos where he died on 18 April 963. His son Romanos was castrated and later became <i>sebastophoros</i> . Constantine Lekapenos was exiled to Samothrace where he was killed c.946-948 while attempting to escape his confinement. Michael Lekapenos, the son of Christophoros Lekapenos, was tonsured and later appointed <i>magistros</i> and <i>Rhaiktor</i> . <u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i> , ed. Bekker 434-437; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i> , ed. Thurn 234-237 (trans. Wortley 228); PMBZ (Konstantinos 23734).
Constantine VII [913-959]	
(c.947) Romanos Lekapenos; Theophanes, <i>parakoimomenos</i>	<u>Description:</u> Uncovered plotting to restore Romanos I to power. <u>Fate:</u> Theophanes was exiled. <u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i> , ed. Bekker 438-439; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i> , ed. Thurn 238-239 (trans. Wortley 230); PMBZ (Romanos 26833); PMBZ (Theophanes 28087).
(c.947/948) Stephanos Lekapenos; Leon Kladon; Gregoras; Theodosios; Ioannes <i>rhaiktor</i>	<u>Description:</u> Uncovered plotting to restore Stephanos to power. <u>Fate:</u> Beaten, subjected to nose cutting, and exiled. Their property was confiscated. <u>Sources:</u> Leon Grammatikos, <i>Chronographia</i> , ed. Bekker 309; <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i> , ed. Bekker 438-439; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i> , ed. Thurn 238-239 (trans. Wortley 230); PMBZ (Stephanos 27251); PMBZ (Leon 24422); PMBZ (Gregoras 22405); PMBZ (Theodosios 27909); PMBZ (Ioannes 22937).
Romanos II [959-963]	
(960/961) Basileios Peteinos, <i>magistros</i> ; with unspecified other <i>magistroi</i>	<u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting to capture the emperor during the Hippodrome races and proclaim Basileios. <u>Fate:</u> The plot was revealed by Ioannikios, one of the conspirators. All involved were detained by Ioseph Bringas, the <i>parakoimomenos</i> . All except Basileios were tortured. They were paraded in the Hippodrome, exiled and tonsured. After a short time, all except Basileios were recalled by Romanos. Basileios had died in exile on Prokonnesos. <u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i> , ed. Thurn 250-251 (trans. Wortley 241-242); PMBZ (Basileios 20934).
Theophano [963] with Basileios II and Constantine VIII [963-1025]	
(Jul-Aug 963) Nikephoros II Phokas, <i>magistros</i>, <i>autokrator strategos</i> in the East	<u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor by the troops at Caesarea on 2 Jul and marched on Constantinople unchallenged. He claimed to be defending the rights of the <i>basileis</i> against the <i>parakoimomenos</i> Ioseph Bringas. <u>Fate:</u> He was crowned emperor with the <i>basileis</i> by Patriarch Polyeuktos, and married Empress Theophano. Ioseph took the tonsure. <u>Sources:</u> Leon Diakonos, <i>Historia</i> , ed. Hase 38-48 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 89-99); Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i> , ed. Thurn 256-260 (trans. Wortley 246-250); PMBZ (Nikephoros 25535); Cheynet 1990: 20-21, No. 1.
Nikephoros II [963-969] with Basileios II and Constantine VIII [963-1025]	

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(966-971) Kalokyros, <i>patrikios</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Attempted to have himself proclaimed emperor and appealed to the Russian prince Sviatoslav for aid.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Unknown.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Leon Diakonos, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Hase 77, 79, 134 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 128, 130, 180-181); Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 288-295 (trans. Wortley 275-281); PMBZ (Kalokyros 23631); Cheynet 1990: 22, No. 4.</p>
(10/11 Dec 969) Ioannes I Tzimiskes, former <i>domestikos ton scholon</i>; with Empress Theodora	<p><u>Description:</u> Ioannes and his comrades gained access to the Great Palace with the assistance of Empress Theodora. They located Nikephoros and proceeded to assassinate him before proclaiming Ioannes emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Nikephoros was beheaded. His body was left in a courtyard of the Great Palace while his head was shown to the palace guard in order to end their opposition to Ioannes' proclamation. The body was buried at the Heroon of the Holy Apostles later that day. Ioannes was crowned emperor by Patriarch Polyeuktos a week later after performing a suitable penance for the murder of Nikephoros. Atzyotheodoros and Balantes, his co-conspirators, were exiled for their role in the murder. Theodora was expelled from the palace.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Leon Diakonos, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Hase 85-89 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 136-139); Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 279-280 (trans. Wortley 267-269); PMBZ (Ioannes 22778); PMBZ (Theophano 28125); Cheynet 1990: 22-23, No.5.</p>
Ioannes I [969-976] with Basileios II and Constantine VIII [963-1025]	
(Spring-Summer 970/971) Bardas Phokas, <i>patrikios</i> , former <i>doux</i> of Chaldea and Koloneia	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor at Caesarea and instigated a rebellion against Ioannes.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Surrendered in exchange for imperial <i>apatheia</i>, and was exiled to Chios. Secondary figures were subjected to blindings and confiscations.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Leon Diakonos, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Hase 112-126 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 162-173); Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 291-294 (trans. Wortley 278-280); PMBZ (Bardas 20784); Cheynet 1990: 24, No.6.</p>
(Spring 971) Leon Phokas the Younger, <i>kouropalates</i> , former <i>domestikos ton scholon</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Attempted to gain access to the Great Palace and proclaim himself while Ioannes I was on campaign.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Sought refuge at Hagia Sophia, but was blinded with his son Nikephoros. Exiled to Kalonymos and subjected to confiscations.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Leon Diakonos, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Hase 145-147 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 189-191); Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 303 (trans. Wortley 288); PMBZ (Leon 24423); Cheynet 1990: 25, No.7.</p>
Basileios II with Constantine VIII [976-1025]	
(Spring 976-March 979) Bardas Skleros, <i>magistros</i> , <i>doux</i> of Mesopotamian <i>tagmata</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor by his troops and planned to conquer Constantinople.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Was defeated by Bardas Phokas in March 978 and fled to the Turks with family. He was imprisoned.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Leon Diakonos, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Hase 169-170 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 212-213); Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 314-328 (trans. Wortley 298-311); Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri I, 12-19; ed. Renauld I, 4-7 (trans. Sewter 30-32); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 540-546; PMBZ (Bardas 20785); Cheynet 1990: 27-29, No.11.</p>
(Aug 987-13 Apr 989) Bardas Phokas, <i>magistros</i> , <i>domestikos ton scholon</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor at Caesarea in August 987 and instigated a rebellion against Basileios.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Died in battle at Abydos. Supporters subjected to impalements, and imprisonment. Degradation parade staged in Constantinople for those captured by Basileios II.</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(Feb 987-Sep 987 & Apr-Oct 989) Bardas Skleros	<p><u>Sources:</u> Leon Diakonos, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Hase 173-174 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 215-216); Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 332-338 (trans. Wortley 314-321); Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri I, 12-19; ed. Renauld I, 7-11 (trans. Sewter 32-37); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 550-554; PMBZ (Bardas 20784); Cheynet 1990: 31-33, No.15.</p> <p><u>Description:</u> After being released from his imprisonment he continued his revolt against Basileios. He was defeated by Bardas Phokas and imprisoned again. However, after the defeat of Phokas he was released and continued Phokas' rebellion.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Reconciled with Basileios II c.989 and was granted dignity of <i>kouropalates</i>. He was blinded and died soon after.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 338-339 (trans. Wortley 320-321); Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri I, 34-39; ed. Renauld I, 15-16 (trans. Sewter 40-43); PMBZ (Bardas 20785); Cheynet 1990: 33-34, No.16.</p>
(Spring-Aug 1022) Nikephoros Phokas & Nikephoros Xiphias	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of aspiring for the throne after instigating a revolt in Cappadocia.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Phokas was betrayed and executed by Xiphias after Basileios II promised him rewards. Xiphias was subsequently taken prisoner, tonsured on Antigone, and subjected to confiscations. Their supporters were imprisoned.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 366-367 (trans. Wortley 346-347); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 567; PMBZ (Phokas 25675); PMBZ (Xiphias 25661); Cheynet 1990: 36-37, No.21.</p>
(?) Theodosios Monomachos	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of aspiring for the throne.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Executed.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri I, 262-265; ed. Renauld I, 125 (trans. Sewter 162-163); Cheynet 1990: 37-38, No.22.</p>
Constantine VIII [1025-1028]	
(Summer 1026) Nikephoros Komnenos, <i>patrikios</i> , <i>protospatharios</i> , <i>strategos</i> of Vaspurakan	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of aspiring for the throne, and of preparing a military revolt (he received an oath of loyalty from his troops).</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Blinded with co-conspirators.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 371-372 (trans. Wortley 350-351); PMBZ (Nikephoros 25676); Cheynet 1990: 38, No.24.</p>
(1026) Bardas Phokas	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting to overthrow Constantine.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Blinded with co-conspirators.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 372 (trans. Wortley 351); PMBZ (Bardas 20806); Cheynet 1990: 39, No.25.</p>
(c.1026-c.1028) Basileios Skleros, <i>patrikios</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting to overthrow Constantine.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Exiled to the Prinkipos Isles and later blinded. Co-conspirator Prousanios exiled and then recalled.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 372 (trans. Wortley 351); PMBZ (Basileios 21113); Cheynet 1990: 39-40, No.27.</p>
(c.1026-c.1028) Romanos Kourkouas, brother-in-law of Bulgarian prince; Bogdan, <i>Toparches</i> ;	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of aspiring for the throne.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Blinded.</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
Glabas; and Goudelios	<u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i> , ed. Thurn 372 (trans. Wortley 351); PMBZ (Romanos 26878); PMBZ (Bogdan 21186); PMBZ (Goudelios 22514); Cheynet 1990: 40, No.28.
Romanos III [1028-1034]	
(c. Nov 1028-c. Nov 1029) Prousanios, <i>magistros</i> , former <i>strategos ton Boukellarion</i> ; Theodora, <i>basilissa</i>	<u>Description:</u> Accused of plotting for the throne with the <i>basilissa</i> Theodora. <u>Fate:</u> Imprisoned at the monastery of Manuel in Constantinople, blinded, and later tonsured. <u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i> , ed. Thurn 376, 384 (trans. Wortley 355, 362); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i> , ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 574; PMBZ (Prousanios 26775); PMBZ (Theodora 27605); Cheynet 1990: 41-42, No.31.
(c. Oct 1029) Constantine Diogenes, <i>patrikios</i> , <i>doux</i> of Thessalonike, <i>strategos ton Thrakesion</i> ; Theodora, <i>basilissa</i>	<u>Description:</u> Accused of aspiring for the throne, and of preparing a military revolt. <u>Fate:</u> Constantine was imprisoned in Constantinople. His co-conspirators were flogged, subjected to a degradation parade in Constantinople, and exiled. Theodora was confined at the Petron monastery. <u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i> , ed. Thurn 376-377 (trans. Wortley 355-356); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i> , ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 575; PMBZ (Konstantinos 24045); PMBZ (Theodora 27605); Cheynet 1990: 42-43, No.32.
(1030) Military officers	<u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting to overthrow Romanos. <u>Fate:</u> Unknown. <u>Sources:</u> Matthew of Edessa, <i>Chronicle</i> , trans. Dostourian 51; Cheynet 1990: 43, No.33.
(c.1032-c.1033) Basileios Skleros, <i>magistros</i>	<u>Description:</u> Accused of aspiring for the throne. <u>Fate:</u> Already blind. Exiled from Constantinople. <u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i> , ed. Thurn 388 (trans. Wortley 366); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i> , ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 583; PMBZ (Basileios 21113); Cheynet 1990: 44, No.35.
(11 Apr 1034) Michael IV and Zoe	<u>Description:</u> Assassinated Romanos III in the palace baths. <u>Fate:</u> Michael was crowned emperor. <u>Sources:</u> Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i> , ed. Impellizzeri I, 106-113; ed. Renauld I, 49-52 (trans. Sewter 80-83); Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i> , ed. Thurn 389-391 (trans. Wortley 367-369); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i> , ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 584-585; PMBZ (Zoe 28508); Cheynet 1990: 44-45, No.36.
Michael IV [1034-1041]	
(c.1035) Constantine Monomachos	<u>Description:</u> Accused of aspiring for the throne. <u>Fate:</u> Exiled to Mytilene for seven years. <u>Sources:</u> Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i> , ed. Impellizzeri I, 262-263; ed. Renauld I, 125 (trans. Sewter 161); Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i> , ed. Thurn 423 (trans. Wortley 398); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i> , ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 615; PMBZ (Konstantinos 23736); Cheynet 1990: 46, No.39.
(Aug/Sept 1040) Gregoras Taronites, <i>patrikios</i> , <i>tagma</i> commander	<u>Description:</u> Participated in a military revolt and probably aspired to be proclaimed. <u>Fate:</u> Taronites was bound in fresh Ox skin and sent to Constantinople for punishment. His co-conspirators were subjected to blindings. <u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i> , ed. Thurn 412 (trans. Wortley 387); PBW (Gregorios 102); Cheynet 1990: 51, No.49.
(Summer 1040) Michael Keroularios; and Ioannes	<u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting against Michael with other prominent individuals.

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
Makrembolites	<p><u>Fate:</u> Keroularios was tonsured. His co-conspirators suffered confiscations.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 412 (trans. Wortley 387); PBW (Michael 11); PBW (Ioannes 112); Cheynet 1990: 51-52, No.50.</p>
Michael V [1041-1042]	
(20-21 Apr 1042) Theodora & Zoe; with the populace of Constantinople	<p><u>Description:</u> Unrest developed in Constantinople after Michael V had Zoe tonsured and exiled to Prote. The people eventually turned to outright opposition and proclaimed Theodora at Hagia Sophia so that she might lead them against Michael.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Michael fled the crowds and took the tonsure at the Stoudios monastery, where he claimed asylum. He was taken from the sanctuary of the monastery after being granted an oath of assurance by Theodora. He was subjected to a degradation parade through the city streets and then blinded at the Sigma. Michael was then confined to the Elegmoi monastery where he died soon after. Zoe and Theodora ruled jointly.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 418-420 (trans. Wortley 393-395); Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri I, 212-243; ed. Renault I, 101-115 (trans. Sewter 132-151); PBW (Theodora 1); PBW (Zoe 1); Cheynet 1990: 54-55, No.56.</p>
Zoe and Theodora [1042]	
(April-July 1042) Theophilos Erotikos, <i>strategos</i> of Cyprus	<p><u>Description:</u> Rebelled on Cyprus and killed several imperial officials, probably intended to be proclaimed emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Defeated, captured, and sent to Constantinople. He was subjected to a degradation parade in the Hippodrome of Constantinople and then released.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 429 (trans. Wortley 403-404); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 624; PBW (Theophilos 102); Cheynet 1990: 56, No.59.</p>
Constantine IX [1042-1055]	
(Sept 1042 - Spring 1043) Georgios Maniakes, <i>magistros, katepano</i> of Italy, <i>autokrator strategos</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor in Italy he crossed the Adriatic and marched on Dyrrakhion.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Defeated and killed in battle. His corpse was beheaded and mutilated. The head was sent to Constantine IX and displayed in the Hippodrome. A triumph was celebrated in which Maniakes' supporters were processed through Constantinople preceded by Maniakes' head atop a pike.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 427-428 (trans. Wortley 401-403); Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri II, 8-21; ed. Renault II, 2-6 (trans. Sewter 194-199); PBW (Georgios 62); Cheynet 1990: 57, No.61.</p>
(Jul 1043) Leon Lampros, <i>patrikios, strategos</i> of Melitene; with Stephanos, <i>sebastophoros</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> The <i>sebastophoros</i> was discovered plotting to proclaim Lampros emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Lampros was tortured, blinded, and subjected to a degradation parade in Constantinople. He died soon after. Stephanos was tonsured and exiled; his property was confiscated.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 430 (trans. Wortley 404); PBW (Leon 109); PBW Stephanos 102); Cheynet 1990: 58, No.62.</p>
(Sep-Dec 1047) Leon Tornikios, <i>patrikios</i> , former <i>strategos</i> of Iberia	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor at Adrianople and marched on Constantinople, laying siege to the city.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Leon's proclamation was rejected by the Constantinopolitans and his forces failed to gain entrance despite having victory in their hands. Leon withdrew for the winter and suffered desertions. He sought asylum in a church to the south of Adrianople and was granted an oath of assurance. He left the church and was taken back to</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
	<p>Constantinople where he was blinded at the city gates. His supporters were subjected to confiscations and a degradation parade in Constantinople before being exiled.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri II, 34-67; ed. Renauld II, 14-30 (trans. Sewter 208-219); Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 439-442 (trans. Wortley 413-416); PBW (Leon 61); Cheynet 1990: 59-60, No.65.</p>
(1050) The sons of Euthymios, Nikephoros and Michael	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting to proclaim Nikephoros emperor with prominent officials in Constantinople.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> All were pardoned except Nikephoros, who was exiled without trial and had his property confiscated.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 471 (trans. Wortley 439); PBW (Nikephoros 109); PBW (Michael 117); Cheynet 1990: 61, No.66.</p>
(c.1050/1051) An unnamed barbarian officer	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting to assassinate Constantine IX and proclaim himself emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Tortured.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri II, 80-83; ed. Renauld II, 35-37 (trans. Sewter 227); Cheynet 1990: 61, No.67.</p>
(c.1051) Romanos Boilas, senator	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting to proclaim himself emperor. He had won over and received oaths from numerous prominent individuals.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Boilas avoided any permanent punishments. His supporters were exiled and had their property confiscated.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 473 (trans. Wortley 441); Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri II, 84-105; ed. Renauld II, 38-47 (trans. Sewter 228-235); PBW (Romanos 62); Cheynet 1990: 62, No.69.</p>
(?) Constantine Barys	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting to proclaim himself emperor; approached Lazaros Galesiotes for a prophecy to aid his cause.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> His tongue was cut.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Vita S. Lazari auctore Gregorio Monacho</i> §105; PBW (Konstantinos 202); Cheynet 1990: 64-65, No.74.</p>
(Jan 1055) Theodora	<p><u>Description:</u> Upon learning that Constantine IX was dying, Theodora and her supporters Niketas Xylinites, Theodoros, Manuel, and elements of the palace guard rushed to bring her into the Great Palace to be proclaimed. Constantine IX had intended that Nikephoros <i>proteuon</i> be proclaimed his successor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Constantine's plans for the succession were frustrated. He died on 7/8 January 1055 and Theodora was proclaimed empress. Nikephoros was tonsured at the monastery of Kouzenos in the Thrakesion theme. His supporters were subjected to confiscations and exile.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 477-478 (trans. Wortley 445-447); Attaleiates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Perez Martin 51 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 90-91); PBW (Theodora 1).</p>
Theodora [1055-1056]	
(Jan/Feb 1055) An unnamed Bryennios, <i>patrikios</i> , commander of Macedonian tagmata	<p><u>Description:</u> Upon hearing of Constantine IX's death, Bryennios marched on Constantinople intending to proclaim himself emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He got as far as Chrysopolis before being captured, dismissed, and exiled. His property was confiscated.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 479-480 (trans. Wortley 447-448); PBW (Anonymous 195);</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
Cheynet 1990: 66, No.76.	
Michael VI [1056-1057]	
(Aug 1056) Theodosios Monomachos, <i>proedros</i> , cousin of Constantine IX	<p><u>Description:</u> Upon hearing of Theodora's death, Theodosios marched to the Great Palace with the intention of being proclaimed emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He found no support from the populace of the city and those with him quickly deserted his cause. He attempted to claim asylum at Hagia Sophia but was denied entry</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 481-482 (trans. Wortley 449-450); PBW (Theodosios 103); Cheynet 1990: 67, No.78.</p>
(Spring 1057 – Sep 1057) Isaakios I Komnenos, <i>magistros</i>, former military commander	<p><u>Description:</u> After being dismissed by Michael VI, Isaakios and several other eastern military commanders decided to plan a rebellion. Isaakios was proclaimed on 8 June and marched against Constantinople. He defeated Michael's loyalist forces near Nikaia and was offered the title of <i>kaisar</i> by the emperor. A coup involving Patriarch Keroularios finally forced Michael's abdication, and Isaakios entered Constantinople to be crowned on 1 September.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Michael abdicated the throne and received the tonsure. Isaakios was crowned by Keroularios and assumed authority.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 487-498 (trans. Wortley 450-465); Attaleiates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Perez Martin 53-59 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 94-107); Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri II, 182-233; ed. Renauld II, 85-109 (trans. Sewter 277-299); PBW (Isaakios 1); Cheynet 1990: 68-70, No.80.</p>
Isaakios I [1057-1059]	
(21 Nov 1059) Constantine X Doukas, <i>proedros</i>, former <i>strategos</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> When Isaakios I was injured in a hunting accident and believed to be dying: a successor needed to be appointed. Isaakios appears to have favoured his brother Ioannes. However, a conspiracy involving Michael Psellos managed to frustrate these plans and proclaimed Constantine X in the Great Palace instead.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Isaakios accepted Constantine's proclamation upon learning of it, he took the tonsure and retired. Constantine received a coronation and assumed authority.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Attaleiates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Perez Martin 69 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 124-125); Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri II, 288-305; ed. Renauld II, 137-145 (trans. Sewter 321-330); Bryennios, <i>Histoire</i>, ed. Gautier 81-83; Cheynet 1990: 70-71, No.82.</p>
Constantine X [1059-1067]	
(Apr 1060) Unknown.	<p><u>Description:</u> An attempt was made to assassinate Constantine X while he was celebrating the feast of St George. (Cheynet 1990 speculates that it may have intended to restore Isaakios I.)</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Constantine returned to the Great Palace to secure it against the conspiracy. Those involved were exiled and their property was confiscated.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Attaleiates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Perez Martin 72-75 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 130-135); Cheynet 1990: 71, No.83.</p>
(Summer 1066) Nikoulitzas Delphinas, <i>protospatharios</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor in Larissa during a tax revolt in Hellas.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Exiled to Amaseia until his restoration to favour under Romanos IV.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Kekaumenos, <i>Strategikon</i>, ed. Vasilevskij p.66-73; PBW (Nikoulitzas 101); Cheynet 1990: 72, No.85.</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(?) Romanos Diogenes, <i>vestarches</i> , <i>doux</i> of Serdica	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of aspiring for the throne and planning a military revolt.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Initially sentenced to death, but that was commuted to exile to an unspecified island.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Attaleiates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Perez Martin 97 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 176-179); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 684-685; PBW (Romanos 4); Cheynet 1990: 74-75, No. 90-91.</p>
Eudokia Makrembolitissa [1067], with Michael VII [1067]	
Romanos IV [1068-1071]	
(Summer-Autumn 1071 – Jun 1072) Michael VII Doukas, co-emperor; Ioannes Doukas, <i>kaisar</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> After Romanos' capture after his defeat at Manzikert (August 1071) Ioannes Doukas instigated a coup to restore Michael VII as <i>autokrator</i>. Eudokia was removed from power and Michael proclaimed. Romanos IV challenged the succession and a civil war ensued.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Eudokia was tonsured. Romanos was defeated in June 1072, granted an oath of assurance, and then blinded. He was tonsured on Prote but died of his injuries on 4 August. Michael assumed authority.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Attaleiates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Perez Martin 158-179 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 286-325); Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri II, 344-363; ed. Renault II, 165-172 (trans. Sewter 354-366); Bryennios, <i>Histoire</i>, ed. Gautier 119-140; Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 699-706; PBW (Michael 7); Cheynet 1990: 75-76, No. 94.</p>
Michael VII [1071-1078]	
(1072-1075) Ioannes Doukas, <i>kaisar</i> ; Roussel de Balliol	<p><u>Description:</u> The rebellion began as a military revolt by Roussel and his free troops. Ioannes Doukas was dispatched by Michael VII to suppress the revolt c.1073/1074 but he was defeated and captured. Roussel proclaimed Ioannes emperor in order to sway influential figures to his cause and marched on Constantinople.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> The rebellion was defeated by the Turks in 1075. Roussel was captured sent to Michael and imprisoned until 1077. Ioannes Doukas took the tonsure and returned to Constantinople.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Attaleiates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Perez Martin 183-193 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 332-351); Bryennios, <i>Histoire</i>, ed. Gautier 167-195; Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 709-712; PBW (Ioannes 62); PBW (Roussel 61); Cheynet 1990: 78-79, 79-80, No.97, 99.</p>
(Nov 1077 – May 1078) Nikephoros Bryennios, <i>proedros</i> , <i>doux</i> of Dyrrakhion	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor at Traianoupolis and marched on Constantinople.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Defeated by Alexios Komnenos and sent as a prisoner to Nikephoros III. He was blinded en-route to Constantinople. Suffered confiscation of his property, but this was later restored to him. His supporters were granted an amnesty.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Bryennios, <i>Histoire</i>, ed. Gautier 214-236; Attaleiates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Perez Martin 242-268, 284-294 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 440-489, 518-537); Skylitzes Continuatus, ed. Tsolakes 172-181; PBW (Nikephoros 62); Cheynet 1990: 83-84, No.104.</p>
(Oct 1077 – Apr 1078) Nikephoros III Botaneiates, <i>kouropalates</i>, <i>doux</i> of the Anatolikon	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor near Lampa in October 1077 and marched on Nikaia. Then set out against an undefended Constantinople which he entered in March/April 1078 without bloodshed.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Michael VII was prompted to abdicate when supporters of Nikephoros started proclaiming him in the city. He was tonsured at the Stoudios Monastery. Nikephoros III was crowned emperor and married Maria of Alania, Michael's wife. Constantine Doukas, Michael's son was permitted to retain elements of the insignia and was</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
	<p>promised the succession. <u>Sources:</u> Bryennios, <i>Histoire</i>, ed. Gautier 237-253; Attaleiates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Perez Martin 238-243, 257-260 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 432-445, 468-475); Skylitzes Continuatus, ed. Tsolakes 172-179; PBW (Nikephoros 3); Cheynet 1990: 84-85, No.105.</p>
Nikephoros III [1078-1081]	
(Spring-Summer 1078) Nikephoros Basilakes, <i>protoproedros, doux</i> of Dyrrakhion	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor after the defeat of Nikephoros Bryennios. Instigated a rebellion in the region of Thessalonike and Dyrrakhion. <u>Fate:</u> Defeated by Alexios Komnenos and captured. Sent to Constantinople and blinded en-route. <u>Sources:</u> Bryennios, <i>Histoire</i>, ed. Gautier 217, 285-297; Attaleiates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Perez Martin 298-300 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 540-549); Anna Komnene, <i>Alexias</i>, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 27-34 (trans. Frankopan 23-29); PBW (Nikephoros 61); Cheynet 1990: 86-87, No.108.</p>
(Spring 1079) Konstantios Doukas, <i>Porphyrogennetos, strategos</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Rebelled against Nikephoros III with the intention of proclaiming himself emperor at Chrysopolis. <u>Fate:</u> Deserted by his troops and captured after a single day. Tonsured and exiled to Marmara. His supporters were granted amnesty. <u>Sources:</u> Attaleiates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Perez Martin 307-309 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 560-563); PBW (Konstantinos 61); Cheynet 1990: 87, No.110.</p>
(1081) Pseudo-Michael VII Doukas	<p><u>Description:</u> Approached Robert Guiscard for assistance in claiming the throne as Michael VII. <u>Sources:</u> Anna Komnene, <i>Alexias</i>, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 40-42 (trans. Frankopan 31-34); PBW (Raiktor 101); Cheynet 1990: 87, No.109.</p>
(Autumn 1080 – Apr 1081) Nikephoros Melissenos, former <i>strategos</i> , brother-in-law of Alexios Komnenos	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor in Asia Minor and intended to depose Nikephoros III. <u>Fate:</u> Failed to secure substantial support. Was granted the title of <i>kaisar</i> by Alexios I in April 1081 in exchange for ending his revolt. <u>Sources:</u> Anna Komnene, <i>Alexias</i>, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 75-81 (trans. Frankopan 68-72); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 732; PBW (Nikephoros 115); Cheynet 1990: 88-89, No.111.</p>
(Feb – Apr 1081) Alexios I Komnenos, <i>sebastos, megas domestikos</i>, adopted son of Empress Maria	<p><u>Description:</u> Entered into a conspiracy with Maria of Alania when it was rumoured that Nikephoros intended to change the plans for Constantine Doukas' succession. He rebelled against Nikephoros III after being accused of plotting a military revolt. Proclaimed emperor in Thrace and marched on Constantinople. Gained access to the city on 1 April 1081 and ousted Nikephoros. <u>Fate:</u> Nikephoros abdicated and was tonsured at the Peribleptos. Alexios was crowned by Patriarch Kosmas. He considered a marriage to Maria of Alania but was persuaded against it. Maria and Constantine were removed from the Great Palace but retained their high status. Constantine was associated as co-emperor with Alexios and permitted to wear imperial insignia. <u>Sources:</u> Bryennios, <i>Histoire</i>, ed. Gautier 63-67; Anna Komnene, <i>Alexias</i>, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 60-86 (trans. Frankopan 54-78); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Büttner-Wobst III, 727-730; PBW (Alexios 1); Cheynet 1990: 89-90, No.113.</p>
Alexios I [1081-1118]	

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(c. 1075-1098) Theodoros Gabras, <i>sebastos, doux</i> of Trebizond	<p><u>Description:</u> Starts issues coinage in his name and declares himself independent of Alexios' rule.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Remains independent and issues coinage sporadically until his death in October 1098.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Anna Komnene, <i>Alexias</i>, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 255 (trans. Frankopan 232-233); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 739; PBW (Theodoros 6003); Cheynet 1990: 92-93, No. 117.</p>
(c.1081-1097) Tzachas, former <i>protonobelissimos</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaims himself emperor in Asia Minor and aspires to create a Byzantine-Turkish empire.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> His ambitions were dashed after he was dislodged from Smyrna in 1090 and faced serious territorial reverses, he continued to claim the imperial title until his death in 1097.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 736-737; PBW (Tzachas 61); Cheynet 1990: 93, No.118.</p>
(1087) Anonymous	<p><u>Description:</u> An individual claimed to be the relative of a former emperor and intended to be proclaimed in place of Alexios.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Executed.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophylaktos, <i>Opera</i>, ed. Gautier 229-231; Cheynet 1990: 95, No.122.</p>
(c. May 1091) Constantine Houmpertopoulos, commander of the Frankish <i>tagmata</i> ; with Arieibes, an Armenian-born military officer	<p><u>Description:</u> Uncovered conspiring to overthrow Alexios with a number of other prominent figures.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Subjected to a degradation parade and exiled. Their property was confiscated. Houmpertopoulos may have been restored by Alexios, but Anna's chronology is corrupt.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Anna Komnene, <i>Alexias</i>, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 252 (trans. Frankopan 229); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 741; PBW (Konstantinos 122); PBW (Arieibes 6001); Cheynet 1990: 96, No.124.</p>
(c. 1091-1093) Ioannes Komnenos, <i>sebastos, doux</i> of Dyrrakhion, nephew of Alexios I	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of plotting to rebel against Alexios and proclaim himself emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> A family council was held but no overt action was taken against Ioannes.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Anna Komnene, <i>Alexias</i>, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 252-255 (trans. Frankopan 229-233); PBW (Ioannes 128); Cheynet 1990: 96-97, No.125.</p>
(Spring/Summer 1094) Nikephoros Diogenes, <i>doux</i> of Crete, son of Romanos IV; Kekaumenos Katakalon	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered conspiring to overthrow Alexios with the support of the Doukai (Empress Maria and Constantine) and prominent aristocrats, senators, and commanders. Alexios' brother, Adrianos, probably also had knowledge.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Nikephoros Diogenes was blinded and his property confiscated. Kekaumenos Katakalon was treated likewise. Michael Taronites was exiled and his property confiscated. Alexios announced a general amnesty for the other conspirators, since he was unsure that the loyal troops he had at hand would be sufficient to detain all those involved. Adrianos and Constantine fell from favour soon after.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Anna Komnene, <i>Alexias</i>, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 267-279 (trans. Frankopan 246-257); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 742; PBW (Nikephoros 64); PBW (Kekaumenos 101); Cheynet 1990: 98-99, No. 128.</p>
(1095) Pseudo-Diogenes, aka Charakenos	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed himself emperor as the dead son of Romanos IV.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Blinded.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Anna Komnene, <i>Alexias</i>, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 283-293 (trans. Frankopan 262-271); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 744; PBW (Anonymous 419); Cheynet 1990: 99-100, No. 129.</p>
(1106/1107) Michael Anemas; his 3 brothers;	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting for power with his brothers, Ioannes, and a number of other prominent aristocrats</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
Ioannes Soloman, senator; and unspecified others	<p>and senators.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Michael was sentenced to be blinded and subjected to a degradation parade in Constantinople. He was spared blinding when Alexios and Eirene intervened moments before he passed the point of no return. He was confined at a tower near the Blachernai Palace. His co-conspirators were subjected to confiscations and exile. Some were restored.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Anna Komnene, <i>Alexias</i>, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 372-375 (trans. Frankopan 346-349); Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 745; PBW (Michael 194); PBW (Ioannes 15019); Cheynet 1990: 100-101, No. 130.</p>
(Aug 1118) Nikephoros Bryennios the Younger, son-in-law of Alexios I, <i>kaiser</i> , <i>panhypersebastos</i> ; Anna Komnene, daughter of Alexios I; Empress Eirene	<p><u>Description:</u> After the death of Alexios Anna and Eirene conspired to promote Nikephoros as emperor in place of Ioannes I.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Their ambitions were forestalled when Ioannes forced entrance to the Great Palace, using his father's monogrammed ring as proof of his precedence. No action was taken against the conspirators although a rift existed between Ioannes and Anna thereafter.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Zonaras, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Pinder and Büttner-Wobst III, 761-764; Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 5-8 (trans. Magoulias 5-7); PBW (Nikephoros 117); PBW (Anna 62); PBW (Eirene 61); Cheynet 1990: 103, No.134.</p>
Ioannes II [1118-1143]	
(Spring 1119) Nikephoros Bryennios the Younger, son-in-law of Alexios I, <i>panhypersebastos</i> ; Anna Komnene, daughter of Alexios I	<p><u>Description:</u> Uncovered conspiring with other prominent figures to assassinate Ioannes while he was hunting at Philopation. They intended to promote Nikephoros in his place.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Anna was divested of her imperial attire but was later reconciled with her brother. The other conspirators had their property confiscated and were later restored.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 10-11 (trans. Magoulias 8-9); PBW (Nikephoros 117); PBW (Anna 62); Cheynet 1990: 103, No.135.</p>
(Summer 1130 – Spring 1139) Isaakios Komnenos, <i>sebastokrator</i> , brother of Ioannes II; Ioannes Komnenos, his son	<p><u>Description:</u> Conspired against Ioannes II in order to claim the throne for himself.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Fled to the Turks with his son in 1130 and was reconciled with his brother in a formal ceremony in 1139.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 32, 36 (trans. Magoulias 19, 21); PBW (Isaakios 102); PBW (Ioannes 250002); Cheynet 1990: 105, No.139.</p>
(c.1139-c.1143) Isaakios Komnenos, <i>sebastokrator</i> , brother of Ioannes II	<p><u>Description:</u> After his reconciliation with Ioannes, Isaakios again plotted to overthrow him and proclaim himself emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> His conspiracy was uncovered and he was exiled to Herakleia in Pontus. He was reconciled with Manuel I in May 1143.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 36 (trans. Magoulias 21); Kinnamos, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Meineke 32 (trans. Brand 34); PBW (Isaakios 102); Cheynet 1990: 106, No.140.</p>
Manuel I [1143-1180]	
(April-May 1143) Isaakios Komnenos, <i>sebastokrator</i> , oldest surviving brother of Manuel I	<p><u>Description:</u> Attempted to claim the throne on the basis of primogeniture.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Imprisoned at the Pantokrator Monastery until Manuel I had received his coronation. He was formally reconciled with Manuel after the coronation.</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(Apr 1143) John Roger, <i>kaisar</i> , brother-in-law of Manuel I	<p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 46-49 (trans. Magoulias 26-29); Kinnamos, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Meineke 29-31 (trans. Brand 32-33); PBW (Isaakios 103); Cheynet 1990: 106, No.141.</p> <p><u>Description:</u> Accused of aspiring for the throne.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Sent away from Constantinople but not officially exiled.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Kinnamos, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Meineke 37-38 (trans. Brand 37-38); PBW (Ioannes 306); Cheynet 1990: 107, No.143.</p>
(Feb 1147) Isaakios Komnenos, <i>sebastokrator</i> , oldest surviving brother of Manuel I	<p><u>Description:</u> Suspected of plotting to overthrow Manuel, in collaboration with Patriarch Kosmas.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> No overt actions were taken against Manuel so Isaakios was not rebuked (at least not publicly), however, Patriarch Kosmas was deposed.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 80 (trans. Magoulias 47); PBW (Isaakios 103); Cheynet 1990: 106-107, No.142.</p>
(c.1154) Andronikos Komnenos, <i>doux</i> of Braničevo, cousin of Manuel I	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting to assassinate Manuel and proclaim himself emperor with assistance from the Hungarians.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Imprisoned at the Great Palace for nine years until he escaped to join the Russian Prince Yaroslav at Galitza. He was formally pardoned and reconciled with Manuel in 1165/1166.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 104-106 (trans. Magoulias 59-60); Kinnamos, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Meineke 126-131 (trans. Brand 99-103); PBW (Andronikos 1); Cheynet 1990: 107-108, No.144.</p>
(1165/1166) Theodoros Stypeiotes, <i>megalodoxotatos, protonotarios, epi tou kanikleiou</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of conspiring to overthrow Manuel and promote another emperor. The conspiracy may have been provoked by Manuel's plan to instigate of an oath to his intended heir Bela-Alexios, the husband of Maria <i>porphyrogenita</i>.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Blinded.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 111-115 (trans. Magoulias 63-66); PBW (Theodoros 186); Cheynet 1990: 108, No.145.</p>
(1167-1180) Andronikos Komnenos, <i>doux</i> of Kilikia, cousin of Manuel I	<p><u>Description:</u> Andronikos abandoned his military command in Kilikia and entered into rebellion against Manuel for a second time. He had been courting Philippa of Antioch in Jerusalem in 1166, but fled to the Sultan of Iconium with Eudokia Komnene. Probably he had been hoping to be proclaimed emperor with their help.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Lived in exile until his formal reconciliation with Manuel in 1180 after which he was sent to govern Oinaion, on the Black Sea. During the period of his exile Manuel issued orders that if he were to be captured he should be blinded.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Kinnamos, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Meineke 250 (trans. Brand 188); Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 141-142 (trans. Magoulias 80-81); PBW (Andronikos 1); Varzos 1984: I, 493-638; Cheynet 1990: 109, No.147.</p>
(1167) Alexios Axouchos, <i>sebastos, protostrator</i> , relative by marriage of Manuel I	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of conspiring to overthrow Manuel.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Taken prisoner at Serdica and tonsured at Mount Papykios in Thrace.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Kinnamos, <i>Epitome</i>, ed. Meineke 265-269 (trans. Brand 198-199); Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 144-145 (trans. Magoulias 82); PBW (Alexios 17004); Cheynet 1990: 109, No.148.</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(Feb 1181) Maria, <i>kaisarissa</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting with other prominent figures and members of the Komnenian family to assassinate Alexios the <i>protosebastos</i> and overthrow the regency on behalf of Alexios II.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Maria and her husband suffered no penalties, but their co-conspirators were tried, found guilty, and imprisoned. They may have been subjected to a degradation parade.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Eustathios of Thessalonike, <i>The Capture of Thessaloniki</i>, ed. Melville Jones 20-21; Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 231-232 (trans. Magoulias 130-131); PBW (17002); Varzos 1984: II, 439-452; Cheynet 1990: 110-111, No.150.</p>
(Apr-May 1181) Maria, <i>kaisarissa</i> ; and the people of Constantinople	<p><u>Description:</u> When the regency began to enquire into Maria's role in the February conspiracy, indicating that they were going to imprison her, she fled to Hagia Sophia with her husband. They organised a resistance and were joined by the Constantinopolitan crowds who proclaimed Alexios II and denounced the regency.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> A one day battle ensued at Hagia Sophia in May. Many of the crowd were killed. Maria was subsequently reconciled with the regency through the mediation of Patriarch Theodosios.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Eustathios of Thessalonike, <i>The Capture of Thessaloniki</i>, ed. Melville Jones 22-23; Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 236-240 (trans. Magoulias 133-135); PBW (17002); Varzos 1984: II, 439-452; Cheynet 1990: 111, No.151.</p>
(Early 1182 - Sept 1183) Andronikos Komnenos, <i>doux</i> of Paphlagonia, cousin of Manuel I	<p><u>Description:</u> Andronikos had been contacted by the <i>kaisarissa</i> Maria about the state of the regency. He marched on Constantinople and gathered supporters along the way. He announced that he had been appointed by Manuel as Alexios' regent and received oaths of loyalty to himself and Alexios. He arrived at Constantinople and the defenders defected to him. He entered the city and deposed the regency, before being appointed as Alexios II's guardian. He was proclaimed co-emperor at Alexios' behest and was crowned emperor at Hagia Sophia with Alexios in attendance in September 1182. He then proceeded to execute the young emperor and assumed sole rule.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Alexios the <i>protosebastos</i> was blinded upon Andronikos' entry to Constantinople, and then subjected to a degradation parade before being exiled. Alexios II was reportedly strangled a few days after Andronikos' coronation. The boy's body was beheaded and mutilated. The head was buried but the torso was cast into the sea. Empress Maria had been executed for treason earlier in the year and her body was thrown into the sea on a nearby shore. The <i>kaisarissa</i> Maria and her husband had died in 1182, and their deaths were later attributed to Andronikos.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Eustathios of Thessalonike, <i>The Capture of Thessaloniki</i>, ed. Melville Jones 22-45; Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 236-273 (trans. Magoulias 133-151); Varzos 1984: I, 493-638; Cheynet 1990: 111-112, No.152.</p>
(Spring-Summer 1182) Ioannes Komnenos-Vatatzes, <i>sebastos</i> , <i>meGas domestikos</i> , <i>doux</i> of Thrace	<p><u>Description:</u> Instigated a rebellion at Philadelphia in defence of Alexios II's rights which he believed were being threatened by Andronikos Komnenos. He sent his sons Alexios and Manuel to campaign against Andronikos.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> When Ioannes died of an illness the populace of Philadelphia declared the city for Andronikos. Alexios and Manuel fled to the Turks and then tried to go to the West. They were captured and blinded.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 262-264 (trans. Magoulias 146-147); Varzos 1984: II, 382-389; Cheynet 1990: 113, No.154.</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(c. Spring-Summer 1183) Andronikos Angelos; Andronikos Kontostephanos, <i>sebastos</i> ; sixteen sons; Basileios Kamateros, <i>logothetes tou dromou</i> ; and others	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of conspiring to assassinate Andronikos Komnenos; probably intended that one of them be proclaimed emperor alongside Alexios II.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Andronikos Angelos and his sons escaped Constantinople. Andronikos Kontostephanos and four of his sons were blinded with Kamateros. Kamateros was exiled to Scythia. Other conspirators suffered confiscations, imprisonment, and exiled. Some were executed.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 266-267 (trans. Magoulias 148); Varzos 1984: I, 656-662; Cheynet 1990: 114, No.155.</p>
(Summer 1183) Maria of Antioch, Empress, and mother of Alexios II	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of conspiring with her sister's husband, Bela III of Hungary to instigate a revolt and overthrow Andronikos.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Tried and found guilty. Maria was executed by strangulation and her body thrown into the sea on a nearby shore.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 266-267 (trans. Magoulias 149); Cheynet 1990: 114-115, No.156.</p>
(Sep 1183 - Spring 1184) Theodoros Angelos; Theodoros Kantakouzenos	<p><u>Description:</u> Enter into revolt at Nikaia, Prousa, and Lopadion shortly after the proclamation of Andronikos I. Probably intended to proclaim a rival emperor alongside Alexios II.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> The rebellions were suppressed by Andronikos in person. Theodoros Kantakouzenos was killed after falling from his horse in battle. Theodoros Angelos was blinded along with the bishop of Prousa. Numerous conspirators were hanged and impaled. The future Isaakios II Angelos was spared because he had surrendered to Andronikos.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 269-270, 281-289 (trans. Magoulias 149-150, 156-160); Nicol 1968: 7 (Theodore Kantakouzenos); Cheynet 1990: 115, No.157.</p>
Andronikos I [1183-1185]	
(Autumn 1183) Andronikos Lapardas, <i>sebastos</i> , <i>vestiarites</i> , <i>chartoularios</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Planned a rebellion against Andronikos Komnenos while at Adrianople, and headed east toward Asia Minor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was captured at Adramyttion and sent to Andronikos Komnenos in Constantinople. He was blinded and tonsured at the Pantepoptes. He died soon after.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 277-279 (trans. Magoulias 154); Stiernon 1966: 89-96; Cheynet 1990: 116, No. 158.</p>
(1184-1191) Isaakios I Komnenos of Cyprus, former <i>doux</i> of Kilikia	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed himself emperor on Cyprus and intended to challenge Andronikos, quickly settled on establishing a break-away state.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Remained independent until ousted from Cyprus by Richard the Lionheart in 1191.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 291-292, 369-370, 418 (trans. Magoulias 161, 204, 229-230); Varzos 1984: II, 301, 884; Cheynet 1990: 116-117, No.159.</p>
(c. Jun/Jul 1185) Alexios Komnenos, <i>sebastokrator</i> , an illegitimate son of Manuel I, prospective son-in-law of Andronikos I; Mamalos	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of aspiring for the throne and found with illicit books of prophecy (<i>basileiographiai</i>) owned by Mamalos.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Alexios was blinded and imprisoned. Mamalos was burned in the Hippodrome with his books.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 296, 309-311 (trans. Magoulias 164, 172); Varzos 1984: II, 481-496; Cheynet 1990: 117, No.160.</p>
(1185) Pseudo-Alexios II	<u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor in the Adriatic region (Dyrrakhion?) under the name of Alexios II.

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(c. Summer - Nov 1185) Alexios, <i>pinkernes</i>	<p><u>Fate:</u> Travelled to Sicily in an effort to raise support for his rebellion. <u>Sources:</u> Eustathios of Thessalonike, <i>The Capture of Thessaloniki</i>, ed. Melville Jones 60-63; Varzos 1984: II, 471-473; Cheynet 1990: 118, No.161.</p>
(11-12 Sep 1185) Isaakios II Angelos, son of a cousin of Manuel I	<p><u>Description:</u> Was proclaimed emperor in Sicily and aspired to claim the throne for himself with Western aid. <u>Fate:</u> Captured and blinded after the defeat of the Sicilians in Nov 1185. <u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 296, 319, 360 (trans. Magoulias 164, 175, 200); Eustathios of Thessalonike, <i>The Capture of Thessaloniki</i>, ed. Melville Jones 60-63; Varzos 1984: II, 471-473; Cheynet 1990: 118-119, No.162.</p> <p><u>Description:</u> A conspiracy involving Isaakios was uncovered and Andronikos I's agent Hagiochristophorites was despatched to arrest him. Isaakios killed Hagiochristophorites and sought asylum at Hagia Sophia. He was joined by his family and the Constantinopolitan crowds, proclaimed emperor and invested. He marched against the Great Palace and deposed Andronikos. <u>Fate:</u> Andronikos was captured as he tried to flee the city. He was tortured while in confinement, had a hand amputated, and was blinded in one eye. He was subjected to a degradation parade and then executed in the Hippodrome. His remains were thrown into a vault of the Hippodrome before being taken to a nearby graveyard where they were not permitted a burial. Andronikos' sons, Manuel and Ioannes were blinded, both died soon after. <u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 343-346 (trans. Magoulias 189-191); Varzos 1984: II, 807-840; Cheynet 1990: 119, No.163.</p>
Isaakios II [1185-1195]	
(1186) Alexios Branas, <i>sebastos, strategos</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of aspiring for the throne during the Sicilian campaign. <u>Fate:</u> Reconciled with Isaakios. <u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 376-377 (trans. Magoulias 207-208); Varzos 1984: II, 394-417, 540-543; Cheynet 1990: 121, No.166.</p>
(Spring 1186 – 1187) Alexios Branas, <i>sebastos, strategos</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor by the troops during his campaign against Peter and Asen and marches against Constantinople. <u>Fate:</u> Defeated and killed in battle. His corpse was beheaded and mutilated. The head was sent to Isaakios, and featured in a degradation parade through the streets of Constantinople. Some of his supporters were granted amnesties. <u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 377-388 (trans. Magoulias 207-213); Varzos 1984: II, 394-417, 540-543; Cheynet 1990: 122, No.167.</p>
(1191) Pseudo-Alexios II	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor at Harmala (upper Maeander) under the name of Alexios II. <u>Fate:</u> Assassinated by a local priest. <u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 420-422 (trans. Magoulias 231-232); Varzos 1984: II, 473-476; Cheynet 1990: 123-124, No.169.</p>
(1191) Pseudo-Alexios II	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor in Paphlagonia under the name of Alexios II. <u>Fate:</u> Captured, whipped, and beheaded. The head was sent to Isaakios II. <u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 422-423 (trans. Magoulias 232-233); Varzos 1984: II, 476; Cheynet 1990:</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(1191-1192) Basileios Chotzas	<p>124, No.170.</p> <p><u>Description:</u> Entered into revolt at Tarsos and aspired to the throne. <u>Fate:</u> Captured, blinded, and imprisoned. <u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 423 (trans. Magoulias 233); Cheynet 1990: 125, No.171.</p>
(c.1191/1193) Isaakios Komnenos, nephew of Andronikos I	<p><u>Description:</u> Escaped from prison and fled to Hagia Sophia where he sought to be proclaimed emperor. <u>Fate:</u> Killed in the attempt. <u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 423 (trans. Magoulias 233); Varzos 1984: II, 507-511; Cheynet 1990: 125, No.172.</p>
(c.1191-1193) Constantine Tatikios	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting for the throne. <u>Fate:</u> Captured and blinded. <u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 423 (trans. Magoulias 233); Cheynet 1990: 126, No.174.</p>
(1193) Constantine Angelos, commander of the fleet, governor of Philippopolis	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor at Philippopolis and marched on Adrianople. <u>Fate:</u> Betrayed by his supporters, captured, blinded, and handed over to Isaakios I. <u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 435 (trans. Magoulias 239); Varzos 1984: II, 847-850; Cheynet 1990: 127, No.176.</p>
(c.1193-1194) Andronikos Komnenos, <i>doux</i> of Thessalonike	<p><u>Description:</u> Accused of aspiring for the throne. <u>Fate:</u> Arrested and blinded without trial. <u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 424-425 (trans. Magoulias 234); Varzos 1984: II, 83-85; Cheynet 1990: 128, No.178.</p>
(c. 1194-1195) The son of Andronikos Komnenos, <i>doux</i> of Thessalonike	<p><u>Description:</u> Enters Hagia Sophia in secret in order to be proclaimed emperor. <u>Fate:</u> Captured and blinded. <u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 428 (trans. Magoulias 235); Cheynet 1990: 128, No.179.</p>
(8 Apr 1195) Alexios III Angelos, <i>sebastokrator</i>, brother of Isaakios I	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor by the soldiery while on campaign with Isaakios II against the Vlachs and Bulgarians. Euphrosyne Doukaina Kamatera, Alexios' wife, secured the Great Palace and Hagia Sophia for him. <u>Fate:</u> Alexios III was crowned emperor and assumed authority. Isaakios was captured, blinded, and tonsured at the Monastery of Vera. <u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 450-451 (trans. Magoulias 247-248); Varzos 1984: II, 726-801; Cheynet 1990: 128-129, No.180.</p>
Alexios III [1195-1203]	
(1195) Alexios Kontostephanos, <i>sebastos</i> , <i>chartoularios</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed himself emperor in the streets of Constantinople, in opposition to the acclamations for Isaakios. <u>Fate:</u> His supporters abandoned him and he was imprisoned. <u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 456 (trans. Magoulias 250) Varzos 1984: II, 249-293; Cheynet 1990: 129-130, No.181.</p>
(Jul 1195) Pseudo-Alexios II	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor near Kilikia under the name of Alexios II. <u>Fate:</u> Assassinated.</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
	<u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i> , ed. van Dieten 461-463 (trans. Magoulias 253-254); Varzos 1984: II, 477-481; Cheynet 1990: 130, No.182.
(Autumn 1195) Isaakios I of Cyprus	<u>Description:</u> After his release from imprisonment he sought to raise a rebellion in Asia Minor. <u>Fate:</u> He died before he was able to instigate a rebellion.
	<u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i> , ed. van Dieten 463-4 (trans. Magoulias 254) Cheynet 1990: 130-131, No.183.
(Jul 1200) The Constantinopolitan crowds	<u>Description:</u> Attempt to proclaim a rival emperor at Hagia Sophia. <u>Fate:</u> After failing to gain access to the church, they marched on the Chalke prison and released many of the prisoners. They engaged the imperial guard but were defeated and dispersed.
	<u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i> , ed. van Dieten 525-526 (trans. Magoulias 288-289); Cheynet 1990: 135-136, No.193-194.
(31 Jul 1200) Ioannes Komnenos(-Axouchos)	<u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor at Hagia Sophia within days of the Constantinopolitan uprising. He marched on the Great Palace, gained access via the Hippodrome, and seated himself on the imperial throne. <u>Fate:</u> Alexios ordered a counter-attack from the Blachernai. The Varangians overwhelmed Ioannes' supporters and killed him within the Great Palace. His corpse was beheaded and mutilated. The head was sent to Alexios III before being displayed in the agora. Ioannes remains were displayed outside the Blachernai Palace.
	<u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i> , ed. van Dieten 527-528 (trans. Magoulias 289); Mesarites, <i>Die Palastrevolution des Johannes Komnenos</i> , ed. Heisenberg; Cheynet 1990: 136-137, No.195.
(Jun-Jul 1203) Alexios IV, son of Isaakios II; with the Fourth Crusade	<u>Description:</u> Alexios escaped imprisonment in Constantinople and fled to the West to find help in restoring his father to the throne. He made an agreement with the leaders of the Fourth Crusade that he would provide them with assistance if they were to install him at Constantinople. The crusade sailed to Constantinople and forced Alexios III to flee the city. Isaakios II was restored by the Varangians and senate in order to negotiate with the crusaders and Alexios was crowned co-emperor soon after. <u>Fate:</u> Alexios III fled to Debeltos in Thrace with one of his daughters. His wife and other daughters were removed from power and kept prisoner in Constantinople. <u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i> , ed. van Dieten 536-541 (trans. Magoulias 294-297); Akropolites, <i>Historia</i> , ed. Heisenberg 6 (trans. Macrides 109-110); Cheynet 1990: 139-140, No.199.
Alexios IV & Isaakios II [1203-1204]	
(25-28 Jan 1204) Nikolaos Kannavos, <i>sebastos</i>	<u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor by the senate, people, and patriarch, at an assembly at Hagia Sophia. <u>Fate:</u> The will of the people was frustrated by the proclamation of Alexios V. Kannavos was arrested and executed.
	<u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i> , ed. van Dieten 562-564 (trans. Magoulias 307-308); Akropolites, <i>Historia</i> , ed. Heisenberg 7 (trans. Macrides 110-111); Cheynet 1990: 142, No. 202.
(28 Jan 1204) Alexios V Doukas, <i>protovestiaros</i>	<u>Description:</u> Proclaimed himself emperor in the Great Palace with the support of the Varangians and the finance minister Constantine Philoxenites. He forced the abdication of Alexios IV and Isaakios II, before quashing the proclamation of Kannavos. <u>Fate:</u> Alexios IV and Isaakios II were taken prisoner and executed. Alexios V was crowned emperor and assumed the defence of the city against the crusaders.

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
<u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i> , ed. van Dieten 561-564 (trans. Magoulias 307-309); Polemis 1968: 145-147; Cheynet 1990: 142-143, No.203.	
Alexios V Doukas [1204]	
(12/13 Apr 1204) Constantine Laskaris	<p><u>Description:</u> Constantine was proclaimed emperor by the patriarch and remaining officials at Hagia Sophia, after Alexios V had fled Constantinople. He refused to accept the insignia offered to him by the patriarch.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He led the resistance against the Latin entry into Constantinople and eventually fled the city to join his brother, Theodoros, in Asia Minor. He appears to have renounced all claim to the throne.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 571-572 (trans. Magoulias 314); Cheynet 1990: 145, No.206.</p>
Conquest of Constantinople by the forces of the Fourth Crusade (1204)	
(Apr 1204) Alexios Komnenos, grandson of Andronikos I; Queen Thamar of Georgia	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor in Trebizond and had aspirations for the empire.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Quickly settled for autonomy in Trebizond.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 571 (trans. Magoulias 313-314); Cheynet 1990: 144-145, No.204.</p>
(1205-1208) Theodoros I Laskaris, <i>despotes</i>, son-in-law of Alexios III	<p><u>Description:</u> After the capture of Alexios III by the Latins, Theodoros Laskaris was proclaimed emperor by the notables at Nikaia and sought his coronation.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Theodoros was crowned emperor by the newly elected (20 March) Patriarch Autoreianos in April 1208.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Akropolites, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Heisenberg 11-12 (trans. Macrides 119-120).</p>
Theodoros I Laskaris [1205-1221]	
(1211) Alexios III Angelos, emperor (still claiming the title), father-in-law of Theodoros I	<p><u>Description:</u> After his ransom and release by Michael I Komnenos Doukas, Alexios III continued to claim the imperial title and appealed to the Seljuks for assistance against his son-in-law, Theodoros I Laskaris.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was defeated and captured at the battle of Antioch-on-the-Maeander, blinded, and tonsured at the monastery of St Hyakinthos in Nikaia.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Akropolites, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Heisenberg 17 (trans. Macrides 131); Skoutariotes, <i>Synopsis Chronike</i>, ed. Sathas 457.</p>
Ioannes III [1221-1254]	
(1224) Isaakios and Alexios Laskaris, brothers of Theodoros I Laskaris	<p><u>Description:</u> Rebelled against Ioannes III and invaded Nikaian territory with the help of the Latins. They intended that one of them be proclaimed emperor in Ioannes' place.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> The brothers were taken captive after the defeat of their forces at the Battle of Poimananon, and were blinded. Other supporters were executed.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Akropolites, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Heisenberg 34-36, 109-111 (trans. Macrides 166, 283); Gregoras, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Schopen I, 25.</p>
(1224/1225-1230) Theodoros Komnenos Doukas, <i>despotes</i> , cousin of Alexios III	<p><u>Description:</u> After a string of successes against the Latins, including the recapture of Thessalonike (Autumn 1224) Theodoros Komnenos Doukas started exhibiting imperial ambitions. He had himself proclaimed emperor at Thessalonike in 1227, and was crowned by Archbishop Demetrios Chomatenos.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> In March 1230 he was defeated by the Bulgarian emperor Ivan Asen at the Battle of Klokotnitsa. He was imprisoned for seven years and blinded.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Akropolites, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Heisenberg 33-34, 41-43 (trans. Macrides 162-163, 178-179, 182).</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(1224) Andronikos Nestongos and Isaakios Nestongos, cousins of Ioannes III; and other prominent officials	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting to proclaim Andronikos Nestongos emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Isaakios Nestongos and one other conspirator (a certain Makrenos) were both subjected to blinding and the amputation of a hand. Andronikos Nestongos was exiled to the fortress of Magnesia. The other conspirators were subjected to unspecified ‘minor’ penalties.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Akropolites, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Heisenberg 36-38 (trans. Macrides 169).</p>
(c.1230-c.1237) Manuel Komnenos Doukas, <i>despotes</i> , brother of Theodoros Komnenos Doukas	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor at Thessalonike at some point after the capture and blinding of his brother by Ivan Asen.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Manuel was deposed by his brother Theodoros who had been released by Ivan Asen and provided with an army. He was exiled to Attaleia in Asia Minor. Theodoros proclaimed his son Ioannes Komnenos Doukas emperor at Thessalonike but exercised real power on his behalf.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Akropolites, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Heisenberg 43-44, 60-62 (trans. Macrides 182, 206-207).</p>
(1237 - Winter 1241/1242) Ioannes Komnenos Doukas, son of Theodoros Komnenos Doukas	<p><u>Description:</u> Proclaimed emperor by his father after capturing Thessalonike and deposing Manuel Komnenos Doukas, but was subject to his father’s authority.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Was reconciled with Ioannes III after the latter’s expedition against Thessalonike in 1241. He renounced his imperial title in exchange for recognition as <i>despotes</i>.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Akropolites, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Heisenberg 60-62, 65-67 (trans. Macrides 206-207, 215-216).</p>
Theodoros II [1254-1258]	
Ioannes IV [1258-1261]	
(Aug 1258 – Dec 1261) Michael VIII Palaiologos	<p><u>Description:</u> During the funerary preparations for Theodoros II (Aug 1258) a group of disaffected Nikaian aristocrats and military officers led by Michael Palaiologos instigated the assassination of Georgios Mouzalon, the regent of the eight-year-old minority emperor Ioannes IV. Michael was promptly promoted as regent and granted the titles of <i>megas doux</i> and <i>despotes</i> (Sep-Dec). He was proclaimed co-emperor with Ioannes on 1 Jan 1259.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Michael was granted seniority in the acclamations attending his first coronation (by Patriarch Arsenios) and Ioannes was not permitted to wear a crown. Michael received a second coronation, in Constantinople in 1261 after the recapture of the city, Ioannes was not present. The young emperor was blinded on his eleventh birthday (25 Dec 1261), and exiled to a fortress in Bithynia.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Akropolites, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Heisenberg 154-163 (trans. Macrides 339-352); Pachymeres, <i>Relations Historiques</i>, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 78-81, 94-97, 102-113, 129-147; PLP 21528.</p>
Michael VIII Palaiologos [1259-1282], with Ioannes IV [1258-1261]	
Recovery of Constantinople (1261)	
(Spring-Summer 1262) Pseudo-Ioannes IV	<p><u>Description:</u> A blind child who resembled Ioannes was proclaimed emperor at Trikokkia in Bithynia.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Following desertions Ioannes and his main supporters fled to the Turks.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Pachymeres, <i>Relations Historiques</i>, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 259-67.</p>
(1264) Makrenos, <i>parakoimomenos</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Suspected of plotting to usurp the throne after arranging a marriage alliance to a member of the Laskarid family.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Arrested and blinded.</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(1265) Frangopoulos, <i>oikeios</i>	<p><u>Sources:</u> Pachymeres, <i>Relations Historiques</i>, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 275-276; PLP 16358/92605.</p> <p><u>Description:</u> Discovered plotting to murder Michael VIII; probably intended to proclaim himself emperor. Patriarch Arsenios was implicated in the conspiracy.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Tortured and subjected to unspecified penalties.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Pachymeres, <i>Relations Historiques</i>, ed. Failler and Laurent II, 371; PLP 30093.</p>
(1273) Pseudo-Ioannes IV	<p><u>Description:</u> A Pseudo-Ioannes IV appeared at the court of Charles of Anjou and requested assistance in claiming the throne.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> N/A.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Geanakoplos 1959: 217 and n.104.</p>
(1278) Georgios Komnenos, emperor of Trebizond	<p><u>Description:</u> In light of Michael's efforts towards church union, an anti-unionist faction at Constantinople called upon Georgios to assume the throne, and the Latin inhabitants of the city to help.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> The calls were suppressed, some of those involved were subjected to punishments.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Loenertz 1965: 391; PLP 12094.</p>
(Late 1280) Ioannes Angelos, <i>despotes</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Was accused of planning to proclaim himself emperor after his successes against the Turks.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was blinded and imprisoned, and was later reported to have committed suicide.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Pachymeres, <i>Relations Historiques</i>, ed. Failler and Laurent II, 613; PLP 205.</p>
Andronikos II [1282-1328]	
(Mar 1292) The Porphyrogenetos Constantine Palaiologos, <i>despotes</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Constantine was accused of plotting for the throne with support from prominent aristocrats and church officials.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was tried, found guilty, and imprisoned in the imperial palace. His supporters were subjected to confiscations.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Pachymeres, <i>Relations Historiques</i>, ed. Failler and Laurent III, 171-181; PLP 21492.</p>
(Late 1295) Alexios Philanthropenos, <i>pinkernes</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> He was proclaimed emperor by the Cretan units of his army in Asia Minor. He was offered the title <i>kaisar</i> by Andronikos II if he were to end his rebellion but he refused.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> After suffering desertions he was betrayed by certain of his troops who had been bribed by the governor of Neokastron. He was blinded and confined to his estates.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Pachymeres, <i>Relations Historiques</i>, ed. Failler and Laurent III, 237-255; PLP 29752.</p>
(1297-1300) Ioannes Tarchaneiotes, an Arsenite loyalist	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered slandering the emperor and wearing insignia.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Arrested and imprisoned.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Pachymeres, <i>Relations Historiques</i>, ed. Failler and Laurent III, 153-155; III, 285-299.</p>
(Jan-Mar 1304) Michael Angelos, <i>despotes</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> After Michael had been discovered exchanging oaths and giving largess to military figures, he was accused of plotting for the throne.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was arrested, tried, and imprisoned at the Great Palace for the rest of his life.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Pachymeres, <i>Relations Historiques</i>, ed. Failler and Laurent IV, 435-437; IV, 447-449; PLP 193.</p>
(1305) Ioannes Drimys, an Arsenite loyalist	<p><u>Description:</u> Drimys was discovered claiming to be a member of the Laskaris family and organising a conspiracy against Andronikos from the monastery of Mosele.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was captured and imprisoned. His co-conspirators were variously imprisoned, fled, or were exiled.</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(c.1307) Kassianos, <i>megas primmikerios</i> , <i>strategos</i>	<p><u>Sources:</u> Pachymeres, <i>Relations Historiques</i>, ed. Failler and Laurent IV, 652-653; PLP 5830.</p> <p><u>Description:</u> Accused by Nikephoros Choumnos of conspiring against Andronikos in collaboration with Osman after contracting a marriage alliance.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was seized by Andronikos' agents at Chele and sentenced to imprisonment.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Pachymeres, <i>Relations Historiques</i>, ed. Failler and Laurent IV, 681; PLP 11346.</p>
(1307) Charles of Valois	<p><u>Description:</u> A conspiracy involving generals in Constantinople and Thessalonike, along with the metropolitan of Thessalonike, intended to proclaim Charles emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> The plot was never implemented, nor was it discovered.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Laiou 1972: 200-220; PLP 11234.</p>
(Apr 1321 - May 1328) Andronikos III	<p><u>Description:</u> When Andronikos III caused the death of his brother Manuel (1320), his father the co-emperor Constantine died of grief. Andronikos II removed his grandson from precedence, although he had already been associated as co-emperor. The enraged grandson gained the support of prominent members of the military aristocracy including Ioannes Kantakouzenos and Syrgiannes Palaiologos, and instigated a period of recurring civil war with his grandfather.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> In Easter 1321 the grandson established a rival throne at Adrianople and forced his grandfather to accept his co-emperorship in a peace treaty in June. In 1322, prompted by Syrgiannes (who had switched sides) Andronikos II renewed hostilities but was forced to agree peace terms in July; Andronikos III was crowned as co-emperor by his grandfather in February 1325. Finally, in February 1327, with assistance from the Bulgarians, Andronikos III renewed hostilities. His grandfather was supported by the Serbians, bringing an 'international' dimension to the conflict. After a string of victories in Macedonia, the grandson marched on Constantinople, besieged and entered the city, and deposed his grandfather on 23/24 May 1328. He was proclaimed sole emperor at the Blachernai. Andronikos II was tonsured but permitted to retain some of his imperial attire and to continue living in the palace. c.1330 he retired to the Lips monastery in Constantinople and died two years later.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Gregoras, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Schopen esp. I, 419-442; Kantakouzenos, <i>Historiarum</i>, ed. Schopen esp. I, 291-292, 300-306; PLP 21437.</p>
Andronikos III [1328-1341]	
(late 1333 - 23 Aug 1334) Syrgiannes Palaiologos, <i>megas doux</i> ; with Empress Maria	<p><u>Description:</u> Suspected of plotting for the throne, he fled to Stephen Dušan and was given troops to support his campaign against the empire.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Marched against Thessalonike in 1334 but was murdered by Sphrantzes Palaiologos in August.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Kantakouzenos, <i>Historiarum</i>, ed. Schopen I, 442-443; PLP 27167.</p>
(1335/1341) John and Manuel Asan, brothers-in-law of Ioannes Kantakouzenos	<p><u>Description:</u> Discovered conspiring to kill Empress Anna and Ioannes V and claim the throne with Genoese assistance.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Both were arrested and imprisoned. They were eventually freed under Ioannes VI.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Gregoras, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Schopen I, 530-533; Kantakouzenos, <i>Historiarum</i>, ed. Schopen I, 481-482, 484; PLP 1499/91373 (Ioannes); PLP 1506 (Manuel).</p>
Ioannes V [1341-1391] (Sole 1st)	
(1341) Alexios Apokaukos, <i>megas doux</i> , regent	<u>Description:</u> Suspected of plotting to seize Ioannes V in order to use him to claim the throne for himself.

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(1345) Alexios Apokaukos, <i>mezas doux</i> , regent	<p><u>Sources:</u> Kantakouzenos, <i>Historiarum</i>, ed. Schopen II, 70-71; PLP 1180.</p> <p><u>Description:</u> Again suspected of plotting to seize Ioannes V in order to use him to claim the throne for himself.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Gregoras, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Schopen II, 702; Kantakouzenos, <i>Historiarum</i>, ed. Schopen II, 540-541; PLP 1180.</p>
(26 Oct 1341 – 2 Feb 1347) Ioannes VI Kantakouzenos	<p><u>Description:</u> Kantakouzenos was proclaimed as junior emperor at Didymoteichon in 1341 instigating another period of protracted civil war. He was crowned for the first time by Lazaros of Jerusalem (21 May 1346) at Adrianople. His opposition to Ioannes V's regency, to which he claimed Andronikos IV had appointed him, lasted for six years until, with the aid of the Turks, Ioannes besieged and entered Constantinople. Empress Anna of Savoy put up a brief show of resistance from the Blachernai Palace and entreated the Genoese at Pera to help. After overcoming the Genoese, Ioannes VI engaged in negotiations with the regency. When these proved fruitless his supporters stormed the Blachernai and forced Anna to submit.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Ioannes V was relegated to second in precedence and married Ioannes VI's daughter. Ioannes VI assumed authority and ruled with Ioannes V. He was crowned emperor (for a second time) by Patriarch Isidore in May 1347, with Ioannes V and Anna in attendance. After a period of renewed civil war between Ioannes V and Ioannes VI, including peace treaties and power-sharing arrangements (1352-1357) Ioannes VI was forced to abdicate and enter monastic confinement at the monastery of Peribleptos when Ioannes V entered the city by subterfuge and besieged the Blachernai Palace.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Kantakouzenos, <i>Historiarum</i>, ed. Schopen esp. II, 167, 564, 600-615; III, 29, 255-256; Gregoras, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Schopen esp. II, 773-779; III, 186-187, 241-247; PLP 10973.</p>
Ioannes VI [1347-1354] with Ioannes V [1341-1391]	
(c. April 1353/4-1357) Matthew Kantakouzenos, son of Ioannes VI	<p><u>Description:</u> In April 1353/4 he was proclaimed co-emperor with Ioannes VI and replaced Ioannes V in the acclamations. He was crowned co-emperor by Patriarch Philotheos. And continued to challenge Ioannes V's authority from his appanage in Thrace, after his father was deposed.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> He was captured by the Serbs in 1357 after a failed expedition against Serres, and ransomed to Ioannes V. Ioannes exiled him to Tenedos, and then to Lesbos, before installing him in the Morea. His sons were made <i>despotes</i> by Ioannes V.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Gregoras, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Schopen III, 188-189, 503-504; Kantakouzenos, <i>Historiarum</i>, ed. Schopen III, 269-270, 319-358; PLP 10983.</p>
Ioannes V [1341-1391] (Sole 2nd)	
(c.1357) Ziani, a supporter of Matthew Kantakouzenos	<p><u>Description:</u> Planned to take Empress Helena and her children hostage in order to force the restoration of Matthew Kantakouzenos in Thrace.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> The plot was exposed by Matthew Kantakouzenos' mother, Eirene, after Ziani wrote to her asking for support. He was arrested and imprisoned.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Kantakouzenos, <i>Historiarum</i>, ed. Schopen III, 341-345.</p>
(1373) Andronikos IV, oldest son and co-emperor of Ioannes V; with Ioannes VII, his son and co-emperor; and Savci Bey, a son of Sultan Murad	<p><u>Description:</u> Rebelled against his father, Ioannes V, with assistance from Savci Bey. Both men intended to claim their respective thrones by overthrowing their fathers.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> The rebellion was defeated. Savci Bey was executed and Sultan Murad I pressed Ioannes V to similarly execute</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
	<p>his son and grandson. However, Andronikos IV and Ioannes VII were granted mercy and each blinded in one eye. They were removed from precedence, in favour of Manuel II, and were imprisoned.</p> <p>Sources: Doukas, <i>Historia Turco-Byzantina</i>, ed. Grecu 73 (trans. Magoulias 79); Chalkokondyles, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Darkó I, 55-56 (trans. Kaldellis 94-97); PLP 21438 (Andronikos); PLP 21480 (Ioannes).</p>
<p>(Jul-Aug 1376) Andronikos IV, oldest son and co-emperor of Ioannes V; with Ioannes VII, his son and co-emperor</p>	<p><u>Description:</u> Andronikos fled his confinement and besieged Constantinople for thirty-two days, with assistance from a Genoese contingent and Turkish forces provided by Sultan Murad I. He entered the city on 12/13 Aug 1376 with assistance from supporters inside.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Ioannes V and Manuel II took refuge at the fortress of the Golden Gate where they continued to resist until October. They surrendered and were imprisoned. Andronikos IV and Ioannes VII assumed authority.</p> <p>Sources: <i>Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken</i>, ed. Schreiner I, 67, 96 Chr. 7/17, 9/32; Wright 2017: 70.</p>
Andronikos IV [1376-1379]	
<p>(May-Jul 1379) Ioannes V and Manuel II</p>	<p><u>Description:</u> Ioannes V and Manuel II escaped their captivity with assistance from the Genoese. They approached Sultan Murad I for support in being restored to authority. After a brief siege of Constantinople, they entered the city on 1/14 July with assistance from supporters inside.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Andronikos' Genoese supporters continued to resist Ioannes V from the fortress of the Golden Gate but were quashed when a Venetian fleet arrived later in the month. Andronikos himself fled to Pera upon hearing that his father had entered the city and continued to resist until 1381 when he was restored to precedence together with his son and granted an appanage to govern semi-independently.</p> <p>Sources: <i>Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken</i>, ed. Schreiner I, 67, 182-183 Chr. 7/19, 22/20; Wright 2017: 70; PLP 21485 (Ioannes); PLP 21513 (Manuel).</p>
Ioannes V [1341-1391] (Sole 3rd)	
<p>(1385) Andronikos IV</p>	<p><u>Description:</u> Andronikos renewed hostilities against Ioannes V after requesting that Sultan Murad give him one of the fortresses then under Ioannes' control.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Andronikos was defeated and exiled to Selymbria, where he died later in the year.</p> <p>Sources: <i>Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken</i>, ed. Schreiner I, 68 Chr. 7/20; PLP 21438.</p>
<p>(Apr-Sep 1390) Ioannes VII</p>	<p><u>Description:</u> Ioannes VII besieged Constantinople with support from Sultan Bayezid I. He entered the city on 13/14 April with assistance from the defenders, including the Genoese at Pera. Ioannes V retreated to the fortress at the Golden Gate and resisted for five months while Ioannes VII claimed authority. Manuel II escaped to Lemnos and Christoupolis to raise forces, including approaching the Knights of St John.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Ioannes VII was ousted from Constantinople when Manuel II entered the city with his forces in September in order to restore Ioannes V.</p> <p>Sources: Ignatius of Smolensk, ed. Majeska 100-103; <i>Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken</i>, ed. Schreiner I, 68-69 Chr. 7/21-22; PLP 21480.</p>
Manuel II [1391-1425]	
<p>(c.1394-1399) Supporters of Ioannes VII in Constantinople</p>	<p><u>Description:</u> Supporters of Ioannes VII exploited the Ottoman siege of Constantinople to proclaim Ioannes in the city and agitate against Manuel's authority.</p>

(Date) Principal Conspirator	Details
(c.1414) Theodosios Kyprios	<p><u>Sources:</u> Doukas, <i>Historia Turco-Byzantina</i>, ed. Grecu 83 (trans. Magoulias 85-86).</p> <p><u>Description:</u> One of ‘the leading men at court’ is mentioned in Mazaris’ <i>Journey to Hades</i> as having held aspirations for the imperial throne.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> PLP 13946.</p>
(1423) Demetrios Palaiologos, <i>despotes</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Suspected of plotting for the throne in collaboration with the Turks.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Fled to the Perama.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Sphrantzes, <i>Memorii, 1401-1477</i>, ed. Grecu 16; <i>Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken</i>, ed. Schreiner I, Chr. 13/8-9; II, 420-421; PLP 21454.</p>
Ioannes VIII [1425-1448]	
(Apr-Aug 1442) Demetrios Palaiologos, <i>despotes</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Besieged Constantinople for several months with aid from the Turks in an attempt to have Demetrios proclaimed emperor.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Demetrios received no support from the citizenry of the city, and was not aided (as he believed he would be) by his brother-in-law Matthew Palaiologos Asan. He was eventually abandoned by his troops and exiled to Selymbria.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Sphrantzes, <i>Memorii, 1401-1477</i>, ed. Grecu 64; Chalkokondyles, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Darkó II, 80 (trans. Kaldellis II, 42-45); PLP 21454.</p>
(Nov 1448) Demetrios Palaiologos, <i>despotes</i>	<p><u>Description:</u> Marched on Constantinople from Selymbria shortly after the death of Ioannes VIII and before the proclamation of Constantine XI. He attempted to establish himself as the city’s defender in order to proclaim himself emperor. He appealed to the anti-unionist factions to support his proclamation.</p> <p><u>Fate:</u> Demetrios’ proclamation was prevented by his mother, the empress Helena, who asserted her right to act as regent until Constantine XI could be proclaimed and return to the city. Constantine was proclaimed at Mistra on 6 January 1448, and returned to Constantinople in March. He did not receive a coronation. Demetrios returned to Selymbria.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Chalkokondyles, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Darkó II, 140-141 (trans. Kaldellis II, 156-157); Nicol 1993: 369-370; PLP 21454.</p>
Constantine XI [1448-1453]	

Table 2: A provisional case list of reluctant Byzantine emperors (c.306-1453)

(Date) Reluctant Individual	Description
(306) Constantine I	<p><u>Source:</u> <i>Panegyrici Latini</i> VI(7).8.3-6 (trans. Nixon and Rodgers 229-231).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> As Constantine was mourning the death of his father the soldiery unexpectedly clothed him in the imperial purple. He attempted to escape the proclamation by spurring his horse. The anonymous panegyrist calls this desire to flee an error because imperium was being offered to Constantine by Jupiter and he would have been unable to escape it anyway. Constantine was commended for his modesty and piety, but the good fortune of the state was said to have triumphed over him.</p>
(360) Julian	<p><u>Source:</u> Ammianus Marcellinus, <i>Rerum Gestarum</i> 20.4, 20.5, 20.8.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> (1) The emperor Constantius was jealous of Julian's popularity with the army and plotted to remove him. After his troops had discovered the plot and broken into open revolt, Julian's palace in Paris was surrounded (February 360). The soldiery proclaimed Julian <i>Augustus</i> and demanded that he appear before them. At daybreak Julian emerged, but rejected their acclamations; showing displeasure, extending his arms and entreating them to hold back from civil war. He called upon them to stand down and return to their quarters. The continued shouts of the troops eventually forced him to give way to their decision. Julian retreated into solitude out of fear of Constantius' reaction. The troops then demanded to see him invested with imperial robes. Julian addressed them and claimed that he had been raised to supreme power by their 'deliberate decision'. (2) Julian dispatched a missive to Constantius in order to explain why the troops had proclaimed him <i>Augustus</i> and to reaffirm his allegiance. After stressing his loyalty, Julian explained that he had been proclaimed without having sought it, that he had been afraid and had tried to hide within the palace, and that he had been persuaded to accept the promotion only after repeated entreaties by the soldiery. He believed that his agreement would restrain them from violent actions, and feared that they would have killed him had he continued to refuse.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i> 3.9.2-3.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> After Julian's troops discovered Constantius' plot against his life they broke into the palace and led Julian outside to proclaim him <i>Augustus</i>. They forced a crown onto his head, and Julian was distressed by what had happened, since he realised that it could not be undone. He sent an ambassador to Constantius to explain that the proclamation had been contrary to his own wishes, and to say that he would be content with the title of <i>Caesar</i> if Constantius were to pardon him.</p>
(363) Salutius	<p><u>Source:</u> Zosimus, <i>Histoire Nouvelle</i> 3.36.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> The <i>praetorian prefect</i> Salutius was unanimously elected as the successor to Julian. He refused the promotion on account of his old age and inability to deal with the current crisis. The troops then proposed that his son should be promoted instead but Salutius again demurred, claiming that his son was too young to sustain the burdens of office. Jovian was proclaimed in his place.</p>

(Date) Reluctant Individual	Description
(363) Jovian	<p><u>Source:</u> Ammianus Marcellinus, <i>Rerum Gestarum</i> 25.9.4.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> After Jovian's selection as Julian's replacement, the emperor reportedly refused to wear a crown, and finally accepted it only with great reluctance.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Thurn 256-257 (trans. Jeffreys 181).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Before news of Julian's death became known, Jovian was brought into the imperial tent under the pretext that the emperor wished to speak with him. As he entered the tent, he was seized by the military commanders and immediately proclaimed emperor.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> John of Nikiu, <i>Chronicle</i>, trans. Charles p.79.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> The troops assembled and decided upon Jovian as Julian's successor. However, Jovian was unwilling to become emperor and had to be persuaded to accept the promotion. In exchange for his agreement, Jovian called upon all those present to convert to Christianity.</p>
(364) Valentinian I	<p><u>Source:</u> Ammianus Marcellinus, <i>Rerum Gestarum</i> 26.1.5, 26.2.1-6.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> (1) After his unanimous selection as the successor to Jovian, Valentinian reportedly delayed his 'election' (proclamation) as he believed that it would otherwise fall on an unpropitious day. (2) After being proclaimed <i>Augustus</i> Valentinian addressed the troops and claimed that he had been raised because they had judged him to be the best candidate, that he had never desired nor sought the imperial position, and that he was troubled by his newfound responsibilities. (3) Before appointing his brother as co-emperor (<i>Augustus</i>), Valentinian supposedly considered himself 'unequal to the pressure of the urgent business' at hand.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Thurn 260 (trans. Jeffreys 183-184).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> After the death of Jovian, Valentinian was supposedly selected and crowned emperor by Salustius, the <i>praetorian prefect</i>, who had to 'force' him to accept this decision.</p>
(484) Leontius	<p><u>Source:</u> Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Thurn 314 (trans. Jeffreys 216).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> The <i>magister militum per Orientem</i> Illus rose in revolt against Zeno. He took the empress Verina with him to Tarsos in Kilikia, and there made her crown the <i>patricius</i> Leontius as emperor in the Church of St Peter. Malalas recounts that Leontius was 'persuaded' (<i>πείσας</i>) to accept the crown because he was a free-born man. Illus was the principal agent behind his elevation.</p>
(512) Areobindus	<p><u>Source:</u> Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Thurn 333-334 (trans. Jeffreys 228); John of Nikiu, <i>Chronicle</i>, trans. Charles p.129.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> In an outbreak of Constantinopolitan public unrest in 512, Areobindus, the former consul and general, was called upon by the</p>

(Date) Reluctant Individual	Description
	rioting populace to assume the imperial title and replace Anastasius. Having gone to the home of Areobindus and Anicia Juliana, the rioters were disappointed to find that Areobindus had already fled and hidden in the Perama.
(512) Anastasius	<p><u>Source:</u> Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Thurn 333-334 (trans. Jeffreys 228).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> <i>Recusatio</i> divestiture variant. During the popular unrest of 512 that saw an attempt to proclaim Areobindus as emperor, Anastasius ascended the <i>kathisma</i> of the Hippodrome, removed his crown, and made a ‘sacred pronouncement’ that indicated his intent to abdicate the throne. The people, upon witnessing this spectacle, called on him to once again wear the crown and resume his governance.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> John of Nikiu, <i>Chronicle</i>, trans. Charles p.129.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Confirming Malalas on all other details, but omitting Anastasius’ performance of a <i>recusatio</i>. Instead the emperor calmed the rioters with his words.</p>
(588) Germanus	<p><u>Source:</u> Theophylaktos Simokattes, <i>Historiae</i>, ed. de Boor 115-116 (trans. Whitby 74); Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 260 (trans. Mango and Scott 382).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> In 588 Germanus was made general in a military revolt. Theophylaktos records that after removing their former leader, Priscus, the soldiery held an assembly and summoned Germanus in order to promote him. Germanus initially ‘rejected the camp’s demand’, but later agreed when the soldiery threatened to kill him if he continued to resist.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Evagrius Scholasticus, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>, ed. Bidez and Parmentier 224-225 (trans. Whitby 294-296).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Germanus was proclaimed as general and emperor, but refused to accept the promotion. He was threatened with physical violence and death if he did not acquiesce, and was then subjected to a range of tortures before eventually agreeing to the troops’ demands.</p>
(602) Phocas	<p><u>Source:</u> Theophylaktos Simokattes, <i>Historiae</i>, ed. de Boor 333-334 (trans. Whitby 225); Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 289 (trans. Mango and Scott 413).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> During his proclamation at the Hebdomon, Phocas purportedly feigned a wish that the <i>patricius</i> Germanus (the father-in-law of the deposed Maurice’s son and heir, Theodosius) be proclaimed instead. Germanus had already been offered the throne by the army if he were to replace Maurice, and before Phocas’ arrival at Constantinople had instigated an unsuccessful attempt to gain power through an appeal to the ‘Greens’. He publicly rejected the offer of proclamation and the assembled <i>demes</i> acclaimed Phocas.</p>

(Date) Reluctant Individual	Description
(610) Herakleios	<p><u>Source:</u> John of Nikiu, <i>Chronicle</i>, trans. Charles p.178.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Herakleios was conveyed against his will to the Church of St. Thomas the Apostle and crowned.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 297 (trans. Mango and Scott 426).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Herakleios and his father had to be persuaded by members of the senate into rebelling against Phocas.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i> ed. Mango 36-37.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> During Herakleios' proclamation at Constantinople, he urged Priskos to assume the imperial office in his place. He claimed not to have come to take the empire for himself but to punish Phocas for the murder of Maurice and his children. However, Priskos refused the offer and Herakleios was subsequently acclaimed emperor.</p>
(715) Theodosios III	<p><u>Source:</u> Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i> ed. Mango 118-119.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> (1) When the <i>Opsikion thema</i> revolted in 715 they marched on Constantinople. At Adramyttion they found a local tax collector named Theodosios and sought to proclaim him emperor. Theodosios ran away to hide on a mountain, but the troops found him again and proclaimed him by force. (2) When Theodosios' lack of experience became clear, the military and civil dignitaries called upon him to abdicate the throne. He swiftly did so, and Leon was elected as his successor.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 385 (trans. Mango and Scott 536).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Confirming Nikephoros' account of Theodosios' proclamation, but omitting the circumstances of his abdication.</p>
(802) Nikephoros I	<p><u>Source:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 477 (trans. Mango and Scott 656).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> After Nikephoros' proclamation he met with Eirene to apologise for his usurpation. He claimed to have been promoted against his will and that he had no desire for the throne. He cursed those who had raised him and condemned them as akin to Judas. He showed Eirene the black buskins that he chose to wear in place of the red buskins of an emperor. This account contrasts with Nikephoros' willingness to go along with his proclamation as described earlier by Theophanes.</p>
(803) Bardanes Tourkos	<p><u>Source:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 479 (trans. Mango and Scott 657).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> (1) Bardanes, <i>patrikios</i> and <i>strategos ton Anatolikon</i>, was proclaimed emperor by the troops. He 'strenuously declined the office, but was unable to frustrate his men.' (2) After eight days spent fruitlessly trying to gain entry to Chrysopolis, he feared to commit a massacre of fellow Christians and again pledged loyalty to Nikephoros I in exchange for an <i>apatheia</i>.</p>

(Date) Reluctant Individual	Description
(811) Michael I	<p><u>Source:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 492 (trans. Mango and Scott 674).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Soon after the <i>magistros</i> Theoktistos had proclaimed the badly injured Staurakios emperor at Adrianople, Staurakios' brother-in-law, the <i>kouropalates</i> Michael Rhangabe, was entreated by friends to lay claim to the title himself. Even Theoktistos was in agreement. However, Michael initially refused the promotion and cited the oaths he had taken to Nikephoros and Staurakios as his excuse.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 5 (trans. Wortley 4).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Michael, was selected to succeed Staurakios after the latter was severely wounded in battle, however, he supposedly believed himself to be unworthy of the imperial office. He therefore initially refused his promotion and proposed that the future Leon V be promoted instead. Leon refused the offer and was subsequently able to persuade Michael to accept the dignity.</p>
(813) Leon V	<p><u>Source:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 502 (trans. Mango and Scott 685).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> After the defeat of the Byzantine forces by the Bulgars at the Battle of Versinikia (June 813), Michael 'escaped' to Constantinople. He informed the military commanders of his intent to abdicate the throne, and indicated that the <i>patrikios</i>, and <i>strategos</i> of the <i>Anatolikon thema</i>, the future Leon V, should replace him on account of his piety and courage. Leon refused this invitation. When the <i>stratego</i>i heard of Michael's flight they called upon Leon to help the 'common cause' and 'the <i>oikoumene</i>'. Leon continually refused their exhortations, wishing to remain untouched by treachery toward the emperor. He was persuaded to accept the promotion when the Bulgars continued their advance against Constantinople. He had already written to the patriarch in order to assure him of his Orthodoxy and to ask for prayers and consent for the assumption of power.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> <i>Genesisios</i>, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 4 (trans. Kaldellis 6).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> The army defamed Michael I and then called upon Leon to assume the throne. Leon was seized with foreboding at the thought of the elevation, but Michael II threatened to kill him if he did not comply.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 16-17; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 26-29.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> After Michael's defeat and flight back to Constantinople, Leon exhorted the troops to abuse the emperor and acclaim <i>him</i> as emperor. Michael II threatened him with death if he would not accept the proclamation. Once this had been done, Leon displayed signs of nervousness and terror at the elevation. <i>Continuatus</i> questions whether these expressions were feigned so that Leon could cite them later (if necessary) in order to excuse his actions.</p>

(Date) Reluctant Individual	Description
	<p><u>Source:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 5, 7 (trans. Wortley 4, 6-7).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> (1) Leon was offered the throne by Michael I who considered himself unworthy of the dignity. However, Leon also protested his unworthiness to rule and persuaded Michael to accept the imperial office. (2) After the defeat of the Byzantine forces by the Bulgars, Leon and his supporters contemplated rebelling against Michael I. The soldiery surrounded Leon's command tent, defamed Michael, and acclaimed Leon. Leon apparently sought to avoid the promotion by making light of what had happened. He accepted the decision when the future Michael II (the Amorion) drew his sword and invited his comrades to do likewise. Leon was invested with a diadem and proclaimed emperor.</p>
(838) Theophobos	<p><u>Source:</u> <i>Genesisios</i>, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 40-41 (trans. Kaldellis 54); <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 124-125; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 178-181; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 74, 80 (trans. Wortley 75, 81).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Theophobos was proclaimed by his Persian troops either at Sinope or Amastris. He repeatedly entreated them to cease their rebellion but was ignored. He secretly contacted the emperor to ensure him of his continued loyalty, and to explain that the revolution had not been his doing. Theophilos accepted this version of events and granted Theophobos an <i>apatheia</i>.</p>
(963) Nikephoros II	<p><u>Source:</u> Leon Diakonos, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Hase 40-44 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 91-93).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> At Kaisareia, Ioannes Tzimiskes and the other military commanders surrounded Nikephoros' command tent and drew their swords before proclaiming Nikephoros emperor. Nikephoros refused the promotion, citing the difficulty of attaining power and his grief over the deaths of his wife and son as reasons. He then proposed that Ioannes should accept the honour instead, but nobody present would allow it; instead, they declared him emperor on the spot and threatened to kill him if he refused.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Psellos, <i>Historia Syntomos</i>, ed. Aerts 99.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Ioannes Tzimiskes proposed to Empress Theophano that Nikephoros should be made emperor on account of his many achievements. Nikephoros was incredibly hesitant to acquiesce but finally agreed when Tzimiskes threatened him with a sword.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 256-257 (trans. Wortley 247).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> The <i>parakoimomenos</i> Ioseph Bringas reportedly dispatched letters to the <i>magistroi</i> Ioannes Tzimiskes and Romanos Kourkouas, offering rewards in exchange for the deposition, tonsure, or murder of Nikephoros. Tzimiskes and Kourkouas revealed this to Nikephoros and called upon him to act. They supposedly threatened to kill him with their own hands if he should continue to delay. Fearing for his life, Nikephoros permitted them to proclaim him emperor.</p>
(969) Ioannes I	<p><u>Source:</u> Leon Diakonos, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Hase 41-44 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 92-93).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> (1) The <i>parakoimomenos</i> Ioseph Bringas, concerned that Nikephoros was to start a revolt, dispatched a letter to the <i>patrikios</i></p>

(Date) Reluctant Individual	Description
	<p>Ioannes Tzimiskes, <i>strategos</i> of the <i>Anatolikon thema</i>. He offered to elevate Tzimiskes to the ‘summit of empire’ in exchange for the capture of Nikephoros. Tzimiskes revealed the letter’s contents to Nikephoros and exhorted him to action. (2) When the troops sought to elevate Nikephoros II to the imperial dignity he initially refused and offered the insignia to Ioannes instead. Ioannes also promptly refused the offer and joined the calls for Nikephoros’ elevation.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Psellos, <i>Historia Syntomos</i> ed. Aerts 99.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> The <i>Historia Syntomos</i> records that Theophano had wanted to appoint Ioannes as the successor to Romanos even before her marriage to Nikephoros. However, Ioannes had declined the empress’ requests and entreated her to take Nikephoros as her husband.</p>
(1028) Romanos III Argyros	<p><u>Source:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 374 (trans. Wortley 353).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Romanos III, the <i>eparchos</i> of Constantinople, was brought into the palace shortly before the death of Constantine VIII. He was then given two choices: divorce his wife, marry Zoe, and be proclaimed emperor; or be blinded. Skylitzes records that Romanos was undecided and speechless when presented with these choices. It was his wife’s decision to willingly accept tonsure that spared him from having to make a choice.</p>
(1042) Theodora	<p><u>Source:</u> Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri I, 226-229; ed. Renault I, 108 (trans. Sewter 144).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> During the rebellion against Michael V, the Constantinopolitan crowd sought to proclaim Theodora. She initially refused their calls. Certain members of the crowd reportedly grew tired of trying to persuade her and forced entry to the Petrion monastery. They brought Theodora out by force, and drew knives to coerce her. A ‘radiant robe’ was then placed upon her, and the crowd escorted her to Hagia Sophia for her proclamation.</p>
(1057) Katakalon Kekaumenos	<p><u>Source:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 487 (trans. Wortley 454).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> During the planning phase of Isaakios I’s rebellion against Michael VI, the conspirators considered who should be appointed as their leader. Katakalon Kekaumenos was reportedly considered the superior choice on account of his bravery and experience. However, Kekaumenos refused the promotion and immediately declared Isaakios to be the emperor. He encouraged his compatriots to do likewise.</p>
(1057) Isaakios I Komnenos	<p><u>Source:</u> Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. ed. Impellizzeri II, 180-183, 216-219, 286-287; Renault II, 85, 102, 136 (trans. Sewter 278, 294, 328).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> (1) Isaakios was persistently reluctant to press his own claims to the throne. (2) He was selected to act as leader of the rebellion against Michael VI by the other commanders, however, he was reluctant and offered to hand authority to the future Constantine X even after the will of the army had been made known. Constantine X refused to accept and supposedly signed a document renouncing all aspirations to <i>basileia</i>. (3) During Psellos’ embassy to Isaakios, the usurper-emperor revealed to him that he had not donned the imperial garb of his own accord. Isaakios claimed that he would have run away from his troops had he been able to, but the army held him in their</p>

(Date) Reluctant Individual	Description
	<p>power, and he had been ‘persuaded’ to this course of action by them.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 489-491 (trans. Wortley 456-457).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> At the outset of the conspiracy against Michael VI, the conspirators reportedly convinced Isaakios to join them, mobilise his forces, and accept the proclamation (8 June 1057) only with great reluctance.</p>
(1059) Ioannes Komnenos	<p><u>Source:</u> Bryennios, <i>Histoire</i>, ed. Gautier 80-83.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Since Isaakios I was presumed to be on his deathbed he called upon his brother, Ioannes, to accept the imperial office and succeed him. Ioannes was reluctant to consent to his proclamation. His wife, upon hearing his refusals, entreated him to think of the consequences that would be suffered by the Komnenoi if another family were to take the throne. Despite being warned that his family would likely be killed, Ioannes continued to refuse <i>basileia</i> and fled to a hiding place within the palace. Constantine X was crowned before Ioannes could be found.</p>
(1059) Constantine X Doukas	<p><u>Source:</u> Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri II, 274-303; ed. Renauld II, 129-136 (trans. Sewter 322-329).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> (1) During the revolt of Isaakios I against Michael VI, Constantine X was invited by Isaakios to accept the imperial position and lead the revolt himself. However, Constantine refused (in writing) and allowed Isaakios to accede in his place. This was supposedly the will of God, who would later guide Constantine to the throne in a peaceful manner. (2) When Isaakios was presumed to be on his deathbed, he took Psellos’ advice and called upon Constantine to assume the throne. When Isaakios had recovered somewhat, he regretted having promised power to Constantine, and the latter was fearful that he would be opposed. When Isaakios relapsed, Psellos claims to have taken charge and seated Constantine on the throne before investing him with the red buskins.</p>
(1066/7) Nikoulitzas Delphinas	<p><u>Source:</u> Kekaumenos, <i>Strategikon</i>, ed. Vasilevskij pp.66-71.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Delphinas, a relative of Kekaumenos, was reportedly caught up in the Larissaeen revolt of 1066/7 after having warned Constantine X of its impending outbreak. He had secretly been approached by its leaders and feigned agreement with their aims. When the conspiracy became public the Larisseans seized him and sought to appoint him as their commander. Despite his repeated protests, he was eventually convinced to accept and proclaimed emperor when they threatened his life. Kekaumenos makes clear that Delphinas did not rebel out of a desire for his own acclamation, but in order to save himself from the violence of the people.</p>
(1071) Michael VII Doukas	<p><u>Source:</u> Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri II, 342-345; ed. Renauld II, 163-164 (trans. Sewter 356-357).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Michael VII was reluctant to challenge the rule of his mother and Romanos IV. Michael asked others, including the <i>kaisar</i> Ioannes Doukas and his mother, to help him lead the state. Psellos even reports that the emperor was so deferential to his mother that he had considered abdicating in her favour if she were to ask him.</p>

(Date) Reluctant Individual	Description
	<p><u>Source:</u> Bryennios, <i>Histoire</i>, ed. Gautier 246-251.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> In his account of Botaneiates' accession, Bryennios describes how Michael VII willingly took the tonsure and admitted to the future Alexios I that he had been considering abdicating the throne for a long time.</p>
(1073/4) Ioannes Doukas	<p><u>Source:</u> Bryennios, <i>Histoire</i>, ed. Gautier 176-181.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Bryennios notes that the <i>Kaisar</i> Ioannes Doukas, on account of his impeccable qualities, earlier could have claimed the imperial title for himself had he so wished. Roussel, after capturing Ioannes in 1073/4, sought to use him to garner the support of the local cities and the elite of Constantinople. Ioannes was initially reluctant to be proclaimed by Roussel, but later became an active participant in the rebellion.</p>
(1077) Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder	<p><u>Source:</u> Bryennios, <i>Histoire</i>, ed. Gautier 226-231.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Shortly before the capture of Traianoupolis, after Nikephoros Bryennios had been joined by his brother Ioannes, and the Thracian and Macedonian troops, he was offered <i>basileia</i> by them. Ioannes Bryennios, had supposedly brought imperial insignia with him and intended to invest his brother. Ioannes called upon the other notables present to persuade Nikephoros to accept, but Nikephoros refused. After the capture of Traianoupolis and the acclamation of Nikephoros as emperor by the inhabitants of the city, the assembled generals and troops approached the Nikephoros' tent and forced him to accept the imperial purple and put on the red shoes.</p>
(1078) Konstantios Doukas	<p><u>Source:</u> Bryennios, <i>Histoire</i>, ed. Gautier 246-251.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Before Michael VII abdicated and received the tonsure, Alexios Komnenos entreated him to appoint a successor other than Nikephoros III. Alexios proposed that Konstantios Doukas, Michael's brother, should be named as his successor and invested with <i>basileia</i>. Alexios had the emperor's words hastily recorded and sealed in an official document, and entreated Konstantios to follow him to the Great Palace in order to see him invested as senior emperor. Konstantios, due to his youthful naiveté, believed that he would be well treated under Botaneiates and therefore refused <i>basileia</i>. Instead, he went with Alexios to welcome Botaneiates and swear fidelity.</p>
(1081) Alexios I Komnenos	<p><u>Source:</u> Anna Komnene, <i>Alexias</i>, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 74-75 (trans. Frankopan 67-68).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Alexios was reluctant to engage in rebellion at all and gave his brother, Isaakios, precedence at all times. Although Alexios enjoyed the support of the army he reportedly flattered his brother by encouraging him to seek power. Knowing that Isaakios would not carry enough support to be proclaimed anyway, Alexios made a pretence of deferring to his authority. The troops assembled around the command tent to deliberate the choice of emperor, and Isaakios then attempted to put the red sandals onto Alexios' feet. Alexios repeatedly objected, and Isaakios reminded him of a prophetic vision foretelling Alexios' rule (a vision that Alexios had been similarly reluctant to tell his brother about and was unsure was valid). Recognising the truth of the prophecy, and the army's desire for Alexios' rule, Isaakios forced the sandals onto Alexios' feet, and the proclamation ensued.</p>
(1118) Nikephoros Bryennios the Younger	<p><u>Source:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 6-7, 10 (trans. Magoulias 6, 8).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> (1) Despite Anna Komnene's exhortations, and the support of the Empress Eirene for his claims, Bryennios was reportedly</p>

(Date) Reluctant Individual	Description
(1183) Andronikos I Komnenos	<p>unwilling to act against Ioannes II's claims by capturing the Great Palace and taking the throne as his own. (2) When a second plot focused around Bryennios and Anna was discovered early in Ioannes II's reign, Bryennios was again described as disinclined to pursue <i>basileia</i>.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Eustathios of Thessalonike, <i>The Capture of Thessaloniki</i>, Melville-Jones 44-51.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Andronikos initially feigned a desire to leave the political realm, but the people forced him to remain. They decided that he should be invited to rule alongside Alexios II, and declared that if he should prove reluctant he should be persuaded or forced: "Better that he should suffer something that he did not want, than that the world should be ruined." Andronikos became depressed by the suggestions that he should be promoted as he disliked the idea of being accused of infidelity to his oaths to Manuel I and Alexios II. He said that he would return to exile instead, and then began striking himself and tearing at his hair before seeking a means of escaping those proclaiming him in the Polytimos chamber of the Blachernai Palace. Eustathios suggests that this attempt at escape was feigned so that Andronikos could express his joy at his proclamation and laugh at his supporters, unseen by anyone else. The Palace Guard prevented his escape, and the Patriarch bound him with a metaphorical stock and chain. Andronikos was restrained by his supporters and the red buskins were forced onto his kicking feet.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 270-271, 346 (trans. Magoulias 150-151, 191).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> (1) Andronikos was bade to accept his proclamation and, following his acclamation in the Polytimos Chamber, was held firmly in place by his supporters as they invested him with the insignia of office and seated him upon the imperial golden couch. (2) Andronikos was also involved in a failed <i>recusatio</i>: as Isaakios II and his supporters surrounded Andronikos at the Great Palace, the emperor, after a brief attempt at resistance, dispatched a messenger to calm the crowd and offered to cede his crown to his younger son, Manuel.</p>
(1185) Isaakios II Angelos	<p><u>Source:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 284, 345 (trans. Magoulias 157, 190).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> (1) During the Nikaian revolt of 1184, after the death of the Nikaian leader Theodoros Kantakouzenos, Isaakios was reportedly enjoined to replace him. Isaakios stepped aside from the leadership contest, but looked to the future and believed the imperial office to be reserved for his family. (2) When Isaakios was proclaimed by the assembled masses in Hagia Sophia he was confused by the coronation and, although desiring <i>basileia</i>, was concerned at how difficult it would be to overthrow Andronikos. Ioannes Doukas, removed his own hat and proffered his head to receive the crown in place of Isaakios. However, the crowd made it clear that they would only be satisfied with Isaakios, who permitted himself to be invested soon after.</p>
(1204) Nikolaos Kannavos	<p><u>Source:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 562 (trans. Magoulias 308).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Choniates records that, in January 1204, the senate and Constantinopolitan crowds sought to replace Alexios IV and Isaakios II. They assembled at Hagia Sophia and chose Nikolaos Kannavos on the third day of deliberations (27 January), when they 'anointed him emperor against his will.'</p>

(Date) Reluctant Individual	Description
(1204) Constantine Laskaris	<p><u>Source:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 571-572 (trans. Magoulias 314).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Constantine Doukas and Constantine Laskaris were considered candidates to succeed Alexios V at an assembly in Hagia Sophia. Laskaris eventually received <i>basileia</i> ‘by lot’ but refused to accept the insignia of office when they were offered to him by the patriarch.</p>
(1259) Michael VIII Palaiologos	<p><u>Source:</u> <i>Imperatoris Michaeli Palaeologi de vita sua</i>, ed. Grégoire 453-455 (trans. Dennis 1243-1244).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Michael VIII provides a brief autobiographical account of his life and accession to the throne. He claims to have been raised to authority by the force of God’s will: ‘I did not persuade anyone, but was myself persuaded. I did not bring force to bear on anyone, but was myself forced.’</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Akropolites, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Heisenberg 158-159, 161 (trans. Macrides 344, 346, 351).</p> <p><u>Details:</u> (1) Michael refused to assume the regency and become guardian to Ioannes IV because of the oaths he had sworn to Theodoros II and Ioannes. The clergy subsequently provided him with their ‘unwritten consent’ and then produced a signed document that would excuse him from any wrongdoing implied by his former oath. (2) Akropolites comments that he was then raised ‘willingly or unwillingly, to imperial eminence, constrained greatly by the prominent men and those for whom public affairs were a concern.’</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Pachymeres, <i>Relations Historiques</i>, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 96, 104, 130.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> (1) Following the murder of Mouzalon, Michael was chosen to be guardian to the young emperor Ioannes. Michael was selected on account of his impeccable qualities and agreed to take on the role of the emperor’s tutor. His elevation to the rank of <i>despotes</i> was granted by others and Michael had remained silent during the deliberations, neither actively seeking nor rejecting the promotion. (2) When subsequently called upon by the nobility to assume the imperial office, Michael questioned his worthiness and offered to abdicate if either he or his son were found undeserving.</p>
(1295) Alexios Philanthropenos	<p><u>Source:</u> Pachymeres, <i>Relations Historiques</i>, ed. Failler and Laurent III, 243-247.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> Alexios was persuaded by a Cretan military unit to enter into rebellion. After giving a speech invoking his affection for his men and the difficulty of the endeavour, he was said to have been convinced to acquiesce to their demand that he assume the supreme office. He refused to accept the insignia even though he was urged to do so by senior figures.</p>
(1341) Ioannes VI Kantakouzenos	<p><u>Source:</u> Kantakouzenos, <i>Historiarum</i>, ed. Schopen I, 365-370.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> (1) When Andronikos III fell ill at Didymoteichon in 1330 he reportedly called upon Ioannes Kantakouzenos to act as regent to his yet unborn son. Andronikos had repeatedly entreated Ioannes to accept the insignia and title of co-emperor - a promotion that Ioannes continually rejected. Ioannes asserted that he was content with his position as <i>mezas domestikos</i>, in which he shared almost equal status with his close friend the emperor. (2) Shortly after Andronikos’ death on 15 June 1341, Ioannes reluctantly agreed to be proclaimed (26</p>

(Date) Reluctant Individual	Description
	<p>October) co-emperor with Ioannes V. His claims to legitimacy then owed much to Andronikos' offers to elevate him and share imperial power.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Gregoras, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Schopen II, 580, 585-586, 593-594, 604, 611-612.</p> <p><u>Details:</u> (1) The Emperor Andronikos III had often asked Kantakouzenos to accept the imperial insignia and reign alongside him. (2) Andronikos later asked Ioannes to reign with Ioannes V in order to ensure the boy's security. However, Kantakouzenos continually rejected the insignia and imperial attire that were offered to him, claiming that he did not need nor desire <i>basileia</i>. (3) When Apokaukos and the regency acted against Ioannes VI in 1341, Gregoras reports that Kantakouzenos was still reticent to pursue imperial power and take up the imperial sceptre, although he could easily have done so.</p>

Table 3: Cases of usurpation-related imperial repentance

(Earliest Expression) Emperor	Description
(Jun 713) Artemios-Anastasios II	<p>Within a fortnight of assuming the throne, Artemios-Anastasios had blinded and exiled Theodoros Myakios and Georgios Bouraphos, commanders of the <i>Thrakesion</i> and <i>Opsikion themata</i>, who had helped him to overthrow Philippikos. Roupfos, the individual responsible for the physical blinding of Philippikos, appears to have remained unpunished. The sequence may have been an attempt by Artemios-Anastasios to be seen to atone for the circumstances of his accession, or at least to distance him from wrongdoing by bringing justice to those responsible for the conspiracy.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 383 (trans. Mango and Scott 533); Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i> ed. Mango 114-117; Leon Grammatikos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Bekker 170.</p>
(Oct 829) Michael II	<p>On his deathbed, Michael allegedly asked Theophilos to punish his co-conspirators, those responsible for the murder of Leon V. We may question whether this story was intended as part of a campaign by Theophilos to revive Michael's reputation and be seen to atone for the wrongdoing of his accession.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Symeon Magister, <i>Chronicon</i>, ed. Wahlgren 217; Genesios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 36 (trans. Kaldellis 49); <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 85-86; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 124-127; Leon Grammatikos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Bekker 214-215; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 49-50 (trans. Wortley 51-52).</p>
(Oct/Nov 829) Theophilos	<p>Theophilos complied with his father's request to punish those responsible for the murder of Leon V by arresting (and subsequently executing) certain of the co-conspirators after a <i>silention</i>. This was reportedly his first official act as emperor, although there are chronological discrepancies in the narratives.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Symeon Magister, <i>Chronicon</i>, ed. Wahlgren 217; Genesios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 36 (trans. Kaldellis 49); <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 85-86; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 124-127; Leon Grammatikos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Bekker 214-215; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 49-50 (trans. Wortley 51-52).</p>
(Aug 886) Basileios I	<p>Basileios was alleged to have had visions of Michael III prior to his own death which prompted him to feel remorse for the murder that had permitted his accession to sole rule. According to <i>The Life of Saint Basil the Younger</i>, and stories told to Liudprand of Cremona during his embassy to Constantinople, the construction of several churches in the city was believed to be associated with Basileios' atonement. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the Davidic persona that Basileios adopted in imperial ideology throughout his reign, would naturally have suggested his association with penitential activities.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>The Life of Saint Basil the Younger</i>, ed. Talbot, Sullivan, and McGrath 68-69; Liudprand of Cremona, <i>Antapodosis</i>, ed. Chiesa §10 (trans. Squatriti 49).</p>
(Aug-Sep 886) Leon VI	<p>Leon, who later made recourse to the Davidic/Theodosian ceremony of repentance for the sin of <i>tetragamy</i>, also sought to redeem his father's image. As one of the first acts of his reign, he arranged the translation and reburial of Michael III's remains in the Macedonian imperial mausoleum.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> <i>Georgios Monachos Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 848-849; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 172 (trans. Wortley 166).</p>
(c.946-948) Romanos I	<p>Romanos allegedly had a dream in which he saw his son thrown into the fires of Hell, but was himself saved thanks to the last-minute intervention of the Virgin. He interpreted this dream as a sign that he was doomed to share his son's fate if he did not atone for the implied sin of his usurpation. Romanos assembled 300 monks from around the Mediterranean world, and performed a ritual</p>

(Earliest Expression) Emperor	Description
(Dec 969) Ioannes I	<p>ceremony of repentance in which he was whipped and his sins read aloud. He received intercessory prayers, was granted an absolution, and the record of his sins was buried with him. The story is not recorded by Skylitzes, who instead assigns penitential motives to Romanos' building works and acts of <i>philanthropia</i>. <u>Sources:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 438-439; Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 237 (trans. Wortley 228).</p>
(c.1034-1041) Michael IV	<p>Ioannes was made to perform the Davidic/Theodosian ritual of repentance, outside Hagia Sophia, before Patriarch Polyeuktos would agree to perform his coronation. As part of the conditions for Polyeuktos' assistance, the Empress Theophano, who was believed to have helped Ioannes murder Nikephoros II, was exiled from the Great Palace. Balantes and Atzypotheodoros, who were responsible for the actual murder and mutilation of Nikephoros, were also exiled. Ioannes later performed acts of <i>philanthropia</i> that were said to be attempts to expiate his sin. The iconography on several issues of his coinage (anonymous issues bearing an image of the Mother of God) may also have been intended to help expiate his wrongdoing. Leon Diakonos reports that, on his deathbed, Ioannes finally admitted to the sin of murdering Nikephoros, and implies that this admission saved Ioannes from Hell. <u>Sources:</u> Leon Diakonos, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Hase 98-99 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 147-148); Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 285 (trans. Wortley 272).</p>
(20/21 Apr 1042) Michael V	<p>Michael is said to have performed numerous private acts of repentance as a result of his guilt over his involvement in the murder of Romanos III. Alongside acts of <i>philanthropia</i>, he associated with monks and adopted their lifestyle as a means of penitence. He subsequently refrained from intercourse with Empress Zoe as a result of their advice. <u>Sources:</u> Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri I, 132-135, 152-155, 156-163, 176-181; ed. Renauld I, 62, 71, 73-76, 83-85 (trans. Sewter 96, 105-109, 116-118); Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 397-398 (trans. Wortley 375).</p>
(Aug 1057) Isaakios I	<p>In the hours before his blinding, Michael tearfully espoused remorse for his actions in exiling and tonsuring Zoe. <u>Sources:</u> Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri I, 234-235; ed. Renauld I, 111-112 (trans. Sewter 147).</p> <p>In Psellos' account of his embassy to Isaakios he records that Isaakios and his supporters tearfully espoused their remorse for having shed the blood of their countrymen in a civil war. Attaleiates, reports numerous rumours in circulation about 'moisture' that was found in Isaakios' sarcophagus. This moisture was variously attributed as evidence of Isaakios repentance or damnation. <u>Sources:</u> Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri II, 200-203; ed. Renauld II, 94-95 (trans. Sewter 286-287); Attaleiates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Pérez Martin 69-70 (trans. Kaldellis and Krallis 124-127).</p>
(c. Apr/May 1081) Alexios I	<p>Alexios reportedly called upon the Church to establish a suitable penance for him to perform in propitiation of the violence committed by his army upon its entry into Constantinople (1081). He performed penance for forty days, in emulation of Christ. Other members of the Komnenian family were reported to have joined him in performing acts of atonement. <u>Sources:</u> Anna Komnene, <i>Alexias</i>, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 99 (trans. Frankopan 90-91).</p>
(Apr 1182) Andronikos I	<p>Andronikos is reported to have expressed remorse for the death of Manuel at his cousin's tomb, facilitating a form of repentance for his earlier conspiracies against him. Later, he is reported to have cited the biblical figure of King David as an allegorical explanation of his periods of exile and life spent among the Turks. A image of David and Goliath visible near Andronikos' planned mausoleum was reinterpreted (by Choniates) as a reference to Andronikos' murder of Alexios II. It is highly probable that Andronikos (like Michael VIII) made recourse to Davidic ideology in an attempt to atone for the murder of Alexios. <u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 256-257, (trans. Magoulias 143, 184); Eustathios of Thessalonike, <i>The Capture of Thessaloniki</i>, ed. Melville Jones 52-53.</p>

(Earliest Expression) Emperor	Description
(Sep 1185) Isaakios II	<p>Just hours before his proclamation by the assembled crowds, Isaakios begged forgiveness for the crime of killing Hagiochristophorites, at the <i>anastathmos</i> of Hagia Sophia where murderers and wrongdoers traditionally confessed and sought forgiveness. The murder won him the throne and the story was undoubtedly promoted by the Angeloi to exonerate Isaakios of guilt even before his assumption of the imperial title.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 342-343 (trans. Magoulias 188-189).</p>
(c.1195-1203) Alexios III	<p>Choniates gives two contrasting accounts of Alexios' thoughts regarding his usurpation: in the first, Alexios showed no remorse for the overthrow or blinding of his brother, not even acknowledging what had taken place; in the second, Alexios was said to be 'conscience-stricken' by what he had done and feared that 'Justice' would later catch up with him. Although no penitential acts were connected with this guilt, his contrition was said to be 'heartfelt'.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 457, 547-548 (trans. Magoulias 251, 299).</p>
(1262-1267) Michael VIII	<p>Michael performed the Davidic/Theodosian ritual of repentance on several occasions before receiving an official absolution from the Church for his treatment of Ioannes IV. His propagandists employed the David story as a means of rhetorically absolving him of guilt, and to provide a precedent for his atonement. Michael's coinage also employed the iconography of an imperial penitent before the heavenly intercessor St Michael.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Pachymeres, <i>Relations Historiques</i>, ed. Failler and Laurent I, 280-283; II, 330-331, 396-399; IV, 516-517; Gregoras, <i>Historia</i>, Schopen I, 107-108; Arsenios, <i>Testamentum</i>, ed. Migne 956-957; <i>Manuelis Holoboli Orationes</i> ed. Treu p.23-27.</p>
(1295-1310) Andronikos II	<p>Andronikos made numerous efforts to redeem his father's memory: c.1295 he met with Ioannes IV to apologise for what his father had done and claimed to have gained Ioannes' favour in return. He later undertook to translate the relics of Patriarch Arsenios and Ioannes IV to Constantinople where they were interred. Ioannes' remains were associated with a Palaiologan foundation, thus honouring him and associating him with the dynasty. A final ceremony of absolution involving the relics of Arsenios was performed (1310), during which the deceased Patriarch posthumously forgave Michael's transgressions, bringing the Arsenite Schism (1265-1310) to an end. Andronikos' coinage retained the penitential iconography of his father's but replaced Saint Michael with the figure of Christ, enhancing the entreaty.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u> Pachymeres, <i>Relations Historiques</i>, ed. Failler and Laurent III, 94-99, 118-119; Gregoras, <i>Historia</i>, Schopen I, 173-174, 261-263; Stephen of Novgorod, <i>Russian Travellers</i>, ed. Majeska 38-39.</p>

Table 4: A list of emperors, usurpers, and conspirators reported to have sought church asylum

(Date) Name	Details
(355) <i>Claudius Silvanus</i>	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> An unspecified church. (Cologne) <u>Outcome:</u> Dragged from sanctuary inside the church and executed. <u>Source:</u> Ammianus, <i>Rerum Gestarum</i>, 15.5.31.</p>
(472) Anthemius [Western Emperor]	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> St. Peters, or Santa Maria in Trastevere. (Rome) <u>Outcome:</u> Captured and beheaded by Ricimer’s supporters while taking refuge in the church. <u>Source:</u> Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Thurn 296-297 (trans. Jeffreys 206-207).</p>
(476) Basiliscus	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> An unspecified church. (Constantinople) <u>Outcome:</u> Granted assurance by Zeno and exiled to Cappadocia with his family (where they were left to die of exposure). <u>Source:</u> Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Thurn 303 (trans. Jeffreys 210); Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 124-125 (trans. Mango and Scott 192).</p>
(479) <i>Marcian</i>	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> Church of the Holy Apostles. (Constantinople) <u>Outcome:</u> Removed from the Church, tonsured, and exiled to the Fortress of Papyrios in Cappadocia. <u>Source:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 127 (trans. Mango and Scott 195).</p>
(490) Arcadius [<i>praetorian praefectus</i>]	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> The Great Church. (Constantinople) <u>Outcome:</u> Escaped execution, but had his properties confiscated by Zeno. <u>Source:</u> John of Nikiu, <i>Chronicle</i> trans. Charles 88; Malalas, <i>Chronicle</i>, ed. Thurn 318 (trans. Jeffreys 219).</p>
(562) Abblabius	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> Church of the Theotokos at Blachernai. (Constantinople) <u>Outcome:</u> Denied access to the church because of the accusations of treason arising from his involvement in a plot with Marcellus to assassinate Justinian. Captured by the imperial guard and tortured for information. <u>Source:</u> Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Thurn 426-427 (trans. Jeffreys 301-303)</p>
(545) John ‘the Tyrant’ [Successor to the mutineer Stotzas, and loyalist of Gontharis]	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> An unspecified church. (Carthage) <u>Outcome:</u> Left the Church after receiving assurance but was subsequently executed for rebellion. <u>Source:</u> Procopius, <i>History of the Wars</i>, ed. Dewing II, 420-421, 454-455; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 215 (trans. Mango and Scott 305-306).</p>
(602) Germanus [<i>patricius</i> , and father-in-law of Maurice’s co-emperor, Theodosios]	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> First to the Church of the Theotokos founded by Cyrus Panopolis, and then to Hagia Sophia. (Constantinople) <u>Outcome:</u> Maurice sent the imperial tutor, Stephen, to persuade Germanus to leave the Church of the Theotokos, but was unsuccessful. Germanus then fled to Hagia Sophia where Maurice attempted to remove him by force but was prevented by a crowd favourable to Germanus. <u>Source:</u> Theophylaktos Simokattes, <i>Historiae</i>, ed. de Boor 329-331 (trans. Whitby 222-223).</p>
(603) Constantina , Germanus, and Philippicus.	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> Hagia Sophia. (Constantinople) <u>Outcome:</u> Germanus persuaded Constantina and her daughters to seek sanctuary in Hagia Sophia while he attempted to have himself proclaimed by the Greens. Phocas attempted to remove Constantina and her daughters by force. Patriarch Kyriakos opposed these attempts and Phocas was made to swear an oath of assurance concerning their safety. <u>Source:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 293 (trans. Mango and Scott 422).</p>

(Date) Name	Details
(711) Tiberios [son and co-emperor of Justinian II]	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> Church of the Theotokos at Blachernai. (Constantinople) <u>Outcome:</u> Tiberios was taken to the sanctuary by his grandmother when Philippikos' troops entered the city. He was dragged from the altar, stripped of his cross and phylacteries, denuded of attire, and had his throat slit. <u>Source:</u> Nikephoros, <i>Historia Syntomos</i>, ed. Mango 112-113; Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 380 (trans. Mango and Scott 529).</p>
(797) <i>Sons of Constantine V</i>	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> Hagia Sophia. (Constantinople) <u>Outcome:</u> After giving them an oath of assurance the eunuch Aetios escorted them from the Church, where a crowd had gathered, and they were exiled to Athens. <u>Source:</u> Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. de Boor 473 (trans. Mango and Scott 650).</p>
(803) <i>Bardanes Tourkos</i>	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> The Monastery of Heraklius at Kios. (Kios or Prousa on the Bithynian coast) <u>Outcome:</u> Received the tonsure at the monastery before being escorted to his own monastic foundation on Prote. Subsequently blinded. <u>Source:</u> <i>Theophanes Continuatus</i>, ed. Bekker 9; ed. Featherstone and Codoñer 18-19.</p>
(813) Michael I	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> The Palace Church of the Pharos. (Constantinople) <u>Outcome:</u> Sought sanctuary when Leon IV entered Constantinople. Leon accepted Michael's abdication, had the family tonsured, and ordered the castration of Michael's sons. <u>Source:</u> Genesios, ed. Lesmueller-Werner and Thurn 6 (trans. Kaldellis 8).</p>
(971) <i>Leon the kouropalates and Nikephoros Phokas</i> [the brother, and nephew, of Nikephoros II]	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> Hagia Sophia. (Constantinople) <u>Outcome:</u> Sought asylum after being discovered trying to seize the Great Palace from Ioannes I by subterfuge. They were subsequently dragged from the church by the <i>droungarios</i> Leon's troops and exiled to Kalonymos in Bithynia. Ioannes then ordered their blinding. <u>Source:</u> Leon Diakonos, <i>Historia</i>, ed. Hase 147 (trans. Talbot and Sullivan 191).</p>
(1042) Michael V	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> The Stoudios Monastery. (Constantinople) <u>Outcome:</u> Fled the Constantinopolitan crowds attacking the Great Palace. He was forced from the sanctuary of the monastery and paraded through streets of Constantinople by the crowds, before being blinded and exiled to the Elegmoi Monastery in Bithynia. <u>Source:</u> Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri I, 228-243; ed. Renauld I, 109-116 (trans. Sewter 144-151).</p>
(1047) <i>Leon Tornikios</i> and his supporter Ioannes Vatatzes	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> Fortress of Bulgarophygon. (South-West of Adrianople) <u>Outcome:</u> After the collapse of his army, Leon sought asylum near Adrianople. He allegedly threatened to kill himself if anyone tried to drag him from the altar. An oath of assurance was offered by an unspecified commander of the imperial forces and the Leon surrendered with Vatatzes. They were transported to Constantinople where Constantine IX ordered them blinded outside the city gates. <u>Source:</u> Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i>, ed. Impellizzeri II, 64-67; ed. Renauld II, 28-29 (trans. Sewter 219).</p>
(1056) <i>Theodosios Monomachos the proedros</i>	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> Hagia Sophia. (Constantinople) <u>Outcome:</u> Denied asylum after attempting to foment a populist uprising that would have installed him as successor to Theodora. He was captured by the imperial guard and exiled to Pergamon. <u>Source:</u> Skylitzes, <i>Synopsis Historiarum</i>, ed. Thurn 481-482 (trans. Wortley 449-450).</p>

(Date) Name	Details
(1081) The Komnenian Women	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> First at St Nicholas', and then at Hagia Sophia. (Constantinople)</p> <p><u>Outcome:</u> The women sought asylum at St Nicholas' (near Hagia Sophia) when Alexios left to commence his rebellion. Anna Dalassena was then permitted to pray at Hagia Sophia where she subsequently sought asylum and received assurance of safety from Nikephoros III. The women were then kept in comfortable confinement at the Petron Monastery for duration of Alexios' revolt.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Anna Komnene, <i>Alexias</i>, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 66-67 (trans. Frankopan 60).</p>
(1081) Nikephoros III	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> Hagia Sophia. (Constantinople)</p> <p><u>Outcome:</u> Nikephoros fled the Great Palace to Hagia Sophia when Alexios' troops entered the city. He had sought asylum, but was persuaded to take the tonsure the next day and was sent into confinement at the Peribleptos.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Anna Komnene, <i>Alexias</i>, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis 86 (trans. Frankopan 78).</p>
(1181) Maria Porphyrogenita and Renier of Montferrat	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> Hagia Sophia. (Constantinople)</p> <p><u>Outcome:</u> After a thwarted attempt to assassinate the <i>protosebastos</i> Alexios, the pair were accused of treason (although no action had been taken against them). They sought sanctuary in Hagia Sophia before Easter 1181, were received by Patriarch Boradiotes, and rejected an offer of amnesty from the regency council of Alexios II. The populace flocked to support them and open conflict between the two sides erupted on 2 May. The next day an amnesty was negotiated. Maria and Renier were granted assurances, reconciled with the regency council, and permitted to return to the Palace.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Niketas Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 233-241 (trans. Magoulias 131-136).</p>
(1185) Isaakios II	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> Hagia Sophia. (Constantinople)</p> <p><u>Outcome:</u> Isaakios sought sanctuary at Hagia Sophia after killing Hagiochristophorites. During the night Isaakios' supporters among the elite, and the Constantinopolitan crowd mobilised at Hagia Sophia. A popular revolt ensued, prompting Andronikos' flight from the city and Isaakios' elevation.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 342-343 (trans. Magoulias 188-189).</p>
(1191/1193) Isaakios Komnenos [Nephew of Andronikos I]	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> Hagia Sophia. (Constantinople)</p> <p><u>Outcome:</u> Isaakios escaped imprisonment and fled to Hagia Sophia where he allegedly proceeded to incite the Constantinopolitan crowds. He was captured and tortured, eventually dying of his wounds.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 423 (trans. Magoulias 233).</p>
(1193/1194) Unnamed son of Andronikos Komnenos, Governor of Thessalonike	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> Hagia Sophia. (Constantinople)</p> <p><u>Outcome:</u> Prompted by the blinding of his father, Andronikos Komnenos, the unnamed Komnenos sought sanctuary in Hagia Sophia and attempted to have himself proclaimed. The crowds remained unaware of his ambitions because he had entered the Church in secrecy. He was dragged out and blinded.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 428 (trans. Magoulias 235).</p>
(1200) Ioannes Komnenos(- Axouchos)	<p><u>Sanctuary:</u> Hagia Sophia. (Constantinople)</p> <p><u>Outcome:</u> Following the suppression of a public revolt focused on Hagia Sophia, and the withdrawal of the Varangians from the area, on 31 July Ioannes Komnenos(-Axouchos) marched into Hagia Sophia and sought asylum. Patriarch Kamateros withdrew and refused to meet Ioannes. Ioannes supporters flocked to the Church and a popular revolt ensued. Ioannes left the Church to secure the Great Palace, but was eventually defeated and executed.</p>

(Date) Name	Details
(1305) <i>Ioannes Drimys</i>	<p><u>Source:</u> Mesarites, <i>Palastrevolution</i>, ed. Heisenberg 20; Choniates, <i>Historia</i>, ed. van Dieten 526 (trans. Magoulias 289).</p> <p><u>Sanctuary:</u> Mosele monastery. (Constantinople)</p> <p><u>Outcome:</u> Discovered preparing a revolt against Andronikos II using the monastery for shelter. He was captured and imprisoned.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Pachymeres, <i>Relations Historiques</i>, ed. Failler and Laurent IV, 652-653.</p>

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