

During the caliphates of al-Mahdi (775–85), al-Hadi (785–86), and Harun al-Rashid (786–809) warfare against the Byzantine empire became a priority for the leadership. Al-Mahdi ordered the stationing of 2,000 new troops at Mopsuestia, to be maintained by stipend, and his first campaign against Byzantium was launched with aplomb in 776, with the caliph lending his symbolic presence to the proceedings. In 778 the Byzantines, under the Isaurian dynasty's favoured commander Michael Lachanodrakon, penetrated the Hadath pass and attacked Germanikeia. Eventually the siege was lifted (through the garrison commander's bribery of Lachanodrakon, according to Theophanes),<sup>59</sup> but not before the Byzantines had deported many Jacobite Christians to reside on the other side of the empire, in Thrace. Emperor Leo IV (775–80) celebrated a triumph for his generals at the palace of Sophianai on the Bosphorus, distributing rewards. In the following year, the Byzantines again penetrated to the Hadath pass, provoking a Muslim counter-expedition under Hasan bin Qahtaba, which reached – but failed to capture – Dorylaion.

Henceforth Caliph al-Mahdi appointed frontier regional commanders from his own household and family, aiming to raise them above the level of the local border warlords. He accompanied an expedition as far as the frontier region in 780 and from there he sent on his son, Harun al-Rashid, who penetrated Byzantine territory and managed to besiege and capture Semalous. In 781/2 al-Mahdi sent Harun to engage the Byzantine forces at the head of a huge force, allegedly some 100,000 strong. After penetrating to Chrysopolis, on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus opposite Constantinople, and after seizing many captives, Harun imposed expensive and embarrassing terms on Empress Irene in 782: the truce was to last for three years, and involved an annual tribute payment by the Byzantines of 100,000 dinars; in addition, Harun's army kept its prisoners and considerable booty.<sup>60</sup> Warfare against the Byzantines now counted for more than it had done at any time since the Umayyad caliphate of Hisham.

Harun al-Rashid resumed military operations in 785–6, in response to an alleged violation of the truce in 785 and the Byzantines' seizure and destruction of the fortress of Hadath. From the Abbasids' point of view, the frontier system was not working very well and the Barmakid family gained effective control of the caliphate's north-west frontier provinces. Nonetheless, Byzantium faced a formidable opponent when Harun al-Rashid became caliph in 786; he had won great renown for his personal participation in the jihad against Byzantium, and he had taken shrewd advantage of Empress Irene's weakness and her serious problems with her

<sup>59</sup> Theoph., ed. de Boor, p. 451; tr. Mango and Scott, p. 623. On Michael Lachanodrakon, see *PMBZ*, #5027; see also above, p. 284.

<sup>60</sup> Tritle (1977).

military units (see above, p. 270). Around the time that Constantine VI (780–97) was reigning in uneasy equilibrium with his mother, Harun chose to make Raqqa his residence in order to control access to the frontier. In 797/8 Harun led the expedition that captured the Byzantine fortress at Safsaf, not far from the Cilician Gates. The Muslims are even said to have reached the Bosphorus again, and Harun appointed commanders for further raids. He agreed to negotiate with Byzantium only because of the pressure he was coming under from the Khazars to his north. The caliph led expeditions in person against Irene's successor Nikephoros I (802–11) in 803 and 806; during the latter expedition, Harun's forces captured Heraclea-Cybistra and Tyana, and the emperor was compelled to accept peace and to pay a humiliating poll tax on himself and his son (see above, p. 256).

Harun took institutional measures to strengthen the caliphate's position against Byzantium in the long term. In the very first year of his caliphate, he created a new frontier district called al-'Awasiim with Membij as its centre. This marked the beginnings of a new system of frontier organisation. Opposing the Byzantines along a straggling line from Tarsus north-eastwards as far as Theodosiupolis were the strongholds of the *thughur*, subdivided into the *thughurs* of Syria and of the al-Jazira.<sup>61</sup> These fortifications ran through mountainous country from the Taurus in Cilicia towards Germanikeia, and then on to Melitene. In 799 Harun built the town of Haruniyya, named after himself, between Germanikeia and Anazarbos, as part of his programme to organise and improve the defences of the northern Syrian frontier. These strongholds on the front line were the culmination of a long process that had already been underway before Harun's caliphate. But behind them Harun instituted the *'awasim*; these formed a second, more compact buffer zone between northern Syria and the Cilician *thughur*, extending from Antioch to Membij. Harun sought to break up the conglomeration of north-west frontier provinces and to impose his own personality directly on the frontier area and on the waging of jihad, thus cutting down to size the figures of the local commanders and warlords.

The frontier became a centre of unprecedented attention in part because of the accession to the throne of Nikephoros I in 802. Harun al-Rashid was provoked by an insulting letter from Nikephoros, demanding the return of the tribute that Irene had paid, but more important may have been a Byzantine raid against Anazarbos and Kanisa al-Sawda. There was an exchange of prisoners in 805 but, as mentioned above, in the following year Harun imposed tribute of 30,000 dinars on Byzantium, in addition to the poll tax that was payable by Nikephoros and his son. In 808 an exchange of prisoners and a summer expedition into Byzantine territory took place,

<sup>61</sup> On the *thughurs* in the Arab-Byzantine frontier region, see *EI*, X, pp. 446–7 (C. E. Bosworth).

but no further major Muslim expeditions into Byzantine territory would occur until 830.

Harun's commitment of so much energy and so many resources to his wars against the Byzantines reflected his sense of duty, although some scholars see his warfaring primarily as propaganda intended for internal consumption.<sup>62</sup> His wars brought few concrete territorial gains, but demonstrated his personal involvement with the jihad. Harun may be characterised as the first *ghazi*-caliph.<sup>63</sup> For Hisham and the Marwanids, military service had been a personal obligation, but Harun adopted the role of *ghazi*. He owed his accession to the power base that he and his supporters controlled in the north-western frontier regions, facing the Byzantines. He held himself out as a ruler whose power was coterminous with Islam and also as an imam-volunteer. Irene and Nikephoros I could not match him as commanders themselves and they lacked generals who were capable of resisting such an effective leader.<sup>64</sup> In this period some Muslim scholars and saints also settled on the frontier, a trend that had not been typical of the Umayyad era. Tarsus and Melitene emerged as the principal centres of the *thughur* by the mid-ninth century, and part of their population was made up of *ghazi*-volunteers. Some commercial goods passed through these strongholds to and from Byzantine territory, and professional military men tried to wield power there.

### *Al-Ma'mun and al-Mu'tasim*

Muslim-Byzantine warfare abated after the death of Harun al-Rashid in 809. Prolonged internal troubles within the caliphate limited the ability of Harun's successors to take the offensive against Byzantium. This period also saw bands of autonomous, armed Muslims marauding into Anatolia. In Byzantium, too, internal conflicts – notably the revolt of Thomas the Slav (see above, pp. 258–9) – severely limited the ability of Emperor Michael II (820–29) to wage war on the Muslims in the east in the early 820s. Thomas' revolt received additional impetus and reinforcements from diehard followers of the defeated al-'Amin, brother of Caliph al-Ma'mun (813–33). Among these were Zawaqil bedouin from Syria, who had no other refuge as they fled from the manhunts and reprisals carried out by the caliph's soldiers. But they were unable to give Thomas' insurgency enough additional resources to bring him victory. Internal violence in the caliphate brought further reinforcements into the Byzantine empire, of rather mixed value. After the crushing in 838 of Babek's Khurramite rebellion, which may have received Byzantine support, the remaining rebels fled into Byzantine territory where

<sup>62</sup> Bonner (1996), pp. 96–106, 144–7.

<sup>63</sup> Kennedy (1981); Kennedy (2001); Kennedy (2004b).

<sup>64</sup> On Irene's and Nikephoros' lack of military skills and 'clout', see above, pp. 256–7, 259, 269, 277.

they were incorporated into the armies of Emperor Theophilos (829–42) and placed under the command of the controversial Theophobos. These separate armed bands of Khurramites brought to Byzantium not only experienced manpower but also valuable information about Muslim military matters. Their relative prominence in the course of events testifies to the shortage of adequate Byzantine soldiers to fight the Muslims. However, these recruits, who are termed ‘Persians’ in the Byzantine sources, did not necessarily make for stability. They were liable to switch sides and so could, in their turn, provide important intelligence back to the Muslims.<sup>65</sup>

Caliph al-Ma'mun assigned northern Mesopotamia, and the border fortress districts of the *thughur* and the *awasim* to his son al-'Abbas, together with the sum of 500,000 dinars. The civil war between al-Ma'mun and his brother al-'Amin had significantly weakened the Abbasids' position vis-à-vis Byzantium. Nevertheless, al-Ma'mun was determined to redress the balance and in 830 he launched a series of offensives, invading Cappadocia in response to Emperor Theophilos' attack on Mopsuestia and Tarsus. He captured and fortified the city of Tyana, and even claimed that he would conquer Constantinople itself. A second campaign into Asia Minor was mounted the following year. In 832, al-Ma'mun forced the major border fortress of Lulon to surrender, and in 833 he tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to capture Amorion. He died while planning further offensives against the Byzantine frontier regions: having recaptured Tyana, al-Ma'mun was preparing an expedition to implant Arab tribesmen in Anatolia.

Al-Ma'mun was succeeded by his brother al-Mu'tasim, who ruled from 833 to 842. His caliphate marks the end of the pivotal period of Byzantine–Muslim relations that followed the death of Harun. Al-Mu'tasim abandoned Tyana soon after assuming power, but his anger was roused by the Byzantines' capture of Samosata and Zapetra in 837, and he succeeded in fulfilling the ambitions of his brother by organising a massive three-pronged invasion of Anatolia. His forces crushed the armies of Theophilos at the battle of Dazimon and then besieged and briefly occupied Amorion in 838, not only an important military base, but also the ancestral home of the Amorion dynasty. He thereby dealt a massive blow to the resources and prestige of Theophilos and his dynasty – and to Byzantium in general – and a number of Byzantine prisoners were executed. Although al-Mu'tasim's armies were obliged to withdraw to caliphal territories in order to suppress worrisome insurgents, the campaign of 838 revealed major weaknesses in Byzantine military capacity. Al-Mu'tasim's newly recruited elite Turkish forces proved their archery skills against the Byzantine soldiers to deadly effect, and the Byzantines were initially unable to resist them.<sup>66</sup> Al-Mu'tasim's forces also

<sup>65</sup> See Cheynet (1998a).

<sup>66</sup> Kaegi (1964).



demonstrated their ability to undertake and bring to a successful conclusion sieges of large, well-fortified Byzantine cities such as Amorion.<sup>67</sup>

Once again, internal Muslim political, religious and military strife rather than Byzantine institutions or imperial decisions brought respite for Byzantium, just as the Byzantines' mood was turning to despair. The 838 campaign marked the zenith of caliphal expeditions across the Taurus mountains into Anatolia. Theophilos and al-Mu'tasim made peace in 841. The shift of the Abbasids' main residence from Baghdad to their huge new city of Samarra and the emergence of a powerful separate unit of Turkish guards changed the dynamics of Abbasid power for the worse.<sup>68</sup> No future Abbasid caliph would lead in person an invasion from Iraq into Anatolia. Nor would any Abbasid expedition manage to assemble troops on the scale of that of 838. The death of al-Mu'tasim in 842 marks a turning-point in the caliphate's offensive capability against Byzantium. His new commanders based at Samarra regarded volunteers for the jihad as a nuisance. In 857 Caliph al-Mutawakkil (847–61) abolished all the fiscal immunities that the *thughurs* had enjoyed. He did try to mount a huge show-piece campaign when he moved his army and much of the administration westwards to Damascus in 858, but military unrest thwarted his efforts. The assassination of al-Mutawakkil in 861 triggered what is sometimes termed the spell of 'anarchy' at Samarra, and Byzantium's military situation benefited accordingly.<sup>69</sup>

#### THE EASING OF JIHAD: DIPLOMATIC AND CULTURAL CONTACTS BETWEEN BYZANTIUM AND THE MUSLIM WORLD

Summer raids into Byzantine Anatolia diminished in intensity once Abbasid power began to fragment both on the periphery and in the central cities during the internal conflicts of the middle decades of the ninth century. A slave revolt broke out in southern Iraq in 869 and the rebels, mostly of east African origin and known as the Zanj, took over Basra and even started striking their own coins before eventually being overwhelmed in 883. Then, from the 890s onwards for almost a century, the Carmathians (Qaramita) backed by bedouin tribes posed a constant challenge, sometimes amounting to a serious threat to the state. Even before inner turmoil diverted the caliphate's resources, growing military and economic power enabled Byzantium to undertake offensive actions. One Byzantine expeditionary force penetrated to Amida, where it took many prisoners in 851, and a Byzantine fleet raided the Egyptian port of Damietta in 853 (see above,

<sup>67</sup> On material evidence from Amorion, see Lightfoot (1998).

<sup>68</sup> Gordon (2001). <sup>69</sup> Kennedy (2004b), p. 169.

p. 298). The central government in Samarra or Baghdad could do little effectively to deter this.

Ninth-century Byzantine–Muslim diplomatic practices and protocols are well documented in the Greek and Arabic sources. Muslim geographical texts such as that of Ibn Khurradadhbih, with its itineraries and other data concerning the empire, also testify to growing contacts and exchanges.<sup>70</sup> Famous Byzantine embassies to Baghdad include those in the reigns of Leo V and Theophilos.<sup>71</sup> Two of the most important missions were those of John the Grammarian of 829 and 831: returning from his first mission, John is said to have advised the emperor Theophilos to build the palace of Bryas ‘in imitation of those of the Saracens’.<sup>72</sup> Not all the information passed through formal channels. Members of Syrian Christian communities, some of whose members also knew Greek, were important intermediaries between the two empires and cultures. They could carry out translations of ancient texts<sup>73</sup> and they could also transmit intelligence of vital relevance to contemporary politics, war and commerce. The frontiers were not tightly sealed between Byzantium and the lands under Abbasid rule. In fact, in every century renegades fled from one side to the other: many of them were neither Greek nor Armenian by origin, and some moved repeatedly to and fro. The migrants included the Banu Taghlib in the seventh century, Tatzates in the late eighth century, Theophobos in the ninth century, Samonas in the early tenth century and Bardas Skleros in the late tenth century.<sup>74</sup> Such defections reveal the potential for the movement of individuals and even, occasionally, of whole groups or communities across the frontiers. Precisely for this reason, attempts were made by the respective authorities to keep vigilant watch over the border zones. It is probable that the Byzantines had developed techniques for reporting and tracking, and for mobilising their own military forces to cut off and destroy enemy raiders in Anatolia, by the late seventh or earlier eighth centuries. Documentation of these practices exists from the tenth century, but the basic military defence measures were most probably in place much earlier.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>70</sup> See Ibn Khurradadhbih, *al-Masalik*, ed. and French tr. de Goeje, pp. 100–13 (text), 73–86 (tr.). For ninth- and tenth-century Muslim information about Byzantium, see El-Cheikh (2004a), pp. 8–9, 139–56.

<sup>71</sup> Vaiou, ‘Diplomatic relations’, pp. 102–31.

<sup>72</sup> TC, pp. 98–9; Ricci (1998); Magdalino (1998), pp. 196–9, 206–10.

<sup>73</sup> On the role of Syrian Christians as intermediaries, see the various studies in Griffith (1992); also Griffith (1996). On the broader movement to translate Greek texts into Arabic, which was triggered by the foundation of Baghdad and the patronage of courtiers and scholars as well as caliphs such as al-Ma'mun, see Gutas (1998), pp. 7, 11–34, 53–4, 61–104; El-Cheikh (2004a), pp. 103–4.

<sup>74</sup> On defectors, see Mansouri (2000), pp. 242–3. The aim of John the Grammarian's first embassy to Baghdad was partly to persuade a prominent defector, Manuel the Armenian, to return home. See also pp. 273–4, 503, 524–5.

<sup>75</sup> For discussion of the tactics recommended in *Skirmishing*, ed. and tr. Dennis, see pp. 138–9 (introduction); ed. and French tr. Dagron and Mihăescu, pp. 214–25, 235–7, 245–8 (commentary).

## CONCLUSION

Emperors, caliphs and amirs took responsibility for major operations on the Byzantine–Arab frontiers intermittently between the seventh and the mid-ninth century, but none persisted in campaigning in person. Too many other priorities and pressures were in play, and important as the frontier was, it did not monopolise their attention. Constans II spent much of his time on or near scenes of military campaigning; the state of emergency required the emperor's continuous personal involvement. Leo III and Constantine V managed to lead far more effectively than their seventh-century predecessors had done (see above, pp. 265–6, 273, 277), but only a few of the earlier ninth-century emperors came from a military background and those who scored significant successes did so in fighting the Bulgars, not the Arabs (see above, p. 257). So far as the Muslims were concerned, no leader after their campaigns of conquest in the seventh century, and occasional expeditions of the eighth and earlier ninth centuries, managed to assemble sufficient human and material resources to undertake further major offensives or to conquer fresh territories. The personal presence of a sovereign was necessary to make the respective military systems function effectively on both sides of the frontier, yet neither caliph nor *basileus* could long give the Byzantine–Muslim frontier his full attention in the light of pressures elsewhere. No single campaign, battle or other brilliant tactical or political feat could resolve the underlying military challenges and political tensions in northern Syria and upper Mesopotamia. Processes of political and military deterioration undermined Muslim strength in the area, but limited resources, the cost and complexity of mobilisation and fear of military coups continued to frustrate the Byzantine emperors, too. Internal conflicts greatly complicated the conduct of warfare and diplomacy on their eastern frontier. No systematic institutional solution showed signs of emerging there for either Byzantines or Muslims, and indecisive if incessant warfare and diplomacy remained the norm. The approximate limits of Byzantine control to the south-east in the mid-ninth century were not radically different from those which had emerged some two centuries earlier, in the aftermath of the earliest Muslim conquests. Decisive change could wait.

## CHAPTER 10

### WESTERN APPROACHES (700–900)

MICHAEL McCORMICK

#### INTRODUCTION

The early medieval societies of Byzantium and western Europe that emerged from the late Roman world shared more than a few institutions, traditions and religious experiences. They sometimes rubbed shoulders in ways we overlook. Rome's clerical elite was so hellenised that the pope who reigned at Charlemagne's birth spoke Greek as his mother tongue. Under Charlemagne's grandsons, members of the Byzantine missionary Methodios' entourage wrote Greek majuscules in the memorial book of a German monastery to record their stay; Methodios was himself a native of Thessaloniki, formerly a Byzantine imperial official in Macedonia and a monk in Bithynia (see above, p. 300). Conversely, Franks served in the Byzantine emperor's military household and figured at palace banquets.<sup>1</sup>

Facts like these raise the broader question of how the two main entities of Christendom interacted over the six or seven generations from c. 700 to c. 900. The historical problem is not without snares. 'Influence' can be misleading; interaction between cultures rarely has one society passively undergoing the active influence of another. Once something is available, the borrowing civilisation must take the initiative in appropriating it from the other culture. So when, where and how Byzantium and the west came into direct or indirect contact needs clarifying. Moreover, though these early medieval societies evolved away from their late antique roots, those common roots are everywhere discernible, and it is easy to mistake residual for recent borrowing. Indeed, the shared matrix could give rise to structural parallels, that is, similar developments that arose independently in each culture.<sup>2</sup> And, even over seven generations, patterns of interaction changed. Byzantium took as well as gave.

Around 700, a kind of community of imagination preserved lingering mental links where real ones had lapsed. In England, Bede still synchronised his universal chronicle with contemporary Byzantine regnal

<sup>1</sup> *Verbrüderungsbuch Reichenau*, 53D4–5; compare Zettler (1983); Philotheos, *Kletorologion*, p. 177. On Methodios, see above, pp. 316–18.

<sup>2</sup> McCormick (1987); McCormick (1997).



Map 20 Western neighbours c. 700–c. 1025

years.<sup>3</sup> Frankish celebrants, eager to use the authoritative new texts of the mass that had been imported from the Byzantine duchy of Rome, sometimes seem scarcely to have noticed that they were still praying for the Roman emperor.<sup>4</sup> Anglo-Saxon missionaries, heirs of the easterners Theodore and Hadrian, who had come to them from Tarsus and Africa via Rome, encouraged obedience to St Peter and a fascination with Italy that

<sup>3</sup> Bede, *De temporum ratione*, pp. 534–5; tr. Wallis, pp. 236–7. Compare Bede, *De temporibus*, ch. 22, pp. 609–11; Bede gives mainly the eastern, not the western Roman imperial succession.

<sup>4</sup> Tellenbach (1934), pp. 19–21. On Byzantium's nominal rule over Rome, see below, pp. 444–6.

fostered face-to-face meetings with Byzantine provincial civilisation. They also copied the Antiochene biblical exegesis transmitted to them by their Byzantine teachers.<sup>5</sup>

Paradoxically, by 900 actual contacts had increased and the old imaginary links were gone. In Byzantine eyes western Europeans' Christianity still created the basis for special relations with the empire. Traditional barbarian stereotypes still prevailed at Constantinople: the Franks were brave but stupid fighters, emotional and undisciplined; recent experience confirmed their avid corruptibility.<sup>6</sup> If eighth-century Byzantines imagined Rome as a typical Byzantine town and the popes as obedient functionaries reverently storing imperial communiqués near the tomb of Peter or routinely transmitting them to western barbarians, ninth-century strains induced an angry emperor to brand the pope and his Latin language as 'barbarian'.<sup>7</sup> 'Byzantines', of course, never existed as such: the empire of Constantinople was known to inhabitants and enemies alike as Roman, a usage into which even a hostile Einhard slips.<sup>8</sup> Its subjects might simply identify themselves as 'Christians'.<sup>9</sup> Westerners might lump the empire's inhabitants together under the simplistic linguistic heading *Graeci*, particularly when they wished to ignore the uncomfortable political implications of eastern imperial continuity. Beneath the uniformity of its Greek public language and tax payments to the emperor in Constantinople, the empire was multi-ethnic: Armenians, Syrians, Slavs, Italians, Istrians all swore allegiance to the Roman emperor, and as cultivated a man as Einhard casually identifies a eunuch with a Slavic name as a 'Greek'.<sup>10</sup> But the ancient empire had changed since the days of Justinian's reconquests.

#### EARLY MEDIEVAL BYZANTIUM: THE 'NEW ROME' TRANSFORMED

The upheavals of the seventh century had transformed Byzantium. The old urban fabric of the Roman empire largely gave way. Though the precise causes and chronology remain controversial, archaeological evidence shows that, in the long run, the cities of Asia Minor and the Balkan peninsula fared little better than those of western Europe.<sup>11</sup> Despite streams of refugees, even the capital of Constantinople shrank dramatically in population.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Bischoff and Lapidge (1994); for the distinctively Byzantine identity of various regions of Italy in this period, see McCormick (1998b).

<sup>6</sup> Leo VI, *Tactica*, XVIII.77, 85–9, cols. 963–4, 965–8; see also Dagron (1987), pp. 217–18.

<sup>7</sup> Pseudo-Gregory II, *Letters*, ed. and French tr. Gouillard, no. 1, pp. 276–97; arguments assigning these texts to Rome have left me unconvinced. For Michael III on Latin, see Nicholas I, *Epistulae*, no. 88, p. 459.

<sup>8</sup> Einhard, *Life of Charlemagne*, ch. 28, ed. Waitz *et al.*, pp. 32–3; tr. Dutton, pp. 33–4.

<sup>9</sup> Mango (1980), p. 31. <sup>10</sup> Einhard, *Translatio*, IV.1, p. 256; tr. Dutton, p. 111.

<sup>11</sup> Biraben and Le Goff (1969); Conrad, 'Plague in the early medieval Near East' (PhD thesis, 1981); Sarris (2002). See also pp. 122–3, 478–9.

<sup>12</sup> Haldon (1997a), pp. 92–124; Mango (1990), pp. 51–62. See also above, p. 260.

To the north, the old Danube frontier and much of the Balkans were overrun by Slavs, Avars and Bulgars, although the imperial government still clung to coastal strongholds like Thessaloniki or Monemvasia. The closing of the old military roads across the Balkans effectively sundered Byzantine Italy from the imperial centre in the winter months, when sailing was difficult.<sup>13</sup> To the south, Rome and Ravenna hung by a thread as the Lombards expanded their power from the Po basin down Italy's mountainous spine. The bold attempt of Emperor Constans II (641–68) to defend the empire's southern flank by transferring his imperial headquarters back to Italy around 662 collapsed with his murder.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, a cash-strapped government intensified the fiscal yield of its western provinces.<sup>15</sup> That pressure may have reinforced tensions which had started over religious issues.

For a government whose professional bureaucracy and military forces were sustained largely by a land tax levied on the provinces, the fiscal implications of such territorial losses were devastating, amounting to as much as three-quarters of revenues.<sup>16</sup> Defeat and the fiscal crunch forced radical administrative and military reconfigurations in the empire's besieged remnants. And conjugated disaster opened more than a political crisis in a society which lived and breathed its religious sentiment: the challenge of Islam was ideological no less than political and military. Was the sect in whose sign the Roman empire had conquered since Constantine's conversion no longer stamped with God's seal of success?

Lifestyle and mental attitudes underwent a sea change as the amenities of late Roman daily life became a thing of the past outside the court's island of archaism.<sup>17</sup> By the seventh century, Greek had supplanted Latin as the characteristic language of the central administration. Outside the Latin-speaking outposts of Dalmatia and Italy, only the Latin lettering of coins and imperial documents, a few fossilised acclamations and the massive presence of Latin loan words in the technical jargon of the state offered a faint linguistic echo of the old Roman past.

Byzantine culture no longer coincided with the Byzantine polity. For a few generations, Constantinople ceded Hellenic cultural leadership to the empire's geographic edges. John Damascene, the greatest Byzantine thinker of his time, wrote his Greek theological treatises under the Arab caliphs; the best Byzantine art adorned the shrines and pleasure palaces of the new Islamic empire, while remarkable Byzantine hagiography of the eighth century was produced in Italy or Palestine.<sup>18</sup>

Small wonder that one of the few pieces of contemporary Byzantine literature translated into Latin around 700 is an apocalyptic vision of the Arab

<sup>13</sup> McCormick (2002), pp. 25–8. <sup>14</sup> Corsi (1983). See also above, p. 232.

<sup>15</sup> McCormick (1998a), pp. 78–80. See also below, pp. 433, 436.

<sup>16</sup> Hendy (1985), p. 620. See also above, pp. 269–71. <sup>17</sup> Mango (1981a).

<sup>18</sup> Mango (1991); Kazhdan (1999), pp. 75–94, 169–81. See also above, pp. 242–3.

conquest, the last Byzantine emperor's return to Jerusalem and the impending end of the world!<sup>19</sup> But events would follow an unforeseeable path. Transformed and reorganised, Byzantium was about to begin a remarkable resurgence. Bede, who had earlier succumbed to optimistic reports of the Roman reconquest of Africa, accurately reported the successful defence of Constantinople from the final Arab siege of 717–18.<sup>20</sup> That victory inaugurated an era whose scarce sources cannot obscure the renewal of Byzantine civilisation which, by 900, stood on the threshold of its great medieval expansion.

The changes that produced this revamped empire are much debated. The Byzantines themselves located the defining moments of their history in dynasties and doctrines, a vision which says as much about emperor and faith in Byzantine mentality as about historical trends. By these lights, confusion and usurpation followed the toppling and execution of Heraclius' last descendant, Justinian II (685–95/705–11), until the usurper general Leo III (717–41) defended the capital from the Arabs and launched the 'Isaurian' or Syrian dynasty. The victorious Leo promoted a new cult practice whose affinity with Islam many observers feel is undeniable: he proscribed most religious images and their veneration as a form of idolatry. His dynasty championed iconoclasm almost to the end, uncovering powerful stresses within the Byzantine ruling class which succeeding generations memorialised as religious persecution (see above, pp. 279–84).

Three generations later, the regent empress Irene recruited the support of Pope Hadrian I (772–95) to overturn the imperial doctrine at the second ecumenical council of Nicaea in 787 (see above, pp. 287–8). Charlemagne's ambassadors witnessed the palace coup that ended Irene's independent rule and the Isaurian dynasty in 802. This spell of short reigns, involving a toned-down reversion to iconoclasm, led to a coup by Michael II (820–9) who established the Amorion dynasty, named after his home town in Asia Minor, where excavation has uncovered the material face of the age.<sup>21</sup> Another regent, Empress Theodora (842–56), finally abolished iconoclasm in 843. Her son Michael III (842–67) and the Amorion house were overturned by a palace parvenu, Basil I (867–86). Down to Michael III's time, soldier emperors predominated: Leo III and his son Constantine V (741–75) were particularly successful commanders.

Reorganisation and re-establishment of control characterise this era. Survival required first and foremost the military stabilisation of the eastern front, where Arab incursions into the empire's new agrarian heartland of western Asia Minor were increasingly checked thanks to new provincial defence systems, known as themes. These *themata* spread sporadically as

<sup>19</sup> Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse*; see also Prinz (1985).

<sup>20</sup> Bede, *De temporibus*, ch. 22, p. 611; Bede, *De temporum ratione*, pp. 534–5; tr. Wallis, pp. 236–7.

<sup>21</sup> Gill (2002); Lightfoot (2003).



events dictated. The word's derivation is contested but it refers simultaneously to autonomous military units and to the large territorial districts in which they were permanently stationed and of which the empire was composed. They may have been inspired at least in part by the western *exarchates*, earlier administrative and military structures elaborated in reconquered Italy and Africa. By the time of Charlemagne and his son, *themes* and the generals or military governors (*stratēgoi*) who headed them had everywhere ended the late Roman tradition that strictly separated civil and military administration, and government had shifted to a permanent war footing.<sup>22</sup>

The mighty *themes* of Asia Minor helped slow the Arab advance. The European *themes* straddled the capital's western approaches and defended Constantinople from the rising power of the Bulgars. But the very concentration of power that facilitated the generals' defensive tasks complicated the political structure of the empire, since *stratēgoi* like the future Leo III often challenged the emperor resident in Constantinople (see above, p. 380). The last great revolt of the *themes* in particular had serious consequences. The civil war between Michael II in Constantinople and Thomas the Slav in 821–3 and the ensuing disarray contributed to the empire's greatest territorial losses in our period: the Arab conquest of Crete (c. 824–8) and the beginning in 826 of the fall of Sicily, both of which had implications for imperial communications with western Europe.

To counter their own provincial armies, the Isaurian emperors created a new, imperial army of cavalry and infantry, known simply as 'the regiments' (*tagmata*) and headquartered in the capital. The *tagmata* spearheaded offensive operations and played a key role in the Isaurians' notable successes in the Balkans and Asia Minor. At sea, the seventh-century Karabisianoi fleet, essentially conceived to defend the central coastal areas and sea approaches to Constantinople, was superseded by provincial fleets organised as maritime *themes* in the course of the eighth and ninth centuries. An imperial fleet equipped with Greek fire was stationed at Constantinople and chiefly destined for long-range intervention, flanked by elements of the thematic fleets.<sup>23</sup> On the empire's western flank, a naval squadron based in Sicily brought enhanced security to Italian waters in the 750s.<sup>24</sup> Despite occasional setbacks, the new military apparatus proved effective in preserving the empire. As surviving inscriptions attest, the emperors began refurbishing critical infrastructures across territories that had slipped out of their control in the seventh century. Whatever local discomfort the return of imperial tax-collectors may have brought to any provincial landowners who might have survived the century of storms, the centripetal dynamic was probably

<sup>22</sup> Lilie (1984a); Haldon (1993), pp. 7–11. See also above, pp. 266–8, 272.

<sup>23</sup> Ahrweiler (1966), pp. 7–107. <sup>24</sup> McCormick (2001), p. 872, no. 159.

powerful: imperial armies brought coinage, administrators and bishops, who sent back to Constantinople the newly restored tax revenues; these, in turn, reinforced the imperial treasury which financed the bureaucracy and military apparatus and enabled the empire to extend its reach even further.<sup>25</sup>

In the capital, the few great late Roman ministers like the praetorian prefects or the masters of the offices, into whose offices various vertical chains of administrative institutions formerly converged, had disappeared. They were replaced by the omnipresent ‘accountants’ or logothetes ever vigilant for income and expenditure of a state straining against the abyss. These new sub-ministers reported directly to the emperor and so brought more direct lines of authority into his hands (see above, pp. 238–9, 273). Administrative structures were far more institutionalised than in the west, as professional bureaucracies looked after imperial finances and justice. Whatever survived or now emerged as a ruling class owed much to government service as the source and sign of its wealth and power. The stresses of a ruling class in the making mark the top echelon of society: frequent *coups d’état*, political shake-ups and church schisms start to stabilise only in the tenth century. From c. 800, Byzantine and Frankish sources yield the earliest glimpses of family names and clans like the Phokai or the Argyroi who would dominate the social scene at Byzantium’s apogee and who seem to ride a rising tide of economic and demographic recovery.<sup>26</sup> A state hierarchy structured this emerging power elite, as imperial promotion granted life-long, non-hereditary state dignities like patrician or *prōtospatharios* and salaries to leading officials who trumpeted their titles on numerous surviving lead seals. Each official’s place in the hierarchy was communicated by his position in imperial ceremonies and delineated in official lists of precedence, the earliest surviving example of which (the *Taktikon Uspensky*) dates from 842–3.<sup>27</sup> For all its factions, the power of this senatorial order was such that a prudent pope might demand that it confirm by oath guarantees issued to his legates by a shaky regency, and it is this social group that supplied most of the challenges to imperial authority, whether they came in the form of conspiracies, usurpations or doctrinal dissidence.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> On the recovery, see Hendy (1985), pp. 77–85, 90–1; the basic picture is confirmed by the seal evidence: see, e.g. *DOS*, I, pp. 40, 46, 104; II, pp. 1, 22, 89; IV, p. 107. On population transfers organised by the government, see Lilie (1976), pp. 227–54; for inscriptions: e.g. Mango and Ševčenko (1972), pp. 384–93; for provincial town walls: Ivison (2000).

<sup>26</sup> On elite factionalism, see Winkelmann (1987), pp. 75–7; on families: Kazhdan and Ronchey (1999), pp. 248–9, 256, table 2, and esp. Cheynet (2000), pp. 285–92.

<sup>27</sup> For seals, an essential source for prosopography and institutional history, see *DOS*, I; for the precedence lists: *LPB*; for dignities and precedence and how they worked in this period: Kazhdan and McCormick (1997), pp. 195–7; Oikonomides (1997a).

<sup>28</sup> Mansi, XII, col. 1073B.

Iconoclasm, the most lasting and disruptive doctrinal quarrel of the era, had many consequences. Resistance to the imperial heresy challenged the emperor's power in matters of doctrine and, implicitly, in other matters as well. The considerable efforts subsequently devoted to restoring the emperor's prestige and redefining relations with the ruling class are most visible in the refurbishing of imperial ceremonial. Iconoclasm affected the institutional history of the church even more deeply. The patriarchs resided only a stone's throw from the imperial palace and were often under the emperor's thumb. The secular church's relative tractability with respect to imperial doctrinal shifts fostered internal conflict. Churchmen who sought to resolve conflict without throwing the ecclesiastical hierarchy into chaos clashed with zealots. A monastic party centering on the great cenobitic reformer Theodore the Stoudite (759–826) burned to root out any who had temporised with what had been the empire's official doctrine over nine of the last twelve decades, factionalising the church in ways which paralleled and were perhaps connected with fissures in the lay aristocracy (see also above, pp. 288–9). In any case conflict spilled over into other issues and spawned a series of bitter schisms from the Moechian controversy – a dispute centering on Emperor Constantine VI's decision to divorce and remarry in 795 – to the 'Tetragamy' in which the Italian-born patriarch and former imperial adviser, Nicholas I Mystikos (901–7, 912–25) bitterly opposed Emperor Leo VI's (886–912) fourth marriage (see below, p. 503). Since partisans of each faction challenged their opponents' ecclesiastical appointments, Byzantine bishops' careers seemed noticeably unsettled in this era.

Factionalism in the upper echelons of church and state provoked sudden political shifts which affected relations with the west. Since the days of Pope Leo I (440–61), whose memory the iconophile hero Theodore Graptos still celebrated, the Roman see and its doctrinal rectitude had enjoyed great prestige in the Constantinopolitan church. This prestige was only enhanced by Rome's role in the earlier monothelite controversies and Pope Martin I's (649–55) resistance, arrest and death in imperial custody which led the Byzantine church to venerate him as a martyr (see above, pp. 231–2). A Greek account of his suffering was composed in eighth-century Jerusalem or Rome, an alternative which is itself revealing. Rome had become the authority to which Byzantine religious thinkers under pressure appealed for support. That the duchy of Rome was slipping out from under the emperor's effective administrative reach only increased its attractiveness, hence efforts to persuade western authorities to curtail the activities of eastern émigrés at Rome.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The attribution of the *Life of Martin I* (BHG 2259) to eighth-century Greeks at Rome (see Mango (1973b), pp. 703–4; Sansterre (1983), I, pp. 138–9) has been seriously challenged in favour of Jerusalem

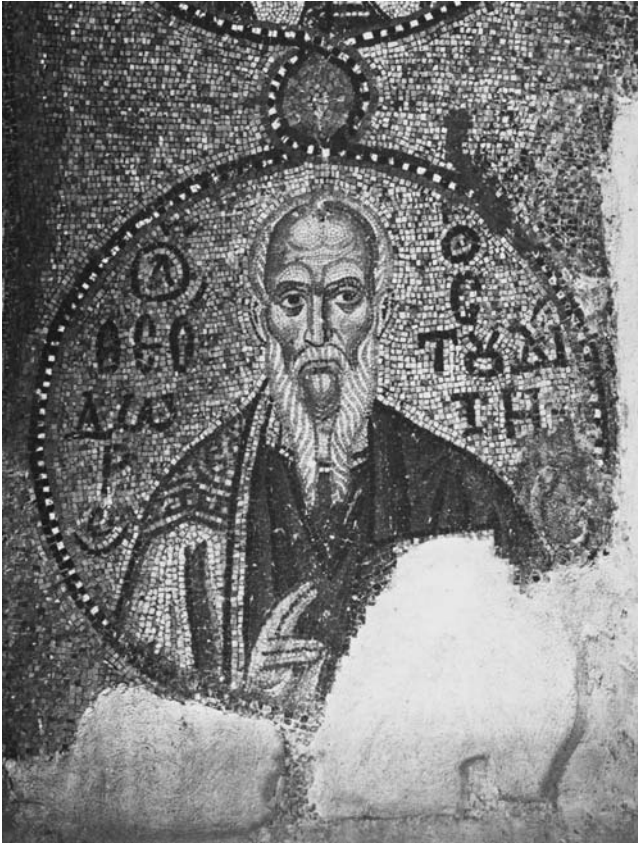


Figure 27 Mosaic of Theodore the Stoudite from the monastery of Nea Moni on Chios; this seems to have the features of a character portrait and probably belongs to a type ultimately deriving from the funerary portrait of Theodore in the Studios monastery

Culturally, four generations of theological debate for and against icons spurred renewed examination of the Hellenic theological and cultural heritage. The hunting out and recopying of old books – to uncover or rebut authorities on icons – marks the earliest stages in the birth of Byzantine humanism, the encyclopaedic movement. The political and economic recovery of a society based in large part on written administration equally invigorated literary culture. Imperial bureaucrats like the future patriarch

by Conte in *Sinodo lateranense dell'ottobre 649*, ed. Riedinger, comm. Conte, pp. 238–49. This text appears to have abbreviated and combined the Greek text of several of the documents transmitted in Latin in Anastasius' *Collectanea*: Devreesse (1935), esp. pp. 54–5, n. 1. See in general on these texts Chiesa (1992); on efforts to curtail émigrés at Rome, see Michael II and Theophilos, *Letter to Louis I*; Phot., no. 290, ed. Laourdas and Westerink, III, pp. 137–8.

Nikephoros I (806–15) figure prominently in the early phases of the revival.<sup>30</sup> They were reinforced by intellectuals and others like Michael Synkellos or Patriarch Methodios (843–7) who migrated back to a recovering imperial centre from Arab-controlled Palestine or the Italian borderlands. As in the west so in Byzantium a new minuscule book script was the tool and hallmark of the new culture.<sup>31</sup> So too the new Greek writing required and conditioned the phenomenon of transliteration. Ancient exemplars in the old script were sought out, compared and copied in the new script. That new writing has preserved in such Byzantine ‘editions’ most of what has survived of classical Greek and patristic literature.

In the capital, the receding danger of Arab siege was replaced by the imminent menace of Bulgar attack. Repairs were made to the city walls.<sup>32</sup> Behind their protective bulk, renewal stirred in a city where nature had reconquered much of the urban fabric. Though on a much smaller scale and with a more religious focus than the colossal monuments of the old Roman state, construction and redecorating were nonetheless significant by recent standards and invite comparison with contemporary western efforts. In 768, Constantine V restored the aqueduct of Valens, which had been interrupted since 626 and was essential to the water-starved site of Constantinople. Numerous churches were remodelled in the ninth century. Theophilos (829–42) built a new suburban palace, ‘Bryas’, modelled, significantly, on the Arab caliphs’, the new standard-bearers of luxury. Basil I constructed a splendid new chapel, the Nea, for the Great Palace, and the ebb and flow of icon veneration required redecoration of religious shrines according to the dictates of the moment.<sup>33</sup>

It was, then, a changing Byzantium which bordered on western Christendom. As the threat of political extinction receded, the reorganised empire reasserted control. The progress of imperial administration allied with an improving general situation and sporadic disarray amongst the empire’s most lethal enemies to allow renewed, if staccato, campaigns of intervention at the empire’s extremities, which despite all setbacks and reversals steadily extended outwards from Constantinople.

#### BYZANTINE–WESTERN TRADE?

Broad economic structures had once spanned the Mediterranean and fostered Byzantine commercial interaction with the west. The sweeping changes of the seventh century naturally affected communications between

<sup>30</sup> Mango (1975a).

<sup>31</sup> Cavallo (1997); McCormick (1997). See also above, p. 279.

<sup>32</sup> Müller-Wiener (1977), pp. 288, 293, 303, 308; see also p. 313 and above, p. 265.

<sup>33</sup> See in general Mango (1990); Magdalino (1996a), pp. 17–50; Brubaker and Haldon (2001), pp. 3–30.

the two former halves of the empire. The occasional western shipwreck and growing ceramic evidence of imports confirm that, although dwindling, economic links to Byzantine Africa and the eastern Mediterranean persisted well into the seventh century, perhaps reinforced by supply efforts to the last garrisons perched along the Ligurian coastline.<sup>34</sup> But even the trickle of sea communications between Constantinople and the west seems almost to dry up towards 700.<sup>35</sup> A high-status ecclesiastical community whose traces have been recovered at Crypta Balbi in Rome was still importing some luxury wares from Byzantine Africa and the Islamic Middle East in the late seventh century. But the imports practically ceased early in the eighth century, if one can judge from their absence and a turn towards recycling and away from Levantine raw materials in glass manufacture.<sup>36</sup> Long-distance shipping routes declined in importance, and regional shipping networks emerged as characteristic.<sup>37</sup>

The reasons for all this remain controversial; certainly the causes were multiple. Networks of easterners trading with the west may have withered under the cyclical plagues, whose contagion contemporaries linked with shipping. Declining economic fortunes presumably shrank western purchasing power even before the Islamic conquests redistributed eastern wealth and reorganised macro-economic structures, fanning demand in the east. To grant Henri Pirenne his due, warfare around the Mediterranean rim probably played a role. The final fall of Byzantine Carthage in 698 disrupted a crucial pivot for shipping linking the eastern and western Mediterranean.<sup>38</sup> Even before it came to conflict, the rapid build-up of Arab and Byzantine fleets will – initially at least – have competed with merchant ventures for such sailors and ships as were available.<sup>39</sup> Greek and Coptic papyrus archives of 698–711 from the inland town of Aphrodito on the Nile paint an astonishing picture of how the new rulers mobilised local wealth and conscripted landlubbers for sea raids (*koursa*) launched from Africa, Egypt and the east.<sup>40</sup> Land travel too was disrupted: Byzantine loss of control in the Balkans blocked the old Roman overland routes to the west, essentially cutting Italy off from Constantinople during the winter months.<sup>41</sup> The structure of exchange within the territories that remained Byzantine took

<sup>34</sup> For a ship from Constantinople that sank off Narbonne c. 630–1, see Solier *et al.* (1981), pp. 26–52; the most recent appraisal allows a date later in the seventh century for the Saint-Gervais 2 wreck off the Merovingian customs port of Fos-sur-Mer, originally dated c. 600–25: Jézégou (1998); for imports at Marseilles: Bonifay *et al.* (1998), pp. 377–8; for Italy: McCormick (2001), pp. 110–11.

<sup>35</sup> Claude (1985), pp. 303–9; Panella (1989), pp. 138–41; McCormick (2001), pp. 115–19.

<sup>36</sup> Panella and Saguì (2001); Mirti *et al.* (2001).

<sup>37</sup> McCormick (2001), pp. 537–47; see also Wickham (2000a); Horden and Purcell (2000), pp. 160–72.

<sup>38</sup> McCormick (2001), pp. 106–8. <sup>39</sup> McCormick (2001), p. 113.

<sup>40</sup> *Greek papyri*, IV, pp. xxxii–xxxv; see also e.g. *ibid.* no. 1350 (AD 710), pp. 24–5.

<sup>41</sup> McCormick (2001), pp. 68–73.

new shapes, as the shrunken fiscal component, formerly dominated by massive northbound shipments from Egypt and Africa, sought new bases. And, it has been argued, very differently administered economic zones emerged in the capital and the provinces.<sup>42</sup> Byzantium's own long-distance trade in the eighth century seems to have been reorientated along a new axis linking the Aegean and the Black Sea.<sup>43</sup>

Direct documentary evidence of trade between Byzantium and the west is slim, and complicated by the ambiguity of the notions of trade and 'Byzantine'. Should we classify as 'Byzantine' middlemen the Venetian merchants who recognised Byzantine sovereignty and sailed between Italy and Africa, Egypt and Palestine? In any event, over the next two centuries the old infrastructures of travel gradually recovered or were replaced. After the nadir of the earlier eighth century, communications and also commerce rebounded smartly in the final quarter of the century; they continued to climb into the reign of Louis the Pious (814–40) and, after a period in which they leveled out, growth resumed in the later ninth century.<sup>44</sup> Although the structures and volume of trade differed greatly from those of the late Roman period, communications and commerce were again significant factors in the relations between western Europe and the Middle East.

Practically in the shadow of the Alps, the more or less autonomous Byzantine outpost of Venice rose out of the Adriatic mists from insignificance to embody this change. The ancient trunk route linking the Tyrrhenian coast with the Middle East via the straits of Messina, around southern Greece and across the Aegean had never ceased completely to function. Indeed, in 746–7, it transmitted *eastwards* to the Byzantine capital the last major seaborne outbreak of the bubonic plague (until 1347), even though the epidemic had begun in the Levant.<sup>45</sup> But over the next century, branch routes sprouted again on the Adriatic or through the Gulf of Corinth, feeding piracy along the coast. The old Balkan and Danubian overland routes, including the Egnatian Way, returned to activity, even if the Hungarians were to make the Danube corridor short-lived.<sup>46</sup>

The rare data on Venetian shipping between c. 750 and 850 point mostly to trade between Italy and the Islamic world. Muslim traders show up at Rome around 800. Slave trading ran along the west coast of Italy and involved Rome and the shipment to Africa of enslaved Europeans by Venetian and Greek merchants c. 750–75; and Emperor Leo V (813–20) was eager to block Venetian commerce with the caliphate.<sup>47</sup> Further west, it may be

<sup>42</sup> Oikonomides (1993); Oikonomides (1997b); Patlagean (1993); Haldon (2000a).

<sup>43</sup> Lilie (1976), pp. 276–9; McCormick (2001), pp. 543–7, 600.

<sup>44</sup> McCormick (2001), pp. 437–43, 786–93.

<sup>45</sup> Pryor (1988), pp. 93–111, 137–49; Biraben and Le Goff (1969), p. 1497.

<sup>46</sup> McCormick (2001), pp. 523–37, 548–69.

<sup>47</sup> McCormick (2001), pp. 618–30; *CC*, no. 59 (from AD 776), ed. Gundlach, pp. 584–5; tr. King, p. 286 (paraphrase); *LP*, XCIII.22, ed. Duchesne, I, p. 433; tr. Davis, II, p. 47; Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 400.

more than coincidental that all four of the tenth-century shipwrecks discovered off the French Riviera were carrying goods from the Islamic world.<sup>48</sup> At the head of a reinvigorated Adriatic shipping route, Arab gold and silver coins competed with Byzantine and Frankish money, to judge from the way coins found in the earth converge with those mentioned in contemporary records. They testify in their way to intensifying economic links between the Islamic world and eighth-century Italy. That people involved in this sort of contact also frequented at least Byzantine provincial centres is also suggested by finds of Byzantine bronze coins. Although these coins never served as a medium of international exchange, their presence in western Europe nevertheless indicates that the people who lost them had direct or indirect contacts with the Byzantine world.<sup>49</sup>

Merchants make only sporadic appearances in Carolingian sources, and 'Greeks' are rarest among them. Traders who do show up tend to be Frisians, Anglo-Saxons, Jews or Italians, and only rarely can we discern the horizons of their activities.<sup>50</sup> Some Jews and Italians may have been subjects of the Byzantine emperor; in any event commercial contacts with Byzantium may have been realised through non-Greek intermediaries. Thus, in 885–6, an astute observer in the caliphate described the trading patterns of Jewish merchants who alternated their export voyages of eastern luxury wares, travelling one year to Constantinople, and the next, to the Frankish court. One of their main western routes probably ran through Venice.<sup>51</sup>

A few 'Greek' merchants do crop up in the eighth-century Tyrrhenian Sea. Towards the tenth century, some Italo-Byzantines imitated their neighbours in Amalfi, Naples and Gaeta, such as the Greek slave trader from Armo near Reggio di Calabria who would not sacrifice his trade's superior profits for less reprehensible commercial ventures. A near-contemporary life of a Sicilian saint compared his crossing from Africa back to Sicily c. 880 to 'some huge ship filled with all kinds of merchandise'. Such hints perhaps explain the concession of a landing for Greek merchants to the church of Arles by one of the last Carolingians, Louis the Blind who, as we shall see, had other connections with Constantinople.<sup>52</sup> The account of the North African crossing underscores that Greek merchants, like their Venetian peers, might have found more profit linking western Europe with the huge Islamic economy than with Constantinople. In other words, western contacts with Byzantine merchants may have been an indirect result of commercial relations with the Islamic world. But this does not diminish the

<sup>48</sup> McCormick (2001), p. 599, table 20.4.

<sup>49</sup> McCormick (2001), pp. 319–87. <sup>50</sup> McCormick (2001), pp. 614–69.

<sup>51</sup> Ibn Khurradadhbih, *al-Masalik*, ed. and French tr. de Goeje, pp. 153–5 (text), 114–16 (tr.); as discussed in McCormick (2001), pp. 688–91.

<sup>52</sup> On eighth-century 'Greek' merchants, see: CC, no. 59, ed. Gundlach, p. 585; tr. King, p. 286 (paraphrase); on the slave trader: *Life of Elias the Speleote*, III.18, p. 855; on the crossing from Africa: *Life of Elias the Younger*, ch. 25, ed. and Italian tr. Rossi Taibbi, pp. 36–7; on Louis the Blind: Poupardin, *Recueil des actes*, no. 59, p. 108.



significance either of the intermediaries or of the overall growth in infrastructures which permitted and channelled relations between Byzantium and the west.

#### POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

##### *Underlying ideas and realities*

Constantinople took the diplomatic initiative in order to defend its own vital interests on its western flanks, especially in Italy. Over time both Franks and Byzantines expanded their imperial reach, and their concerns converged or collided in other regions as well. Thus Charlemagne's destruction of the Avars in central Europe opened a power vacuum into which the dynamic Bulgar realm expanded from its headquarters at Pliska some 300 kilometres north of Constantinople. Bulgaria's Greek inscriptions and inhabitants make its Byzantine cultural cachet unmistakable, and it may have acted occasionally as an intermediary.<sup>53</sup> Ninth-century Franks and Byzantines shared powerful and dangerous neighbours in the Bulgars. Wherever its political centre lay, the new Slavic society of the Moravians which sprang up between the destruction of the Avars and the Hungarians' arrival would greatly concern the eastern Franks and allow Byzantium to cultivate yet another power situated to Bulgaria's rear. Finally, tenth-century links between Byzantium and northern Europe were foreshadowed by the Scandinavians' appearance on the Black Sea, a fact perhaps not unconnected with the new north-eastern axis of Byzantine shipping, and the coalescence of a 'northern arc' of traders, linking the Baltic to the Middle East. In 839 Emperor Theophilos sent with his ambassadors to Louis the Pious some mysterious newcomers called 'Rhos'. Louis knew a Viking spy when he saw one and so informed his Byzantine colleague.<sup>54</sup> A couple of years later, the Byzantine ambassador to the Franks and to the Venetians communicated with the Baltic trading emporium of Hedeby, if we may judge from the excavators' recovery there of his seal. The idea that this may have been connected with his known mission to recruit warriors for Byzantium is not weakened by the recent discovery of a second seal in another Scandinavian trading settlement.<sup>55</sup>

Ideas as well as realities conditioned Byzantium's approach to the west. Byzantines viewed Constantinople as the capital of the Roman empire, a unique historical entity established by God to foster the spread of Christianity. Various barbarians had occupied parts of the whole but the empire

<sup>53</sup> Venedikov (1962), pp. 273–7; Shepard (1995a), p. 238.

<sup>54</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. Grat *et al.*, pp. 30–1; tr. Nelson, p. 44; McCormick (2001), pp. 918 (no. 944), 606–12.

<sup>55</sup> Stiegemann and Wemhoff (1999), I, pp. 375–6, nos. VI.78 and VI.79; see also McCormick (2001), pp. 227, 920 (no. 455).

retained theoretical claim to territories which were, for the time being, not effectively administered. This attitude affected imperial ideas about Italy, for example in Constantine V's pressure on Pippin the Short, king of the Franks (751–68) to restore the exarchate of Ravenna to Byzantine control.

A second idea conditioned Byzantine policy and was linked with the first: just as the Roman empire was a unique historical entity, so its ruler, the *basileus* – the Greek word had come gradually to occupy the semantic zone of the Latin word *imperator*, triumphing officially by 629 – was God's lieutenant on earth and incomparably superior to other terrestrial rulers (*archontes*) or kings (*reges*). A family hierarchy of powers projected onto foreign relations the conceptions that structured domestic society. The Roman emperor reigned supreme as the father of all other rulers, although the exception once made for the Persian shah was now extended to the caliph, who was reckoned worthy of fraternal status. This would give a particular edge to the Frankish imperial usurpation, as viewed from Constantinople.<sup>56</sup>

The means by which Constantinople sought to effect its aims ranged from carefully calibrated gifts to armed intervention. Religious cooperation or conversion, subsidising potential rivals and cultivating satellite powers as buffers worked as well as dangling prospects of marriage with the imperial family. A favourite tactic was to encourage hostile action by the enemies of Byzantium's enemies.<sup>57</sup> All these approaches featured in the diplomatic dialogue with the west.

Geographically and historically, a fragmented Italy and its complicated local politics held the key to Byzantine dealings in the west. The Lombard principalities of the Po basin, Spoleto and Benevento pressed against the increasingly autonomous Byzantine coastal areas stretching from Ravenna to Naples via Rome. At the extreme south of the Italian boot, first Sicily and later Calabria and Apulia anchored Constantinople's power in Italy. The loss of Rome to the barbarians – for this is how Constantinople viewed the papal alliance with the Franks – and Carolingian ascendancy in Italy inevitably intensified Byzantine interest in the new transalpine power, especially when the Arabs of Africa surged across the Mediterranean to assault Byzantine Sicily and southern Italy.<sup>58</sup>

### *Rome as a 'Byzantine province'*

Three successive trends characterised the political situation. As elsewhere in its former dominions, Constantinople sought in the early eighth century

<sup>56</sup> See Ahrweiler (1975a), esp. pp. 129–47; *ODB*, I, p. 264 (M. McCormick, A. Kazhdan); III, p. 1945 (M. McCormick); Grierson (1981), pp. 890–914.

<sup>57</sup> Obolensky (1963). <sup>58</sup> von Falkenhausen (1978–9), p. 152.

to reintegrate Italy into the imperial structure, and so to restore late antique patterns of political domination. But local and distant forces conspired to loosen Constantinople's grasp on the Italo-Byzantine societies. From the north, expanding Lombard power absorbed Ravenna in 751 and menaced Rome. The Franks would soon swallow the Po kingdom and extend the Lombard pattern into an attempt to restore a Roman empire in the west. They forcibly removed northern Italy from the Byzantine sphere and so strengthened its transalpine political, cultural and economic links that it looked much like the southernmost extension of northern Europe. The even greater vitality of the Islamic world capitalised on the complexities of southern Italy to drive Byzantium from Sicily and establish toeholds on the Italian mainland. Finally, the collapse of the Frankish empire combined with the resurgence of Byzantine power to shift the dynamics in a new direction so that, as far north as Rome, the late ninth-century peninsula again appeared as the northwestern edge of a southeastern Mediterranean world.

If Italy was the key to Byzantine and western interaction, Rome was the key to Italy. The city's cultural and religious significance outweighed its economic or strategic importance, although the wealth of its churches would tempt Arab and Frankish looters alike, and great prestige accrued to its master. It was uniquely suited to intensive cross-cultural contacts. Politically it lay on the fluctuating frontier of Byzantine and northern power zones. Culturally, it attracted pilgrims from all parts of the Christian world: Irish, Anglo-Saxons, Franks, Lombards, Byzantines, even Arabs made their way to its fabled shrines.<sup>59</sup> Economically, the restored finances of the Roman church and wealthy pilgrims created a market for expensive imported goods that began flowing again on the main trunk routes. From 700 to 900, the elite culture of the ancient city changed.

Around 725, the church of Rome was nearing the last generation of its 'Byzantine period', under the powerful influence of immigrants from the lost eastern provinces. The papal bureaucracy, the lay elite and the monasteries all show signs of Greek predominance, as some befuddled Anglo-Saxons learned in 704 when the papal advisers they were meeting began joking and discussing the matter among themselves in Greek.<sup>60</sup> The city produced Greek literature, including a papal translation of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*, and the *Miracles of Anastasius*, while surviving fragments suggest that Greek inscriptions were not uncommon.<sup>61</sup> The public face of

<sup>59</sup> On Byzantine pilgrims, see von Falkenhausen (1988), pp. 644–6; see also the semi-fabulous description associated with Harun ibn Yahyah: Ibn Rustah, *Al-A'laq al-nafisah*, tr. Wiet, pp. 144–6. On Frankish establishments, see Stoclet (1990).

<sup>60</sup> Eddius Stephanus, *Life of Wilfrid*, ch. 53, ed. Levison, p. 247; ed. and tr. Colgrave, pp. 112–13.

<sup>61</sup> In general, see Sansterre (1983); Sansterre (2002). Pope Zacharias' translation of Gregory's *Dialogues*: *PL*, 77, cols. 147–8; see also Photios, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 252, ed. Henry, VII, p. 209; tr. Wilson, pp. 228–9. On Anastasius the Persian, see *Miracles of Anastasius*. On inscriptions, see Cavallo (1988), pp. 484–92.

the papal court owed much to Byzantine provincial officialdom, naturally enough given the prominence of descendants of refugees from the eastern upheavals. Although the process is difficult to track, such families must increasingly have assimilated the local language, even as innovations rooted in the immigration flourished: the name stock of the Roman elite, new saints' cults and liturgical feasts like the Assumption are all imports from the east.<sup>62</sup> From about the middle of the eighth century Latin prevails, but a Greek heritage perdured: the person who forged the *Donation of Constantine* wrote a Greek-accented Latin, and Pope Paul I (757–67) supplied Pippin the Short with Greek books.<sup>63</sup>

Two or three generations later, the Greek presence at Rome appears to have been concentrated in the monasteries, which had received fresh reinforcements fleeing the upheavals in the Byzantine church. Papal distributions to the monastic establishments of the eternal city reveal that in 807, six of the most important monasteries and one convent were Greek.<sup>64</sup> A fragment from their liturgical services shows that one community used the Greek liturgy associated with Jerusalem when praying for Pope Hadrian I (772–95).<sup>65</sup> Around the same time, a native Greek speaker who probably resided in one of those communities contributed to Byzantine literature a remarkable hagiographical novel set in Rome and Sicily in the days of Gregory the Great (590–604).<sup>66</sup> In the later ninth century, some Roman aristocrats may still have felt nostalgia for Byzantine rule, Anastasius Bibliothecarius may have been able to compare different manuscripts of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in Rome, and the occasional Greek monk might work purple cloth or copy texts there. But the instruction in and use of Greek were becoming rarer and more private.<sup>67</sup> As Roman ambassadors insisted in Constantinople in 870, some churches under Roman jurisdiction were Greek in language, and clergy appointed to them were chosen for their linguistic qualifications.<sup>68</sup> But Anastasius, with his command of both languages, stands head and shoulders above his contemporaries. By 900 immigration from the east had shrunk to undetectable levels and the old Greek monasticism of Rome was entering its final decline even as Byzantine power surged in the south.<sup>69</sup>

In some ways, the very recovery of the imperial centre distanced the two societies; a reorganising empire sought to tighten slackened links with

<sup>62</sup> On provincial ceremonial, see McCormick (1990), pp. 252–9; on names: Llewellyn (1981), pp. 360–1; on saints: Sansterre (1983), I, pp. 147–9; Detorakès (1987), pp. 94–6.

<sup>63</sup> On the *Donation of Constantine*, see Loenertz (1974). For the gift of books, see CC, no. 24, ed. Gundlach, p. 529.

<sup>64</sup> LP, XC VIII.76–81, ed. Duchesne, II, pp. 22–5; tr. Davis, II, pp. 212–18; Sansterre (1983), I, pp. 32–4, 90–1.

<sup>65</sup> Sansterre (1984). <sup>66</sup> 'Leontius of St Sabas', *Life of Gregory of Agrigento*.

<sup>67</sup> On nostalgia, see Brown, T. S. (1988a), pp. 39–44; on Anastasius' manuscripts: Chiesa (1989), p. 198; on cloth and calligraphy: *Life of Blasios of Amorion*, ch. 14, p. 663; on the changing character of Greek learning: Cavallo (1988), pp. 490–2.

<sup>68</sup> LP, CVIII.51, ed. Duchesne, II, p. 183; tr. Davis, III, p. 285. <sup>69</sup> Sansterre (1988), pp. 709–10.

provincial society by restoring old standards of political, fiscal and religious integration and subordination long in abeyance and now newly resented. A carrot and stick approach seems unmistakable: *c.* 710 Justinian II violently repressed a rebellion in Ravenna and blinded and exiled its archbishop Felix; later the same prelate was restored and enriched. Pope Constantine (708–15) and his entourage were summoned to Constantinople for a year-long consultation and celebration of unity, during which the future Pope Gregory II's theological expertise impressed the emperor, who confirmed earlier privileges of the Roman church, while imperial envoys arrested and executed the papal officials who had stayed behind in Rome.<sup>70</sup>

### *Lombard perils*

Some time between *c.* 724 and 755, a series of distinct developments coalesced to undermine the old assumptions which governed the church of Rome's thinking about the empire. They did so at about the time trans-Mediterranean communications in general reached their lowest ebb and direct overland travel had ceased. The precise chronology and relative weight of each development is disputed, but the overall result is clear. As Constantinople reorganised, it increased the tax burden on the lands of the Roman church. The papal establishment resisted paying. Despite imperial efforts to stabilise the Arab threat from the south, expanding Lombard power menaced Rome and Ravenna ever more acutely, even as pressing military threats closer to home kept Constantinople from shoring up Italy's defences. Leo III's new doctrine of iconoclasm met papal opposition. The imperial government responded to papal tax delinquency by confiscating the papal properties in Sicily and Calabria; then or somewhat later, the emperor transferred ecclesiastical jurisdiction over southern Italy and Illyricum from Rome to the patriarch of Constantinople.<sup>71</sup>

According to their loyal biographers, the popes vociferously protested at doctrinal and administrative measures of which they disapproved even as they dutifully represented imperial power in security matters. Thus in 713 Pope Constantine intervened to quell a murderous riot against an official who had accepted an appointment in the name of Emperor Philippikos (711–13), whose orthodoxy the pope himself had challenged.<sup>72</sup> Gregory II

<sup>70</sup> Agnel., chs. 137, 143–4, ed. Holder-Egger, pp. 367–8, 371–2; ed. Mauskopf Deliyannis, pp. 313–16, 321–4; tr. Mauskopf Deliyannis, pp. 259–61, 266–70; *LP*, XC.1–7, XCI.1, ed. Duchesne, I, pp. 389–91, 396; tr. Davis, I, pp. 91–3, II, p. 3; Todt (2002); see also McCormick (2001), p. 860, no. 73, and below, pp. 438, 440.

<sup>71</sup> On the stabilised Arab threat, see Leo III, *Epistolae*, no. 7, p. 98; see also Amari (1933–9), I, pp. 350–1; on taxes, see *LP*, XCI.16, ed. Duchesne, I, p. 403; tr. Davis, II, p. 10; Theoph., ed. de Boor, I, pp. 404, 410; tr. Mango and Scott, pp. 558–9, 567–9; see also Sansterre (1983), II, p. 165, nn. 176–7. On the date of the transfer, see von Falkenhausen (1978–9), pp. 151–5; see also Schreiner (1988), pp. 369–79. See above, p. 285.

<sup>72</sup> *LP*, XC.10, ed. Duchesne, I, p. 392; tr. Davis, I, p. 94. See also below, p. 440.

(715–31) is supposed to have quashed an Italian plan to elect a rival emperor to oppose Leo III's iconoclasm and attack Constantinople, despite purported Byzantine plots on his life.<sup>73</sup> Pope Zacharias (741–52) intervened twice with the Lombard kings to protect Ravenna. Despite recognising the usurper Artabasdos (see above, p. 258), he even obtained the imperial estates of Ninfa and Norma in Campania from Constantine V.<sup>74</sup>

To judge from the imperial largesse, papal opposition sounded louder locally and beyond Byzantine borders than it did inside the Great Palace in Constantinople. Nonetheless, the pope had held a local synod in 731 to clarify his position against iconoclasm. Roman links with the Greek milieu of Jerusalem, which were ardently defending icons from the safety of the caliphate, and with monks fleeing from Constantinople, perhaps stiffened papal attitudes. The emperors' appropriations of papal patrimonies and jurisdiction were certainly not tailored to soften the papal stand on doctrine.

Doctrinal and administrative differences might have remained just that, as they had in far more dramatic circumstances a hundred years earlier, were it not for the inexorable Lombard threat. This pressure produced a triangular relationship between Constantinople, Rome and whoever controlled the Po valley, in which every rapprochement between two of the partners might threaten the third. When Rome urged Constantinople to check the Lombard threat, it nonetheless dreaded that Constantinople might sacrifice Rome to accommodate the Lombards. So, too, when the popes entered their alliance with the Franks, Constantinople attempted to bind the Carolingian kings to Byzantium – to the popes' detriment. Paradoxically, when Rome seemed strictly subordinated, relations between the Franks and Byzantines were on the best footing, for instance immediately after Pope Leo III's restoration by Frankish arms in 799.

In its last century of existence, the Lombard kingdom centred on Pavia must have had fairly intensive contacts with Byzantium, not least because of its ongoing absorption of the exarchate of Ravenna. But records are rare. Diplomatic exchanges, for instance, are known only in so far as the papacy was involved. The extent of contacts is suggested by a few hints: a Byzantine jester named Gregory entertained the court of King Liutprand (712–44); Lombard royal charters emulated Byzantine models; and in 750, King Aistulf forbade business with the Byzantines during periods of conflict.<sup>75</sup>

The same pope who convened the council condemning iconoclasm in 731 had secretly invited the Franks to attack the Lombards in what was, after all, only a classic manoeuvre of Byzantine diplomacy. In 732, a Roman

<sup>73</sup> *LP*, XCI.14–20, ed. Duchesne, I, p. 403–7; tr. Davis, II, pp. 10–13.

<sup>74</sup> Bertolini, O. (1968), II, pp. 695–701: compare the different interpretation of Speck (1981), pp. 114–22.

<sup>75</sup> Lounghis (1980), pp. 133–4; *Urkunden Pippins*, ed. Mühlbacher *et al.*, no. 183, p. 247; Brühl (1977), pp. 9–10; Aistulf, *Leges*, no. 4, ed. and German tr. Beyerle, pp. 360–1.

council very publicly ignored imperial sovereignty. A decade or two after the fact, a member of the Carolingian family remembered that the pope had promised to defect from Byzantium if Charles Martel helped him. True or not, it shows that under Pippin the Short the Carolingian clan fully grasped the Byzantine implications of intervening in Italy.<sup>76</sup>

*The coming of the Franks and the crowning of Charlemagne*

Theological tension probably converged with Lombard military pressure to drive the papacy into the arms of the Franks: Pope Stephen II's trip across the Alps to seek Frankish intervention effectively put him and his chief advisers out of Byzantine reach for the iconoclast council scheduled in Constantinople for February 754. In any event, Pippin the Short's twin invasions of Italy in 754 and 756 signalled to Constantine V that his power counted in the ancient territories over which Constantinople was reasserting control (see below, p. 444). That Byzantium viewed the Franks in the light of Italy emerges from every aspect of its diplomatic *démarche* to the west: the embassy to Pippin followed his first intervention in Italy; John *silentarios*, one of the ambassadors, had headed previous negotiations with the Lombards; he stopped at Rome to liaise with the pope before heading on to Pippin's court.<sup>77</sup> Papal assertions to the contrary notwithstanding, Constantine V's efforts to woo the Franks for his version of an anti-Lombard alliance clearly tempted the Franks and frightened the Romans. In May 757, Byzantine ambassadors pressed their case and presents, including an organ, on Pippin's court at a general assembly at Compiègne. More than simply symbolising superior technology, a Byzantine organ was a strictly secular instrument used chiefly in ceremonies glorifying the emperor. Its ostentatious presentation to the usurper king at the gathering of his unruly magnates suggests that Byzantium curried royal favour by supplying the means to magnify a nascent monarchy.<sup>78</sup>

In the last twelve years of his reign, Pippin's frequent diplomatic contacts with Constantinople provoked papal anxiety; the papacy tried to examine Frankish correspondence with Byzantium and stressed the heretical character of imperial theology. This explains for instance the staging of a theological debate between imperial and papal representatives at Gentilly in 767. The popes supplied Pippin's court with specialists who could advise him on

<sup>76</sup> Mordek (1988); Fredegar, *Chronicle continuation*, ch. 22, ed. Krusch, pp. 178–9; tr. Wallace-Hadrill, p. 96; compare Classen (1983), pp. 102–3.

<sup>77</sup> *LP*, XCIV.8, 17–23, 43–5, ed. Duchesne, I, pp. 442, 444–6, 452–3; tr. Davis, II, pp. 56, 59–61, 70–1. On diplomacy between the Franks and Byzantines in general, see Nerlich (1999); embassies between Byzantium and western Europe are catalogued in McCormick (2001), appendix 4, pp. 852–972; for Carolingian attitudes towards Constantinople, see Wickham (1998); compare Sansterre (1996).

<sup>78</sup> *ARF*, s.a. 757, ed. Kurze, p. 15; tr. Scholz, p. 42. See also above, p. 274.

the Byzantines. To papal horror, Pippin solidified his Byzantine relations by betrothing his daughter Gisela to Constantine V's son.<sup>79</sup> But the fragile Frankish political consensus which had allowed intervention in Italy disintegrated with the king's death. The Frankish aristocracy turned inwards to the succession of Pippin the Short's sons, Charlemagne and Carloman, as Italy and Byzantium receded to the far periphery of Carolingian politics.

Yet this very succession issue triggered decisive Frankish intervention in Italy. Among the reasons spurring Charlemagne to invade the Lombard kingdom in 773, the escape of Carloman's wife and sons to her father's capital of Pavia after Charlemagne pounced on his dead brother's kingdom was critical. Carloman's kin residing at the Lombard court in Pavia constituted a permanent threat to Charlemagne. The papacy's position appears ambivalent. It had worked hard to foster warm relations with the Carolingians and benefited from the virtual Frankish protectorate in northern Italy. But for all its differences with the emperors, Rome continued formally to recognise imperial sovereignty.<sup>80</sup> In fact, the year before Charlemagne's invasion, Pope Hadrian I was comfortable enough with the iconoclast regime to send his political enemies to Constantinople for safekeeping.<sup>81</sup> In any event, Charlemagne's conquest of Pavia brought renewed relations with Constantinople. A marriage alliance was resurrected and formally concluded in Rome in 781; the eunuch official Elissaios was dispatched to Charlemagne's court to prepare his daughter Rotrud for her new life as a Byzantine empress.<sup>82</sup> Rome again faced the disturbing prospect of its two major partners making arrangements over its head, when Pope Hadrian responded cautiously but positively to Empress Irene's overtures in 784 and 785 about restoring icons and doctrinal – and therefore political? – unity.<sup>83</sup>

The second Frankish–Byzantine entente was short-lived. Why it collapsed is unclear. Einhard claims that Charlemagne simply could not bear to lose his daughter and torpedoed the alliance. It is no less likely that the Franks had inherited the Lombard kingdom's conflicts with Constantinople – notably in the Adriatic, where Venice already presented an inviting target – and the Lombard assimilation of Byzantine Istria was pursued.<sup>84</sup> To the south, the allegiance of the powerful duchy of Benevento oscillated. Charlemagne's efforts to impose his overlordship met with patchy success, and the policies of the dukes there and in Bavaria – both of whom

<sup>79</sup> On papal anxiety see, for example, *CC*, nos. 11, 30, ed. Gundlach, pp. 505–7, 536–7; on Gentilly: *ARF*, s.a. 767, ed. Kurze, p. 25; tr. Scholz, p. 46; on specialists: McCormick (1994b); on Gisela: *CC*, no. 45, ed. Gundlach, p. 562; tr. King, p. 272; Auzépy (1994a).

<sup>80</sup> Deér (1957). <sup>81</sup> *LP*, XCVII.13–14, ed. Duchesne, I, p. 490; tr. Davis, II, p. 129.

<sup>82</sup> *Annales Mosellani*, s.a. 781, p. 497; Theoph., ed. de Boor, I, pp. 455–6; tr. Mango and Scott, pp. 628–30.

<sup>83</sup> Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 341 (= Mansi, XII, cols. 986B–C); *Régestes des actes du patriarcat*, ed. Grumel *et al.*, no. 352.

<sup>84</sup> Bullough (1955), pp. 161–6.



had married sisters of Adelchis, the Lombard co-king who had escaped to Constantinople – were unpredictable. Hadrian's growing disillusionment with Frankish domination can be read in his constant, vain entreaties to Charlemagne to fulfil his part of the bargain struck by his father.<sup>85</sup>

The break came early in 787, when Charlemagne met with Byzantine ambassadors at Capua, even as he reasserted his authority over the Beneventans. Hadrian frantically relayed reports of Beneventan collusion with an impending Byzantine invasion which would restore Adelchis. The invasion occurred early in 788; it coincided – perhaps not coincidentally – with attacks by the Bavarians and Avars. The Byzantine expeditionary force expected aid from Benevento. But the new duke sided with the Franks and the imperial troops were crushed in Calabria. Alcuin of York boasted that 4,000 Byzantines were killed and another 1,000 captured. Among the latter was Sisinnios, Patriarch Tarasios' (784–806) brother, who would spend the next decade in western captivity. The Byzantine defeat secured the Frankish position in Italy and left relations with Constantinople at a standstill.<sup>86</sup>

There was a complication. Even as Byzantine forces and the Lombard king were disembarking to drive the Franks from Italy, Hadrian's ambassadors were en route or just back home from Constantinople with their copy of the *Acts* of the second council of Nicaea (787). The Greek text of the proceedings proclaimed the perfect unity of the Byzantine rulers and the pope on icon-veneration, punctuated by the usual acclamations of imperial power; the whole, of course, signed and approved by papal legates. To make matters worse, the Greek text had silently excised references to Charlemagne (and the papal patrimonies) from its quotations of Hadrian's correspondence with the emperors.<sup>87</sup> Exactly when Charlemagne and his advisers learned about all this is unclear. Their reaction is not: it can be read in the enraged pages of the *Libri Carolini*. Although papal opposition ultimately forced the Frankish court to abandon the treatise, more accurately called the *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum*, this theological assault on the second ecumenical council of Nicaea was clearly about more than pure doctrine.<sup>88</sup>

Hadrian's relations with Charlemagne survived this crisis, but the Frankish court persisted in a modified version of its iconoclast views as the council of Frankfurt (794) shows, and the court of the next pope, Leo III (795–816),

<sup>85</sup> CC, nos. 49, 53–6, ed. Gundlach, pp. 568–9, 574–81; tr. King, pp. 277–9, 281–5 (partial tr. and paraphrase).

<sup>86</sup> ARF, s.a. 786, 798, ed. Kurze, pp. 73–5, 104; tr. Scholz, pp. 63–4, 76–7; Theoph., ed. de Boor, I, pp. 463–4; tr. Mango and Scott, pp. 637–8; CC, nos. 80, 82–4 and App. 1–2, ed. Gundlach, pp. 611–14, 615–20, 654–7; tr. King, pp. 295–303 (partial tr.); Alcuin, *Letters*, no. 7, ed. Dümmler, p. 32; tr. Allott, p. 42; Classen (1985), pp. 28–34; PMBZ, #6794.

<sup>87</sup> Mansi, XII, cols. 1075C–6A; see also Lamertz (1997). See also above, pp. 286–7.

<sup>88</sup> *Opus Caroli, praeformatio*, ed. Freeman and Meyvaert, pp. 97–102.

made its differing opinion known to the Roman public and visitors by raising huge icons in the city's main pilgrim shrines. In the south, Byzantium recouped its position somewhat by marrying the emperor Constantine VI's sister-in-law Evanthia to the duke of Benevento.<sup>89</sup> Starting again in 797, Byzantium attempted to normalise relations with the increasingly powerful Charlemagne, whose contacts with the caliphate and Byzantine milieu in Palestine could scarcely have escaped Constantinople's notice.<sup>90</sup> Two more legations had arrived at the Frankish court by late 798. But the crisis in Rome pre-empted whatever was cooking between the two courts, and Charlemagne's actions in subsequent months appeared hostile. The Frankish crackdown which restored Pope Leo III was soon followed by the famous visit to Rome at Christmas 800.<sup>91</sup>

In Constantinople, Charlemagne's coronation as emperor naturally appeared as the latest in a long series of Italian usurpations, the most recent of which had occurred only nineteen years before, and it was believed an invasion of Sicily would soon follow.<sup>92</sup> When this did not materialise, Irene (797–802) continued her contacts and two of Charlemagne's right-hand men travelled to Constantinople, according to a Byzantine witness, in order to discuss a marriage between the new emperor and the increasingly beleaguered empress.<sup>93</sup> Irene was toppled, however, and subsequent contacts led nowhere, as Charlemagne's imperial pretensions poisoned an atmosphere of increasing hostility. Again Italy supplied the kindling, as an internal power struggle in Venice spilled over into Frankish politics: the new Venetian leaders and two key officials of Byzantine Dalmatia shifted their allegiance to Charlemagne in 805. The result was Charlemagne's second war with Byzantium, which ended only when the Franks, whose Adriatic successes were mitigated by naval defeat and the death of Charlemagne's son, renounced their claim to Venice. In return Byzantine ambassadors acclaimed Charlemagne as *basileus* – without specifying of what or whom – in the new chapel of Aachen. Byzantine silver coins henceforth entitled their rulers *basileis Romaion*: 'emperors of the Romans' (see fig. 28).<sup>94</sup> This compromise would govern the two powers' basic *modus vivendi* for over a quarter of a century.

The compromise facilitated some military co-ordination in Italy. Arab raids increasingly menaced the peninsula's western coast, and the pope was able to act as intermediary between the Byzantine governor of Sicily and Charlemagne. Border disputes along the western Balkans were the subject

<sup>89</sup> On the council of Frankfurt, see Hartmann (1989), pp. 108–10; Auzépy (1997); on icons: *LP*, XCVIII.3–5, ed. Duchesne, II, pp. 1–2; tr. Davis, II, pp. 180–1; on Evanthia: Classen (1985), p. 33.

<sup>90</sup> Borgolte (1976), pp. 46–58; *DAI*, ch. 26, pp. 108–13.

<sup>91</sup> Becher (2002). See below, p. 447.

<sup>92</sup> Classen (1983), pp. 34, 40–1.

<sup>93</sup> Grierson (1981), pp. 906–8; however, compare Classen (1985), pp. 83–6.

<sup>94</sup> Classen (1985), pp. 91–7; Grierson (1981), pp. 910–11.



Figure 28 Silver coin of Michael I bearing the inscription 'basilis [=basileus] Romaion' ('emperor of (the) Romans') in the bottom two lines (left); on the reverse, a 'cross potent' affirms his faith and power (right)

of two Byzantine missions in 817. But the crisis of the Carolingian political structure that overtook Louis the Pious' court interrupted the progress realised by the missions of 824 and 827, aimed at a deepened diplomatic and theological union. Further embassies in 833, 839 and the early 840s found the Franks enmeshed in civil war and a looming succession crisis, which dashed Theophilos' hopes of Frankish military support.<sup>95</sup>

*Carolingians in Italy, papal ambitions in the Balkans and Byzantium's resurgence*

By the middle of the ninth century, the context had changed dramatically. The Frankish empire had fragmented even as Mediterranean infrastructures recovered and ramified. The duchy of Rome was regaining autonomy, Venice grew in wealth and power, while Arab attacks on the coasts intensified and Sicily slowly slid under Arab control, perhaps encouraging Venice to focus its future on the Levant and Constantinople. Yet Byzantine power was on the upsurge at home and abroad. Between the Frankish kingdoms and Constantinople, new centres of power were emerging among the Moravians and the Bulgars. These changes combined with the recent past to shape the final phase of Byzantine–Carolingian interaction. Frankish imperial ambitions continued to irritate the Roman emperors of Constantinople. And the old papal claims to jurisdiction in the Balkans lost none of their relevance as that area figured anew on the historical stage.

<sup>95</sup> On the pope as go-between, see Leo III, *Epistolae*, nos. 7, 8, pp. 97–100 and compare with nos. 1, 6, pp. 87–8, 96–7; on the Byzantine missions of 817, see *RKK*, nos. 642b, 655a; on those of 824 and 827: *RKK*, nos. 793a, 842b as well as McCormick (2005); on the missions of 833 and 839, see *RKK*, nos. 926a, 993b; Gen., III.16, III.18, ed. Lesmüller-Werner and Thurn, pp. 50, 51; tr. Kaldellis, pp. 66, 67–8; TC, p. 135; compare Dölger (1953), pp. 330–1; McCormick (2001), p. 920, no. 455.

The installation of Arabs on the Italian mainland from 838 combined with their sack of St Peter's to dramatise the need for cooperation. The residence of the Frankish emperor, Louis II (855–75) in Italy deepened his involvement in the complex politics of Rome and southern Italy, and consequently with Constantinople. At least two more marriage alliances were contracted between members of the Frankish emperor Lothar I's (840–55) family and its Constantinopolitan counterpart, although again the marriages never took place.<sup>96</sup> Cooperation focused on the key strongholds of Apulia, where the complementarity of Frankish land forces and the Byzantine navy was obvious. Bari had been an Arab emirate for decades; its coastal site counselled a land and sea operation. Joint Byzantino-Frankish operations were foreseen in 869 and 870 but coordination broke down. In 871 Louis II finally captured Bari in an operation in which the Byzantine sources claim they participated. He then failed to take Taranto.<sup>97</sup> It was in this context that Louis II sent his famous letter to Basil I, composed probably by Anastasius Bibliothecarius, newly returned from a Frankish mission to Constantinople. The letter responded vigorously to Basil's criticism of the Carolingian imperial title, even as Louis requested more naval support and suggested that he and Basil had agreed to liberate Sicily once Calabria was rid of Arabs.<sup>98</sup>

The ambivalent tone of Louis' letter foreshadowed how interests which had converged at Bari now collided. Both powers aimed to control southern Italy and both focused on Benevento in this respect. Louis II had turned Bari over to the duke of Benevento rather than the Byzantine admiral. But the duke soon turned on him, capturing and humiliating the Frankish ruler. Louis' further efforts to subdue the duke were frustrated in part because of the duke's new alliance with Constantinople.<sup>99</sup> Louis' subsequent death without an heir precipitated a struggle over northern Italy which Charles the Bald's short-lived success failed to resolve, even as the pace of Byzantine intervention accelerated in the south. Already in 872 the Byzantine fleet had scored one success off the Campanian coast to the relief of Pope John VIII (872–82).<sup>100</sup> When Rome itself was occupied by the duke of Spoleto early in 878, John VIII felt himself driven into the arms of Constantinople. As his letter to Basil I shows, the Roman see was now led to look with a different eye on the latest in the Byzantine church's continuing upheavals and to seek resolution of its own bitter conflicts with recent patriarchs.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Dölger (1953), pp. 334–7.

<sup>97</sup> TC, pp. 292–4; *DAI*, ch. 29, pp. 122–39; *DT*, II.11, ed. Pertusi, pp. 97–8; see also Dölger (1953), pp. 337–8.

<sup>98</sup> Amari (1933–9), I, pp. 518–23; *RKK*, nos. 1242a, 1246abc, 1246ef, 1247; Gay (1917), pp. 84–96; Louis II, *Epistula ad Basilium*.

<sup>99</sup> *RKK*, no. 1261a. <sup>100</sup> John VIII, *Fragmenta registri*, no. 5, p. 276.

<sup>101</sup> John VIII, *Epistulae*, nos. 72, 69, pp. 67, 64–5.

These conflicts had arisen despite the final restoration of icons and the appointment as patriarch of Methodios, a Sicilian who had been ordained during the few years he had lived in Rome. In fact, however, the papacy's resentment over its jurisdictional losses had not disappeared. It was exacerbated by the expansion of Bulgar power in the Balkans, that is Illyricum. Papal suspicion of the patriarchate was plain to see right from 787, when Hadrian had qualified his cooperation by repeating long-standing papal objections against the patriarchal title *oikoumenikos* or *universalis*, as well as against Tarasios' elevation from lay official to patriarch.<sup>102</sup> Two generations later new developments were to mix different sources of contention in explosive fashion: Roman primacy, lost jurisdiction over southern Italy and Illyricum, growing awareness of disciplinary divergences and the factionalisation of the Byzantine elite.

Monastic pressure on Patriarch Methodios to purge all bishops compromised under the second spell of iconoclasm was given new life by his rigorist successor, the monk Ignatios (847–58, 867–77), a castrated son of Emperor Michael I (811–13). For reasons that are unclear, Ignatios deposed one of Methodios' close associates, Gregory Asbestas, archbishop of Syracuse, who appealed to Rome. While this case was pending, Ignatios himself was swept away by a political crisis and replaced by the head of the imperial chancery, the great lay intellectual Photios (858–67, 877–86), who was consecrated by none other than Gregory Asbestas. In spring 859, the deposed Ignatios' supporters met in Constantinople and claimed to depose Photios; Photios retorted with a synod which attacked Ignatios (see above, p. 293).

At this point, the opposing factions seemed to stall in stalemate. Photios and Michael III sent an embassy to the new pope, Nicholas I (858–67), seeking his support for a council which would deal finally with iconoclasm and the current schism within the Byzantine church.<sup>103</sup> Bishops Radoald of Porto and Zacharias of Anagni, the papal legates, apparently exceeded their mandate at the ensuing council held at Constantinople in April 861, by approving the deposition of Ignatios; but they failed to recover Illyricum.<sup>104</sup> The remaining Greek monastic communities in Rome again added an internal dimension to papal relations with Constantinople. Ignatios clearly had vociferous supporters there, particularly the monk Theognostos. Pope Nicholas I convened a council which repudiated his legates' actions and declared Photios and Asbestas deposed, eliciting from

<sup>102</sup> Mansi, XII, cols. 1074A–1075B. See also above, pp. 287–8.

<sup>103</sup> Nicholas I, *Epistulae*, no. 82, pp. 434–7; compare Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 457; *Régestes des actes du patriarchat*, ed. Grumel *et al.*, no. 467 [464].

<sup>104</sup> Deusdedit, *Collectio canonum*, IV.428–31, pp. 603–10; compare e.g. Beck (1969), p. 178; see also Shepard (1995a), pp. 238–41.

Michael III the famous and contemptuous letter about the barbarity of Latin Rome.<sup>105</sup>

On an already complex situation, further complications now obtruded, as the Bulgar ruler Boris (c. 852–89) was having second thoughts over his contacts with Constantinople and approached Louis the German about converting to Frankish rather than Byzantine Christianity.<sup>106</sup> At about the same time Constantinople dispatched two veteran diplomats and missionaries to the edges of East Francia, in response to the Moravians' expression of interest in conversion. It is a sign of the rapid development of both Bulgar and Moravian societies that they now looked to conversion and therefore cultural integration with the dominant neighbouring cultures. It is a measure of their political astuteness that each explored the advantages of converting to the church most removed from their respective borders. The Bulgar initiative, which was soon notified to the pope, opened up the unexpected prospect of recovering jurisdiction over Illyricum regardless of the Byzantine emperor's attitude. In 866, the Bulgar ruler expressed dissatisfaction with the Greek missionaries working in his kingdom by approaching Pope Nicholas I, who answered with legates and a remarkable document responding to the khan's queries about Byzantine criticism of Bulgar customs. The pope expressed a fairly enlightened attitude towards Bulgar practices even as he slammed the customs of rival Constantinople (see above, p. 319). Photios retorted by enumerating western doctrinal and disciplinary deviations in an eastern encyclical. He convoked a council which deposed Nicholas I and dispatched emissaries to Louis II to solicit his help in toppling the pope, even as Nicholas sought theological support from the dynamic cultural centres of the Frankish kingdoms.<sup>107</sup>

At that very moment, the power constellation with which Photios was identified crumbled when Basil I had Michael III assassinated. The new emperor soon restored Ignatios and requested papal support, offering to have the rival patriarchal parties submit to the pope for judgement. Only Ignatios' legation made it to Rome intact, and Nicholas I's successor, Pope Hadrian II (867–72), unsurprisingly found for Ignatios. Papal legates then travelled to Constantinople for a council convened over the winter of 869–70 to sort out the implications of the recent upheavals. At the same time, Louis II's ambassadors – including Anastasius Bibliothecarius – were busy in Constantinople discussing a marriage alliance and the military cooperation

<sup>105</sup> Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 464; Nicholas I, *Epistulae*, no. 88, p. 459; *ODB*, III, p. 2055 (A. Kazhdan); for the intricacies of the Photian schism, see Hergenröther (1867–9), I, pp. 357–9; see also Dvornik (1948), which must be used with caution. Compare Beck (1969).

<sup>106</sup> On the nature of Byzantine missionaries, see Ševčenko, I. (1988–9). See also above, ch. 7.

<sup>107</sup> For Nicholas' advice to Boris, see Nicholas I, *Responsa ad consulta Bulgarorum*, on which compare *ODB*, III, p. 1785 (A. Kazhdan); for the pope's attempts to rally support from churchmen and kings, see Nicholas I, *Epistulae*, nos. 100–2, pp. 600–10. For Photios' encyclical: Phot., no. 2, ed. Laourdas and Westerink, I, pp. 40–53; compare p. 424 below.

we have already noted. The intractable papal legates imposed their own views on the council. But afterwards, they were confronted and confounded by Bulgarian ambassadors and a Byzantine hierarchy led by Ignatios, backed by Basil and supported by the eastern patriarchates, which forcefully denied Roman claims in Bulgaria. The resulting strain would endure until events in Italy drove Pope John VIII in 878 to seek political rapprochement with Byzantium.<sup>108</sup>

Ignatios had died in 877 and Photios resumed the patriarchal office. The pope allowed his legation to participate in another winter council in 879–80. The text of the Roman documents presented there appears to have been toned down; Photios emphasised that he had never opposed Roman jurisdiction over Bulgaria; he had only bowed to the imperial will in the matter. Concord of a sort was re-established. Although Roman jurisdiction over Bulgaria would never become a reality, old and new Rome were again in communion and the way was open for military cooperation.<sup>109</sup>

The need was great: the Byzantine stronghold of Syracuse had fallen to the Arabs a few weeks after John VIII wrote to Basil seeking his support, and Constantinople reacted vigorously. In 879, the Byzantine navy attacked the Arabs off Naples, and the pope complained that the detachment had not continued up the coast to receive his blessing and defend Rome. After the latest council in Constantinople the pope received the seemingly good news about Bulgaria, the loan of several warships and the restoration of Roman rights over the elegant Justinianic church of Sts Sergius and Bacchus next door to the Great Palace.<sup>110</sup> A powerful military force from the western themes reconquered Taranto, even as a Byzantine fleet won an important victory off the northern coast of Sicily. Basil I's hold on Calabria expanded considerably, as the Byzantines occupied some strongholds while others recognised eastern overlordship.<sup>111</sup> Charles the Fat now claimed his family's inheritance in Italy; he rightly feared that Rome – and even the Frankish family who ran the duchy of Spoleto – was turning away from the Carolingians to Constantinople. Duke Wido had in fact sent his own embassy to Byzantium.<sup>112</sup>

As post-Carolingian chaos descended on the north of Italy, the Byzantines briefly occupied Benevento from 891 to 895, organised the new theme of Langobardia and seemed more significant to Italy's fate than ever.<sup>113</sup> That significance expressed itself in the dating formulae of local charters or the

<sup>108</sup> Mansi, XVI, cols. 1–208; *LP*, CVIII.32–64, ed. Duchesne, II, pp. 179–85; tr. Davis, III, pp. 274–91; see also Stiernon (1967); John VIII, *Epistulae*, nos. 69, 72, pp. 64–5, 67. See also above, p. 299.

<sup>109</sup> Mansi XVII, cols. 373–526; Dvornik (1948), pp. 159–201.

<sup>110</sup> John VIII, *Epistulae*, nos. 245, 259, pp. 214, 229–30.

<sup>111</sup> von Falkenhausen (1967), pp. 19–20.

<sup>112</sup> On Rome, see *RKK*, no. 1639c; on Wido: Hiestand (1964), pp. 27–9.

<sup>113</sup> Brown, T. S. (1993).

dispatch of Venetian bells to adorn Basil I's splendid new palace chapel of the Nea. Monasteries scurried to obtain Byzantine confirmations of their privileges and local Italian aristocrats flaunted Greek court titles. Reinforced by population transfers from the east, the Byzantine south became increasingly active in the renewed writing and copying of Greek texts.<sup>114</sup> Italians made pilgrimages to St Demetrios' shrine in Thessaloniki and Leo VI invited to his court holy men from Italy, even as Eugenius Vulgarius sent him fawning panegyrical poems in Latin.<sup>115</sup>

Presumably in anticipation of the impending Carolingian succession in Italy, in 872 and 873 Basil I had reopened diplomatic contacts with a northern Frankish court by concluding an alliance (*amicitia*) with Louis the German.<sup>116</sup> Italy motivated, at least in part, the Byzantine envoy who travelled to Regensburg in 894 for an audience with King Arnulf of Carinthia after his Italian expedition. So too another embassy in 896 followed Arnulf's imperial coronation.<sup>117</sup> Pope John IX's ambassadors to Constantinople in 899 consecrated the renewed harmony between Rome and the east and may have played a hand in arranging the betrothal of Louis III, king of Provence – whose mother Ermengard had once been promised to the Byzantine emperor – to Anna, daughter of Leo VI (see below, p. 541). The question of whether the betrothal was followed up by actual marriage is controversial. If the marriage did take place, Louis III the Blind, who sporadically controlled areas of northern Italy between 900 and 905, sired the only Carolingian also descended from the Byzantine Macedonian house, Charles-Constantine, count of Vienne. Such a union might perhaps clarify the mention of Greek merchants in Louis' privilege of 921.<sup>118</sup> In any event, Rome's relations with Constantinople and renewed Byzantine power in Italy would soon be symbolised by the victorious joint operation against the Arab colony on the Garigliano river in 915.<sup>119</sup>

#### CULTURAL INTERACTION BETWEEN BYZANTIUM AND THE WEST

Diplomatic interaction had cultural ramifications. The several dozen embassies which travelled between Constantinople and western courts

<sup>114</sup> On dating, confirmations, titles and transfers, see von Falkenhausen (1967), pp. 10–12, 21–4, 31–7; on bells: John the Deacon, *Cronaca*, p. 126; on manuscripts, see Irigoien (1969).

<sup>115</sup> *Miracles of Demetrius*, chs. 222–6, pp. 192–4; *Life of Elias the Younger*, ch. 66, ed. and Italian tr. Rossi Taibbi, pp. 104–7; compare with the *Life of Blasios of Amorion*, ch. 19, p. 666; on Eugenius, see *ODB*, II, p. 744 (M. McCormick).

<sup>116</sup> *RKK*, no. 1490b, with Dümmler (1887–8), II, pp. 336–7; Dölger, *Regesten*, nos. 489, 491.

<sup>117</sup> Dölger, *Regesten*, nos. 525, 533; *RKK*, no. 1922a; Hiestand (1964), pp. 70, 75–6.

<sup>118</sup> See p. 407 above; Hiestand (1964), pp. 90–107. On the question of whether Anna actually married Louis, see Kresten (2000a), pp. 200–7; Thompson, 'The kingdom of Provence' (PhD thesis, 2001), pp. 208–11.

<sup>119</sup> Gay (1917), pp. 147–55. See also below, pp. 538, 562–3.



constituted privileged intermediaries, and much cultural exchange bears their stamp. Men of great influence led them: for instance Charlemagne's ambassador Count Hugh became father-in-law of Lothar I. Some, like Amalarius of Metz or Anastasius Bibliothecarius, were distinguished intellectuals. Amalarius, for example, used his experience of the Greek liturgy in his own commentaries and wrote a poem about his trip to Constantinople.<sup>120</sup> The numbers involved are surprising: at least fifty-five diplomats travelled between the Frankish court and Constantinople between 756 and 840. What is more, the structure and size of the parties they led means that the heads of embassies – whose names alone the sources usually supply – were only the tip of the iceberg; thus these ambassadors were probably accompanied by a very large number of attendants of varying status.<sup>121</sup>

Byzantine gifts were carefully chosen for their impact, as the ceremonial organ presented to Pippin suggests. The manuscript of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite offered to Louis the Pious' court in 827 was tailored to the pretensions of Louis' adviser, Hilduin, abbot of St Denis, who identified the Areopagite with his abbey's patron saint. Diplomatic contacts required translators; we have already noted how the Roman church supplied Pippin the Short with Byzantine experts. One product of such contacts survives in the Latin translation of Michael II and Theophilos' letter to Louis the Pious.<sup>122</sup> In the eighth century, Byzantine relics from the Black Sea area reached the royal convent of Chelles, and it is likely that the short-lived betrothal to Constantine V's son of Gisela, its abbess, clarifies their unexpected presence there.<sup>123</sup> The embassies help explain why transalpine interest in Byzantine culture clustered around the Frankish courts.

Because of its diplomatic implications, the Frankish court mediated western discussion about religious images. Launched by the debate on iconoclasm between representatives of Constantine V and the Roman church at Gentilly, the discussion echoed across the sea through the court-produced *Opus Caroli regis* and the councils of Frankfurt (794) and Paris (825). Frankish theologians joined the Photian fray when, at Pope Nicholas I's request, Hincmar of Rheims raised the matter before Charles the Bald's court over Christmas 867. The result was that at Paris and Corbie, Bishop Aeneas and the monk Ratramnus refuted Byzantine objections against the *filioque*, papal primacy and various disciplinary issues. The East Frankish bishops offered their own response in a council held at Worms in 868.<sup>124</sup>

So too the Byzantine practice of inviting foreign ambassadors to witness important state rituals explains western court familiarity with some

<sup>120</sup> *ODB*, I, pp. 72–3 (M. McCormick). <sup>121</sup> McCormick (1994b).

<sup>122</sup> Michael II and Theophilos, *Letter to Louis I*. <sup>123</sup> McCormick (2001), pp. 309, 312.

<sup>124</sup> On iconoclasm, see *CC*, no. 36, ed. Gundlach, p. 546; Haendler (1958); McCormick (1994a); on Hincmar, see Devise (1975–6), II, pp. 628–31; on Aeneas and Ratramnus, see Bouhot (1976), pp. 60–7; on the council of Worms, see Hartmann (1989), pp. 301–9.

Byzantine ceremonies: Count Hugh and Bishop Haito's embassy of 811 accounts for Charlemagne's crowning of his son Louis the Pious in 813 in a manner resembling Emperor Michael I's crowning of his own son, Theophylact, in 811. Notker the Stammerer claims that a Byzantine delegation's sweet chanting prompted Charlemagne to obtain an isosyllabic translation, the antiphon *O veterem hominem*, so that it could be sung in his chapel, and independent Byzantine evidence appears to bear him out.<sup>125</sup> Hilduin of St Denis' and John the Scot's translations of Pseudo-Dionysius both show court connections and used the manuscript conveyed in 827. Conversely, the eastern missions to the court of Louis the Pious resulted in Byzantine translations of Latin hagiography. Hilduin's fantastic *Passion of St Denis* was rendered into Greek soon thereafter, while the Latin *Passion of St Anastasia* was translated during the Roman leg of the embassy of 824.<sup>126</sup> Outside the royal courts, sustained Byzantine cultural contacts north of the Alps were rarer. Two exceptions were Reichenau and, especially, St Gall: religious houses which, not coincidentally, lay where a great complex of Alpine passes met the Rhine, Francia's main north–south axis.<sup>127</sup>

Even left to their own devices, Carolingian scholars needed to understand the Greek expressions which littered St Jerome's letters or Priscian: hence the collection of lists of Greek terms organised by the Latin authors where they occur.<sup>128</sup> The drive to comprehend the Bible deepened interest in Greek. Bilingual psalters like those connected with Sedulius Scottus' circle did double duty. The prophetic character that Christian exegesis recognised in the Septuagint gave its Greek text great prestige, while the fact that the psalms were often known by heart allowed them to serve as a crude dictionary in which Greek equivalents for Latin phrases might be hunted down. Although not every Carolingian crumb of Greek need reflect a personal contact with Byzantines, such encounters may have played a larger role than usually suspected. So Thegan claims that Charlemagne consulted Greeks and Syrians about the text of the Gospels.<sup>129</sup> Northern scribes who delighted in spelling their names with Greek letters may strike us as superficial pedants, but they were perhaps inspired by Italians from Byzantine borderlands who had been using Greek letters for Latin subscriptions since the days of Justinian.<sup>130</sup> The lists of Greek numbers frequently found in

<sup>125</sup> On Michael's crowning of Theophylact, see Wendling (1985), pp. 207–23; Notker, *Gesta Karoli*, II.7, ed. Haefele, p. 58; tr. Thorpe, pp. 142–3; compare Strunk (1964).

<sup>126</sup> Hilduin, *Passion of St Denis*; Loenertz (1950); Loenertz (1951), pp. 228–37; *Passion of St Anastasia*, pp. 86–7 (introduction), 131 (text).

<sup>127</sup> Kaczynski (1988); compare the Rhenish connections of the Hiberno-Greek data in Bischoff (1977), pp. 51–3.

<sup>128</sup> Dionisotti (1988), pp. 13, 49–50.

<sup>129</sup> Thegan, *Deeds of Louis*, ch. 7, ed. and German tr. Tremp, pp. 186–7.

<sup>130</sup> von Falkenhausen (1968–9), pp. 177–80; compare the somewhat different interpretation of Luzzatti Laganà (1982 [1983]), pp. 740–7.

Carolingian manuscripts give the modern rather than the classical names, and so derive from early medieval Greek speakers.<sup>131</sup> Linguistic contacts left tangible traces in Lupus of Ferrières' comment on the accent of a Greek loan word or in bilingual phrase collections for travellers. The St Gall–Angers list has useful Greek expressions like 'do me a favour'; one at Monza in early Italian and Greek may have been connected with an early tenth-century travelling doctor.<sup>132</sup>

Outside Europe, the Greek-speaking church of Jerusalem offered a privileged place for cross-cultural encounter. Royal involvement with Christians there is documented by an extraordinary Frankish administrative roll indicating revenues, personnel and languages of prayer of the church of Palestine. Alcuin sought a prayer association with the Greek patriarch of Jerusalem and, by Charlemagne's last years, seventeen nuns and many monks from the Frankish empire had established communities in the Holy City, one of which survived for at least another half-century, when its members were still displaying the splendid bible, presumably from Charlemagne's court school, sent to them by the emperor. They formed a natural focus for contacts among western pilgrims, Italian merchants and the Greek clergy, which explains why the *filioque* controversy over the wording of the creed arose there, when Greek monks heard Latins chanting the offending passage.<sup>133</sup>

But like political ones, cultural contacts between Byzantium and the west pivoted on Italy. As far back as the Lombard court's Greek jester, the Po basin had channelled western encounters with Byzantine civilisation. Declining shipping to the Rhône corridor and the rise of Venice only reinforced the Po's prominence. Although Ravenna's gateway role in our period has perhaps been overrated, Agnellus' historical memory and Charlemagne's export of Ravennate artwork testify to its enduring Byzantine after-life. If it is genuine, Charles the Bald's mention of the Greek liturgy to the clergy of Ravenna need not reflect its performance there. Already in 826, a Venetian came to Louis the Pious' court, promising to construct a Byzantine organ. Across the Adriatic, Carolingian *missi* grappled with the intricacies of Byzantine provincial administration during an inquest into the Frankish absorption of Istria.<sup>134</sup> Some slight evidence for translations in the Po

<sup>131</sup> Bischoff (1966–81), II, p. 264.

<sup>132</sup> Lupus of Ferrières, *Letters*, no. 20, ed. Marshall, p. 27; tr. Regenos, p. 22; on St Gall, see Kaczynski (1988), pp. 70–1; on Monza, see Aerts (1972); compare Bischoff (1984), p. 255.

<sup>133</sup> On the roll, nuns, etc., see *Commematorium de casis Dei*, esp. p. 302; see also Borgolte (1976), pp. 45–107; Alcuin, *Letters*, no. 210, ed. Dümmler, pp. 350–1; on the splendid bible, see *Itinerarium Bernardi*, ch. 10, p. 314; on Italian merchants, see *Miracles of Genesius*, ch. 2, ed. Waitz, pp. 170–1; on the *filioque*, see Peri (1971); *Konzil von Aachen 809*, ed. Willjung.

<sup>134</sup> For the argument that Ravenna has been overrated as a conduit for Hellenic 'influence', see Brown, T. S. (1988b), pp. 131–41; compare Sansterre (1992); on Agnellus, see *ODB*, I, p. 37 (M. McCormick); on the grant of Ravenna artwork to Charlemagne, see *CC*, no. 81, ed. Gundlach, p. 614; on Charles the

basin anticipates the Monza glossary, and Anastasius Bibliothecarius found a Greek manuscript of the *Translation* of St Stephen in Mantua.<sup>135</sup> The controversial Gottschalk of Orbais drew on his experience in Byzantine Dalmatia and Venice when delineating the semantic fields of key words in his defence of predestination.<sup>136</sup>

Rome was a propitious place for translations. Pope Hadrian I ordered a Latin translation of the Greek Acts of the second council of Nicaea brought back by his legates.<sup>137</sup> The Roman translator Anastasius Bibliothecarius was Carolingian Europe's pre-eminent Byzantine specialist. He translated the usual fare of hagiography and councils, but Anastasius' interest in 'modern' Byzantine literature is even more noteworthy, since he rendered into Latin the most outstanding chronicle of the period, a sermon by Theodore the Stoudite and a work by his own contemporary and acquaintance Constantine-Cyril.<sup>138</sup> A fellow papal emissary, Bishop John of Arezzo – precisely one of the legates who presided over Charles the Bald's experiment in Byzantine ceremonial at Ponthion in July 876 – may have translated a Byzantine text on the Assumption.<sup>139</sup> Rome is virtually unique in so far as it was also a centre for translation from Latin into Greek. Thus Pope Zacharias' rendering of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* was perhaps intended for circulation at home as well as abroad: a manuscript probably copied at Rome survives from c. 800 (see fig. 29); the Greek translation of the *Passion of St Anastasia* mentioned above used a Latin manuscript at the saint's Roman shrine.<sup>140</sup>

Latin speakers rubbed shoulders with hellenophones in the south. Late ninth-century Taranto, for instance, had Latin bishops but counted many Greeks among its elite.<sup>141</sup> The renewal of Byzantine power and culture helps explain the sudden bloom of Latin translations along the Campanian frontier. The church of Naples fostered rather superior translations. For instance, the Neapolitan deacon Paul sought to capitalise on Charles the Bald's enthusiasm for things Greek by dedicating to the Frankish ruler his translations of the *Life* of St Mary the Egyptian and the Faustian forerunner, the *Penance* of Theophilus. Both works enjoyed enormous success north of

Bald, see Jacob (1972); on the Byzantine organ, see *ARF*, s.a. 826, ed. Kurze, p. 170; tr. Scholz, p. 120; on the inquest, see Margetić (1988).

<sup>135</sup> Chiesa (1989), pp. 173–5.

<sup>136</sup> Gottschalk of Orbais, *De praedestinatione*, IX.6, ed. Lambot, p. 208.

<sup>137</sup> *LP*, XCVII.88, ed. Duchesne, I, p. 512; tr. Davis, II, pp. 168–9; compare Freeman (1985), pp. 75–81; see in general Chiesa (2002).

<sup>138</sup> *ODB*, I, pp. 88–9 (M. McCormick).

<sup>139</sup> Philippart (1974); Schieffer (1935), pp. 16–25. See also below, p. 448.

<sup>140</sup> Gregory I, 'Dialogues', Vat. gr. 1666. On the manuscript available to the learned Byzantine envoy who was in Rome in 824, see *Passion of St Anastasia*, ed. Halkin, pp. 86–7 (introduction) and above, p. 425.

<sup>141</sup> von Falkenhausen (1968), p. 149.

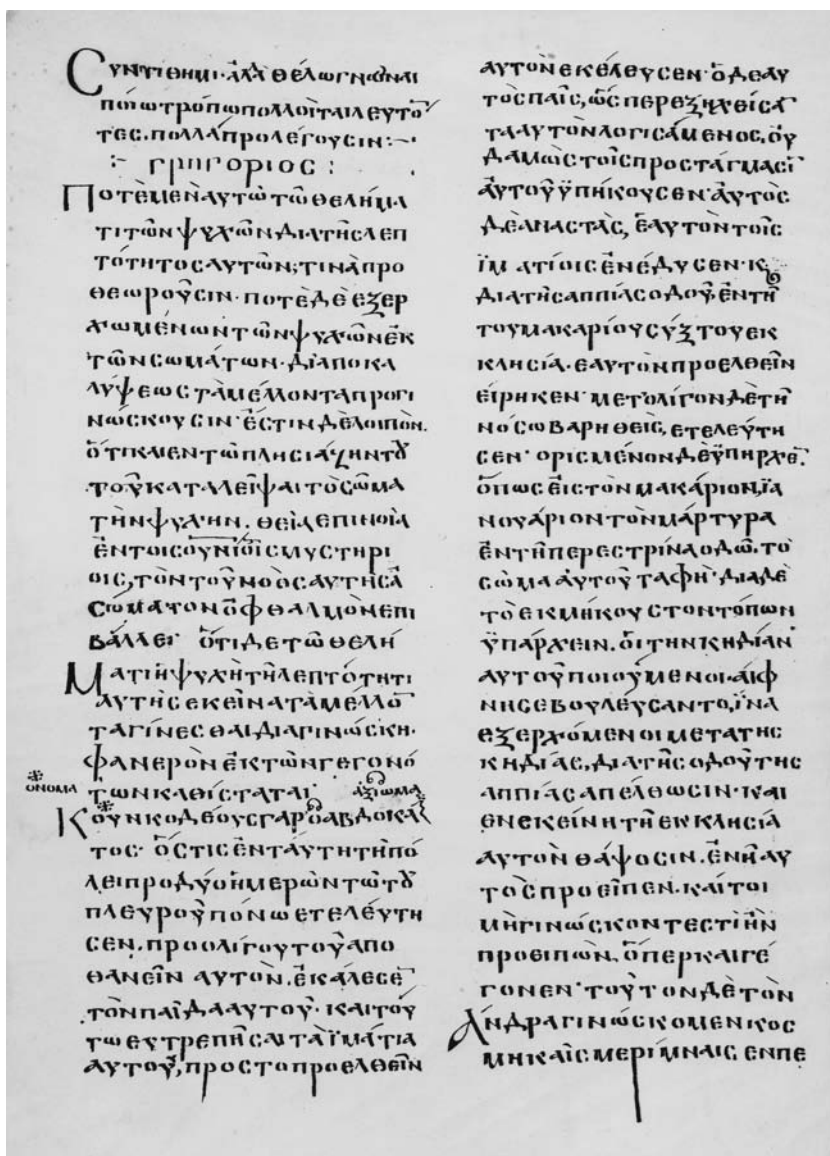


Figure 29 Latin into Greek: from a manuscript of the Greek translation of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*, probably copied at Rome c. 800 (Vat. MS gr. 1666, fol. 154v)

the Alps and fuelled the veneration of Mary as an intercessor for sinners.<sup>142</sup> John, deacon of Naples, who wrote a continuation of his diocesan history around 900 and enjoyed the patronage of the bishop and the abbot of St Severinus, also collaborated with a Greek speaker to produce Latin adaptations of hagiographical classics like Cyril of Scythopolis' sixth-century *Life* of Euthymios as well as Patriarch Methodios' *Life* of Nicholas.<sup>143</sup>

Not a few instances of apparent western appropriation of Byzantine iconography and style have been challenged. Even when derivation from 'Byzantine' style or iconography is uncontested, it is often unclear whether we have a direct appropriation from a contemporary Byzantine exemplar, or a residual rather than recent borrowing from Byzantium. The art-historical problem is only complicated by the scarcity of securely dated and localised surviving eastern items for comparison.<sup>144</sup>

Some Byzantine models were nonetheless certainly available for imitation in the west: c. 850 a party of Irish pilgrims to Italy jotted down a description of a Greek gospel cycle and left the codex at St Gall. Even its sophisticated Islamic neighbours appreciated ninth-century Byzantium's outstanding metalwork and locks. Diplomacy documents the dispatch of Byzantine luxury products like the bejewelled gospel book and chalice conveyed to Pope Benedict III (855–8). Nor were such gifts destined only for papal and royal treasure hoards; Constantinople had a shrewd grasp of the power structure at a western court and, as the lists of presents intended for Hugh of Arles, king of Italy (926–47), and his court in 935 reveals, imperial diplomacy distributed its gifts accordingly, placing Byzantine prestige items in the hands of key royal associates who were no less active than the kings as patrons of art. A prominent early ninth-century traveller and diplomat proudly bequeathed to the churches of Grado expensive reliquaries purchased in Constantinople. Nor was the traffic exclusively one way: we have already noted Basil I's bells from Venice, while the technique of making cloisonné enamel may have travelled from the west to Byzantium around the same time, and a high Byzantine official acquired religious art at Rome late in the eighth century.<sup>145</sup> Conversely, an important technology transfer in the opposite direction occurred at Rome a few decades earlier, when local

<sup>142</sup> Kunze (1969), p. 40; Meersseman (1963).

<sup>143</sup> *Life of Euthymios the Younger*, ed. Dolbeau; *Life of Nicholas*, ed. Corsi; Chiesa (1989), pp. 183–5.

<sup>144</sup> Brubaker (1997a).

<sup>145</sup> On the gospel cycle, see Mütherich (1987); on metalwork: Pellat (1954), p. 159; compare on the date Lewis (1977), p. 13; on the gifts to Benedict III, see *LP*, CVI.33, ed. Duchesne, II, pp. 147–8; tr. Davis, III, pp. 185–6; on Hugh of Arles, see *DC*, II.44, ed. Reiske, I, pp. 661–2; on Fortunatus of Grado's will: *Documenti relativi alla storia di Venezia*, ed. Cessi, I, no. 45, pp. 76–7; on enamel, see Buckton (1988); on Roman religious art: *Life of Niketas Patrikios*, ed. and French tr. Papachryssanthou, ch. 3, pp. 324–5.

kilns started making glazed ceramic of a type that archaeologists believe was inspired by similar Byzantine wares.<sup>146</sup>

Linguistic evidence yields some tentative insights into technology transfers and material culture, since words could be borrowed with the thing they designated. Of course the problem of residual borrowings is compounded by the potential lag between the borrowing and a word's earliest attestation in the rare written records. Still, Byzantium's apparent linguistic impact in this period does not contradict the picture derived from the other evidence. Most securely identified Byzantine loan words relate to expensive items associated with the lay or clerical elite; virtually all of them seem to enter usage through Italy, whether via the Po basin or Rome. Byzantium's impact on religious life and art is suggested by the Italian Latin loan words *olibanum* for incense (< [t]o *libanon*) and *icona* (Gr. *eikōn*; acc. *eikona*). At Rome, Byzantium appears as the west's intermediary with the Islamic world with *magarita* and *magarizare* ('apostate', 'to convert to Islam') from Arabic *muhadzhir* ('Muslim Arab settler in newly conquered territory') via Greek *mōagaritēs* or *magaritēs*. On the other hand, *celandatum*, a word from the good life ('fine silk cloth', 'brocade'), probably derives from Persian *sundus* via Byzantine Greek *sendes* and shows up almost simultaneously in milieux connected with the Carolingian court and northern Italy. Military contacts such as we have seen in southern Italy can be traced in words for 'catapult' which seem to have been borrowed at this time, and the Byzantine term *chelandion*, perhaps derived from the Greek word for 'eel', designated Constantinople's sleek warships in Latin. Technology is probably represented by the ancestors of the modern English words 'bronze' and 'varnish'.<sup>147</sup> Transfers in the other direction seem rarer, but so are the sources. One very likely candidate for our period is *kortēs* (Latin *cortis*) apparently in the sense of 'royal tent'.<sup>148</sup>

#### CONCLUSIONS

Despite the renewed dynamism of the Byzantine south, Italy from Rome northwards was now fastened to transalpine Europe to an extent and in ways no one could have imagined in 700. Venice was well on its way to becoming a distinctively Italo-Byzantine amalgam and a gateway city to the populations of the Po basin and across the Alps. The issue of the imperial legacy and legitimacy was posed and would rarely leave the forefront of diplomatic relations. Rome's paper victory in defending its ecclesiastical claims to Illyricum would be swept aside by the Bulgaro-Byzantine

<sup>146</sup> Paroli (1992a), pp. 44, 57; Paroli (1992b), p. 356–9.

<sup>147</sup> McCormick (2001), pp. 708–9, n. 53; Kahane and Kahane (1968–76), cols. 368–71, 380, 385, 412.

<sup>148</sup> For example, Theoph., ed. de Boor, I, pp. 467–8; tr. Mango and Scott, pp. 642–4.

confrontation and the Hungarian attacks. While Greek monasticism in the environs of Rome would not cease altogether, the dynamic provincial society of Byzantine Calabria probably provided a more characteristic note than Constantinople.

Byzantium's interaction with the west appears chiefly political and cultural. Economic links to the imperial metropolis seem distinctly secondary. But whatever the kind of interaction, Italy was pivotal, simultaneously a privileged locus of encounter and the stakes of competition. Three essential zones appeared there: the Po–Adriatic basin; Rome and vicinity; and the Byzantine south. Other secondary, eccentric zones of encounter followed the itinerant human networks that were the Frankish courts; farther afield, significant contacts certainly occurred between westerners and Byzantines in Jerusalem.

Generally speaking, the extent to which transalpine Europe controlled parts of Italy was the chief factor affecting the intensity of political and direct cultural interaction north of the Alps. Such contacts first peaked between 756 and 768. They intensified again in the 780s and once more in the first three decades of the ninth century. After that, the possibility for Constantinople to deal directly with a Carolingian ruler in Italy made this kind of contact more sporadic.

The sociology of interaction suggests mostly an affair of elites. But this social slant may in part be the product of our aristocratically minded source material. The content of exchanges is pretty clear. Elite lifestyle concerns played an important role; westerners imported eastern political rituals and symbols, liturgical pieces, theological treatises, and political and military support where Byzantium's capacities complemented but did not threaten their own. Constantinople was interested in obtaining political support on its own terms, as well as western warriors. The religious traditions of Rome provided useful sanctions to competing factions of the Constantinopolitan elite, while the inability of Constantinople to project its power there made it a safe haven for dissidents. Both societies avidly discovered each other's saints and the texts describing their wonders. The Greek church of Jerusalem sought Frankish wealth for its own local purposes, even as the semi-autonomous Byzantine outposts of Italy provided inoffensive go-betweens linking the huge economy of the house of Islam, a resurgent Byzantium and a recovering west.

In this crucial period of some seven generations, communications began picking up again, as Byzantium and the west began again to know one another. In so doing, each began to discover with amazement how different the sibling had become. Like the creed, once-identical shared traditions had begun to show slight variations which were all the more disturbing for the substantial sameness of their backgrounds. The Photian schism had been overcome, but these centuries' interaction left scars; the issues



of papal primacy, the *filioque* and disciplinary divergences between Rome and Constantinople were so many ticking time-bombs, awaiting future moments of tension. And the Carolingian claim to have restored the Roman empire, despite brief periods of mutual acceptance, constituted a permanent challenge to all that was essential to the Byzantine identity. The stage was set for the cooperation and competition that would mark the future of Byzantium's interaction with the west.

## CHAPTER 11

### BYZANTINE ITALY (680–876)

THOMAS S. BROWN

#### BYZANTINE ITALY IN 680

By the last quarter of the seventh century the Byzantine areas of Italy had experienced over a century of upheaval. Within decades of their first invasion of Italy in 568 the Lombards had established a powerful kingdom consisting of the territories north of the river Po, Tuscany and the two outlying duchies of Spoleto and Benevento. The empire was confined to the areas of Rome and its duchy, Ravenna, and the neighbouring areas of the exarchate and the Pentapolis, approximating to the present-day Romagna and Marche, and a few coastal areas elsewhere. The Byzantines had only been able to hold on to their possessions by initiating a thoroughgoing militarisation of society, which involved the concentration of land in military hands and the concentration of authority in the hands of the commander-in-chief in Ravenna (the exarch) and his subordinates (*duces* and *magistri militum* at a provincial level and *tribuni* in the localities). In many areas, such as the Roman Campania, this process was accompanied by a steady shift of population, as settlement became concentrated on military strongholds and refuges, usually located on promontories. Although the pressure eased somewhat in the seventh century, Liguria and most of the remaining settlements on the Venetian mainland were lost to the Lombards in the reign of King Rothari (636–52), and the duchy of Benevento made continual encroachments in the south, accelerating after the unsuccessful expedition of Emperor Constans II (641–68) to southern Italy in 663–8. Internal tensions were reflected in a series of revolts, the determined opposition led by the papacy to Constans II's monothelite doctrines and a bitter conflict between the sees of Rome and Ravenna over the same emperor's grant of ecclesiastical autonomy (*autokephalia*) to the latter in 666.<sup>1</sup> In two letters addressed to his successor, Pope Agatho (678–81) bemoaned the dislocation

<sup>1</sup> On Lombard–Byzantine relations, see Delogu *et al.* (1980); on the Byzantine territories: Guillou (1969); Brown, T. S. (1984); Ferluga (1991); Ravegnani (2004); on the movement of settlement to defensive *castra*: Brown and Christie (1989); on Pope Martin I's exile to Cherson, see above, p. 232. Useful surveys of the Byzantine territories' relations with a wider world, especially in the economic sphere, can be found in: Horden and Purcell (2000); McCormick (2001); Wickham (2005).



caused by the 'gentiles' and complained that lack of food forced the clergy to work the land.<sup>2</sup>

By 680, however, the outlook appeared more hopeful. In that year, or shortly before, the empire had concluded a treaty with the Lombards which seems to have involved formal recognition of their kingdom.<sup>3</sup> Constantine IV (668–85) pursued a policy of reconciliation with the papacy which was reflected in his abandonment of support for Rome's ecclesiastical rival, the archbishopric of Ravenna; reduced taxation of papal patrimonies; and a renunciation of monotheletism in favour of Chalcedonian orthodoxy at the sixth ecumenical council, held in Constantinople in 680–1.<sup>4</sup> The process of absorbing the Lombards into the Roman and Christian mainstream was facilitated when the Arian beliefs which had long served as an anti-Roman rallying-point for many Lombard kings and their followers were finally repudiated by King Perctarit (661–2, 671–88). Complete unity within the catholic ranks was at last achieved when the damaging schism over the Three Chapters was resolved by the council of Pavia in 698 (see above, pp. 117–18, 212–14). Byzantine influence was considerable in many respects, for example the strong presence of eastern clerics and artists not only in imperial territories such as Rome, but also in the kingdom of Italy; eight of the nine pontiffs who sat on the throne of St Peter between 676 and 715 were of Greek, Syrian or Sicilian origin.

Any euphoria was short-lived because the situation within the remaining Byzantine enclaves was inherently unstable. Successful resistance to the Lombards had been achieved through concentrating power in the hands of locally formed elites from the imperial garrison units (*numeri*). Bureaucrats and soldiers of eastern origin had married into native families, accumulated property locally and assumed a dominant hereditary position within their communities. This group, which probably included some more adaptable elements from among the middle-ranking civilian landowners surviving from the late Roman period, came to identify strongly with local interests and traditions; it was in a position to flex its muscles whenever it saw its position threatened by an imperial government which it regarded as remote and alternately impotent or oppressive. As a result of this process, and of the empire's preoccupation with more immediate threats from the Arabs, Bulgars and Slavs and its consequent shortage of resources, the position of the exarch and other officials sent out from the east became increasingly marginal. Exarchal power was further limited in the early 690s by the elevation of Sicily into a theme, whose governor (*stratēgos*) was also granted authority over Naples and the other imperial territories in the southern mainland.<sup>5</sup> In this context the transformation of the Lombards from

<sup>2</sup> *PL* 87, cols. 1164, 1219, 1220.      <sup>3</sup> Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 240. The precise date is uncertain.

<sup>4</sup> Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 238 and references; Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 250; Mansi, XI.

<sup>5</sup> Oikonomides (1964). For details of officials throughout Byzantine Italy, see Cosentino (1996–2000).

barbarian bogeymen to Romanised catholics served to weaken allegiance to the empire further.

#### THE LAST DECADES OF BYZANTINE RULE

The late seventh century also saw a crisis in the economic position of the Byzantine territories of Italy. The loss of Carthage to the Arabs and the general weakening of imperial power led to a dramatic decline in imports such as pottery from Africa and the east, and to an increase in the importance of local Italian centres of production. This readjustment is reflected in finds from recently excavated sites such as Crypta Balbi in Rome, although luxury imports from the east remained important, and building activity, particularly of churches, continued at a significant level.<sup>6</sup>

On a political level, the delicate equilibrium was soon upset by the autocracy and impetuosity which the youthful Emperor Justinian II displayed in his first reign (685–95). After a brief honeymoon period with the papacy,<sup>7</sup> in 691–2 the emperor convoked a council in Constantinople, the *quinisext*, or council *in Trullo*, which promulgated a number of canons in conflict with the customs of the Roman church (see above, p. 245). Faced with resistance from Pope Sergius I (687–701), Justinian resorted to the same strong-arm tactics which his grandfather had attempted against Martin I (649–55) (see above, p. 232). On this occasion, however, military contingents from Ravenna and the Pentapolis intervened to prevent Sergius' arrest by the *prōtopatharios* Zacharias.<sup>8</sup> The antagonism of Ravenna towards Justinian found expression in 695, when a number of its citizens resident in Constantinople joined in the emperor's deposition and mutilation.<sup>9</sup> Italian hostility to the empire was visible again in 701, when 'the army of all Italy' moved to protect Pope John VI (701–5) against the newly appointed exarch Theophylact, who had presumably been sent to Rome by Emperor Tiberius II Apsimar (698–705) to pressurise the pontiff into accepting the *quinisext* decrees.<sup>10</sup>

The situation deteriorated further when Justinian recovered his throne with Bulgar help in 705. The chronology and motives of imperial policy are far from clear. However, it is likely that while he harboured plans for revenge

<sup>6</sup> Zanini (1998), pp. 320–32; Wickham (2005), pp. 728–41. On Crypta Balbi, see Manacorda (2001). Coates-Stephens (1997) argued for continuous building activity in Rome, with an increase in quantity and quality from the mid-eighth century. See also above, p. 405.

<sup>7</sup> A continuation of his father's pro-papal policy is demonstrated by a letter of 687 asserting Justinian's adherence to Chalcedonian orthodoxy (Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 254), and by a reduction of taxation on papal patrimonies in Sicily and southern Italy (Dölger, *Regesten*, nos. 255, 256).

<sup>8</sup> *LP*, LXXXVI.7–9, ed. Duchesne, I, pp. 373–4; tr. Davis, I, pp. 86–7.

<sup>9</sup> Agnel., ch. 137, ed. Holder-Egger, p. 367; ed. Mauskopf Deliyannis, p. 312; tr. Mauskopf Deliyannis, p. 259. Although Agnellus' account has many legendary elements, support for this episode is offered by the known presence of Italian troops in Constantinople (Mansi, XI, col. 737).

<sup>10</sup> *LP*, LXXXVII.1, ed. Duchesne, I, p. 383; tr. Davis, I, pp. 89–90.

against Ravenna, his approach to Rome was more accommodating. Papal support was seen as crucial to the emperor's desire for political and religious unity, and the see of Rome appears to have enjoyed enhanced power as the representative of imperial authority in Rome.<sup>11</sup> Pope John VII (705–7), the son of a Greek official, was offered a compromise over the quinisext decrees, which he refused. The pope then proceeded to establish a papal palace on the previously imperial preserve of the Palatine hill, and carried out a lavish programme of artistic production, best reflected in the superb frescoes of the church of Santa Maria Antiqua (fig. 30).<sup>12</sup> The strongly 'Byzantine' character of John's programme lends support to the notion of a positive element to relations between Justinian and the pope. For example, the emperor appears to have sided with Rome in a renewed conflict with its fractious suffragan, Ravenna. At his ordination in 709 the city's archbishop, Felix, refused to offer the traditional pledges of loyalty to the pope, and with the support of the (by now independent-minded) Ravenna officials (*iudices*) submitted his own version. The emperor's despatch of a punitive expedition led by the patrician Theodore, *stratēgos* of Sicily, can best be seen as retribution for the snub to papal authority, rather than vengeance for Ravennate opposition to the emperor in 693 or 695.<sup>13</sup> By a ruse Theodore succeeded in arresting Felix and the leading citizens of Ravenna, who were taken to Constantinople and tortured.<sup>14</sup> In fear of further moves by Justinian the remaining citizens organised an elaborate local defence force under an elected duke named George.<sup>15</sup> It is probable that this new force caused the 'revolting death' suffered by John Rizokopos when he sought to take up his post as exarch in Ravenna late in 710.<sup>16</sup> The whole episode led to a turning-point in Ravenna's relations with the empire: the general allegiance associated with

<sup>11</sup> Llewellyn (1986). Noble (1984) approaches the question from a different perspective (of increasing tension and papal independence), but his interpretation is broadly compatible for the position between c. 680 and the outbreak of iconoclasm.

<sup>12</sup> Nordhagen (1988), pp. 600–10 and more recently Osborne *et al.* (eds.) (2004). On the Palatine in the Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods, Augenti (1996).

<sup>13</sup> My interpretation of this episode differs radically from that of Guillou (1969), pp. 211–18, who argues that the Ravenna *iudices* forced Felix to climb down and places Theodore's expedition after the murder of John Rizokopos. The latter chronology runs counter to the contemporary account in the *Liber pontificalis* (LP, XC.2, ed. Duchesne, I, p. 389) and my interpretation of the phrase 'sed per potentiam iudicum [Felix] expositus ut maluit' is supported by Davis' translation (I, p. 92). On Justinian II's relations with Ravenna: Brown, T. S. (1995).

<sup>14</sup> The outlines of the dramatic account in Agnellus of Ravenna, *Liber pontificalis* (Agnel., chs. 137–8, ed. Holder-Egger, pp. 367–9; ed. Mauskopf Deliyannis, pp. 313–16; tr. Mauskopf Deliyannis, pp. 259–63) can probably be accepted because (a) the episode clearly loomed large in Ravenna folk memory and the traditions of Agnellus' family and (b) it is broadly confirmed by the *Liber pontificalis*' account.

<sup>15</sup> Agnel., ch. 140, ed. Holder-Egger, pp. 369–70; ed. Mauskopf Deliyannis, pp. 317–19; tr. Mauskopf Deliyannis, pp. 263–5. George was the son of Iohannicius, a learned secretary at the exarch's court who had served for a time in the capital before becoming one of the unfortunates arrested by Theodore.

<sup>16</sup> The account in the *Liber pontificalis* is vague: 'suis nefandissimis factis iudicio Dei illic [sc. Ravennae] turpissima morte occubuit' (LP, XC.4, ed. Duchesne, I, p. 390; tr. Davis, I, p. 92).



Figure 30 Fresco showing a Seraph's head from the church of Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, commissioned by Pope John VII

benign imperial *laissez-faire* in the late seventh century turned to marked antipathy and an even more marginal role for the exarchs in the eighth. It is hardly surprising that there was rejoicing in Ravenna when the emperor was deposed and his severed head was transported to Italy.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Agnel., ch. 142, ed. Holder-Egger, p. 371; ed. Mauskopf Deliyannis, p. 320; tr. Mauskopf Deliyannis, pp. 266–7; see also Nikeph., ch. 45, ed. and tr. Mango, pp. 112–13; Theoph., ed. de Boor, I, p. 381; tr. Mango and Scott, p. 529.

A rapprochement between Rome and the empire was achieved in early 711, when Pope Constantine I (708–15) visited Constantinople, being honourably received by Justinian II and accorded privileges. However, Justinian appears to have been playing a double game: during the pope's absence the newly appointed exarch John Rizokopos had executed four prominent papal officials, presumably to punish advisers considered anti-imperial and to intimidate the pope.<sup>18</sup>

Justinian was assassinated in December 711 and relations between Rome and Constantinople deteriorated during the short reign of his successor, Emperor Philippikos (711–13), who was refused recognition in Rome on the grounds of his monophysite sympathies. As the *de facto* authority in the city, Constantine had to make peace between the warring factions.<sup>19</sup> An improvement in relations followed Philippikos' deposition in 713, but once again events made this short-lived. After years of instability the Lombard kingdom became a potent force under King Liutprand (712–44), who adopted a policy of unifying the peninsula under Lombard rule. Meanwhile the empire came under renewed pressure from the Arabs, culminating in a year-long siege of Constantinople. In Sicily the *stratēgos* Sergios, in apparent despair of the empire's survival, rebelled and proclaimed a certain Basil Onomagoulos emperor. Emperor Leo III (717–41) responded by sending an expedition under a replacement *stratēgos*, Paul, and Sergios was forced to seek refuge among the Lombards of southern Italy (see below, p. 461).

More serious was the Lombards' exploitation of the empire's difficulties. In 717 the duke of Benevento seized Cumae, the duke of Spoleto occupied Narni, and the king himself invaded the exarchate and occupied Classe. Although the loss of Narni proved permanent, Liutprand promptly withdrew from Classe and the Roman pontiff Gregory II (715–31) was able to recover Cumae. Once his position in the east was secure, Leo III attempted to reassert the empire's authority in Italy. In 724 or 725 the emperor imposed an increase in taxation which hit the papal patrimonies particularly hard; they had hitherto been exempted from fiscal burdens by a privilege of Constantine IV.<sup>20</sup> In the light of Gregory's opposition, a plot to kill the pontiff was hatched by imperial *duces* in collaboration with papal officials. When this failed, the exarch Paul sent forces backing another plot on the pope's life. However, the Romans, together with the Lombards of Spoleto and Benevento, rallied to the pope's defence and forced the exarch's troops to withdraw.

Stronger resistance arose to Leo III's publication of decrees prohibiting the veneration of icons in 727. Gregory II's vehement reaction is reflected

<sup>18</sup> *LP*, XC.4, ed. Duchesne, I, p. 390; tr. Davis, I, p. 92.

<sup>19</sup> *LP*, XC.8–9, ed. Duchesne, I, p. 391; tr. Davis, I, pp. 93–4.

<sup>20</sup> *LP*, XCI.16, ed. Duchesne, I, p. 403; tr. Davis, II, p. 10; on the circumstances see Marazzi (1991), pp. 231–46.



in the words of both the *Liber pontificalis* – ‘he took up arms against the emperor as if against an enemy’<sup>21</sup> – and the Byzantine chronicler Theophanes – ‘he removed Rome and all Italy from his [Leo III’s] rule’.<sup>22</sup> In areas such as Venetia and the Pentapolis this dispute reinforced existing discontent and prompted local army units to revolt and elect their own *duces*. When the notion was mooted of electing a rival emperor and setting him up in Constantinople, however, Gregory refused his support in the hope that Leo could still be won back to orthodoxy, and urged the empire’s subjects ‘not to renounce their love and loyalty to the Roman empire’.<sup>23</sup> Serious divisions soon appeared within the Byzantine provinces. While in Rome the population killed one pro-imperial duke and blinded another, in the duchy of Naples iconoclasm appears to have attracted widespread support;<sup>24</sup> in the exarchate there was serious conflict between pro- and anti-Byzantine factions, costing the exarch Paul his life.<sup>25</sup> Gregory’s position reflects not only the durability of the imperial ideal in the absence of any ideological alternative, but also his need to retain a protector against the Lombards, still regarded as barbarians intent on exploiting the situation to dominate the peninsula. In fact, while the dukes of Spoleto and Benevento showed solidarity with the pontiff, King Liutprand seized western portions of the exarchate.

Later in the same year (727) a new exarch, Eutychios, disembarked in Naples but was unable to enter Rome or to enforce his authority there.<sup>26</sup> When Liutprand moved south to establish control over Spoleto and Benevento, he and Eutychios found it expedient to make a surprising alliance against the pope. However, Gregory was able to play upon the king’s catholic piety to induce him to leave for the north, and a revolt in Roman Etruria in 728 gave Gregory an opportunity to demonstrate his continuing loyalty to the imperial ideal. The pope encouraged the exarch to defeat and capture the usurper, Tiberius Petasius, and Eutychios then also headed north in order to reimpose imperial control over Ravenna.

The empire’s position was soon undermined by Leo III’s promulgation of stronger decrees against icons in 730 (see above, p. 279). After diplomatic remonstrations failed, the new pope, Gregory III (731–41), summoned a

<sup>21</sup> *LP*, XCI.17, ed. Duchesne, I, p. 404; tr. Davis, II, p. 11: ‘contra imperatorem quasi contra hostem se armavit’.

<sup>22</sup> Theoph., ed. de Boor, I, p. 409; tr. Mango and Scott, p. 565.

<sup>23</sup> *LP*, XCI.20, ed. Duchesne, I, p. 407; tr. Davis, II, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Bertolini, P. (1974).

<sup>25</sup> *LP*, XCI.18, ed. Duchesne, I, p. 405; tr. Davis, II, p. 12. The view of Guillou (1969), p. 220, that Leo responded by sending a punitive expedition, is based on a misunderstanding of Agnel., ch. 153, ed. Holder-Egger, p. 377; ed. Mauskopf Deliyannis, pp. 330–1; tr. Mauskopf Deliyannis, pp. 276–7. The expedition referred to was probably intended to recover the city after its capture by the Lombards (see also Bertolini, O. (1967), pp. 35–49); but Agnellus may also have confused it with the attack of the *stratēgos* Theodore in 710. See also Brown, T. S. (1995).

<sup>26</sup> *LP*, XCI.19, ed. Duchesne, I, pp. 405–6; tr. Davis, II, p. 13.

council in Rome in December 731 which resolutely upheld the iconodule position. Leo III responded by transferring the papal provinces of southern Italy, Sicily and Illyricum to the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople. However the attitude of the pope and the imperial authorities in Italy was surprisingly conciliatory. While Gregory took a principled stand in opposing iconoclasm and imperial persecution in the east, in practice he cooperated with Eutychios in defending the Italian provinces against the Lombards. In turn the exarch appears to have made no attempt to impose the iconoclast decrees in Italy and even sent the pope a gift of onyx columns for St Peter's. Eutychios' alliance with Liutprand had proved short-lived, and imperial forces even attempted to recover some of the Lombard conquests. Lombard forces occupied Ravenna at an uncertain date in the mid- or late 730s, forcing Eutychios to flee to Venice. Possibly after the failure of an imperial expedition to recover the city, Pope Gregory III wrote to the duke of Venetia and the patriarch of Grado requesting their help in restoring Ravenna 'to the holy republic and the imperial service of our sons Leo [III] and Constantine [V]'.<sup>27</sup> A Venetian fleet duly recovered the city.

In 739 Thrasamund II, duke of Spoleto, captured the stronghold of Gallese from the duchy of Rome. Gregory III resorted to negotiation to recover it for 'the holy republic and the Christ-loved Roman army'.<sup>28</sup> Thrasamund then rebelled against King Liutprand and, when ejected from his duchy by royal troops, sought refuge in Rome. In his fury the Lombard king then devastated the area around Rome and seized four strategic strongholds on the Flaminian Way, prompting Gregory to appeal to the Frankish mayor of the palace, Charles Martel. When Liutprand returned northwards, Thrasamund was able to recover his duchy with Roman support.

Gregory's successor, the Greek-born Zacharias (741–52), had to deal with another period of uncertainty when the more militantly iconoclast Constantine V (741–75) was faced with a revolt by his brother-in-law Artabasdos. Liutprand appeared characteristically opportunistic in applying renewed pressure against both Spoleto and Rome. Zacharias resumed negotiations, obtained the four disputed *castra*, together with lost papal patrimonies in the Pentapolis and the duchy of Spoleto, and concluded a treaty of twenty years' peace with the Lombard kingdom in 742. In the following year Liutprand prepared to attack Ravenna again, and in alarm the exarch Eutychios and the city's archbishop appealed to the pope to intervene. Zacharias set off for Ravenna, where he was received with great honour by the exarch and population; he went on to Pavia, where in the summer of 743 he persuaded

<sup>27</sup> *Epistolae Langobardicae collectae*, ed. Gundlach, p. 702 (= *Regesta pontificum romanorum*, I, no. 2177).

<sup>28</sup> '... in conpage sanctae reipublicae atque corpore Christo dilecti exercitus Romani annecti praecepit': *LP*, XCII.15, ed. Duchesne, I, pp. 420–1; tr. Davis, II, p. 28.

Liutprand to return most of the territories seized from the exarchate. The pope acted independently of the empire, and appears for the first time to have staked the kind of proprietorial claims to the exarchate he had already made to the duchy of Rome. Soon afterwards, in 743, Constantine V granted the pope two estates south of Rome, probably in order to restore the pope's allegiance to his rule and to offer compensation for the loss of papal jurisdiction and property in 732/3 (see above, p. 285).

#### 751 AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

In early 744 Liutprand died, and Zacharias was able to confirm the twenty-year treaty with his successor-but-one, Ratchis (744–9). For obscure reasons Ratchis abandoned his pro-Roman policy in 749 and launched a campaign against the Pentapolis. Zacharias met the king and prevailed upon him to renounce his conquests, but within a short time Ratchis became a monk and was succeeded by his brother Aistulf (749–56). Aistulf adopted a more aggressive policy, including attacks on Istria, Ferrara, Comacchio and Ravenna itself, which was in his hands by 4 July 751. The ease with which the capital was finally taken may in part be explained by the exarch Eutychios' realism in surrendering the city in the face of considerable odds. The existence of a pro-Lombard party among its citizens – hostile to the only viable alternative, papal overlordship – may also help explain the city's defeat: this group may have included the city's archbishop, Sergius, who, according to Agnellus, had aspirations to rule the area 'just like an exarch'.<sup>29</sup> Certainly Aistulf showed himself aware of Ravennate sensibilities by observing the forms and titles of Roman rulership, patronising the city's churches and showing deference to its patron, St Apollinaris. Nor did he attempt a military occupation of the exarchate, relying on control exercised on its border through the foundation of the royal monastery of Nonantola and the foundation of the duchy of Persiceto under a loyal Friulian noble.

The long-term consequences of the fall of Ravenna in 751 proved dramatic for the papacy and for the Lombard and Frankish kingdoms, especially since the same *annus mirabilis* saw the deposition of the last Merovingian king with the sanction of Pope Zacharias, and the anointing of Pippin the Short (751–68) as king of the Franks by the Frankish bishops. Ironically the fall of the capital with more of a whimper than a bang had little direct effect on the remaining territories of Byzantine Italy. The process of decentralisation had been underway for decades, with effective power in the hands of local elites led by *duces*. Nevertheless the history of the surviving provinces is best studied by examining them in three separate blocks, since

<sup>29</sup> Agnel., ch. 159, ed. Holder-Egger, p. 380; ed. Mauskopf Deliyannis, p. 337; tr. Mauskopf Deliyannis, p. 284.

in each the relatively uniform social structure of the imperial period was gradually transformed by particular local factors. In the north, Venetia and Istria retained their imperial allegiance; in the south, Sicily and the duchies of Calabria, Otranto and Naples continued to come under the authority of the *stratēgos* of the Sicilian theme; and in central Italy the exarchate, the Pentapolis and the duchies of Perugia and Rome were the subject of a tug-of-war between the Lombards, the papacy and entrenched local elites.

#### ROME AND ITS DUCHY

Zacharias' successor, Pope Stephen II (752–7), was alarmed when Aistulf followed up his conquests by demanding a tribute from the duchy of Rome, and sought help from Constantine V. At the emperor's behest, he entered into frantic negotiations with the Lombard court at Pavia, but to no avail. As Lombard pressure on Rome increased in 753, the pope made overtures to Pippin the Short, paid a fruitless visit to Pavia on imperial orders, and then proceeded to cross the Alps to meet Pippin at Ponthion in January 754. The upshot was that Stephen granted Pippin the title *patricius Romanorum* (with its echoes of the rank held by the Byzantine exarch), a Frankish army was sent to besiege Pavia, and Aistulf was compelled to hand territories formerly belonging to the exarchate over to Stephen II. When these promises were broken, the Frankish king returned to Italy in 756 and conceded all the exarchate's territories to the pope through the 'donation' of Pippin. Although this represented a serious snub to imperial claims, an overt divergence between the papacy and the empire cannot be postulated before at least the 770s, when the pontiff's name replaced that of the emperor on Roman coins and documents. In practice, however, ties between the papacy and the Franks became increasingly close, and it is also to this period (between 752 and 771) that most recent scholars would date the forging of the 'donation of Constantine' (*Constitutum Constantini*) by a Roman cleric working in the Lateran chancery. Although it is doubtful that this document can be seen as an official production intended to legitimise papal claims to Byzantine territory, it appears to reflect the predominant ideology of clerical milieux in Rome who were working towards a wholly independent status for the 'patrimony of St Peter'.

The following years were ones of uncertainty. Widespread fears of Byzantine attempts to recover their territory failed to materialise, while the new Lombard king Desiderius (757–74) showed himself at first conciliatory, but later hostile, to papal claims. Although after Stephen II's death in March 757 Desiderius failed to deliver all the areas he had promised and Pippin was too preoccupied with other concerns to intervene, an uneasy *modus vivendi* was achieved between the Lombard king and Pope Paul I (757–67). Following Paul's death, however, the duchy of Rome sank into bitter

internal conflicts, whose key element appears to have been a struggle between an elite of military officials with their power base in the country and the clerical bureaucrats of the Lateran Palace in the city. One of the military officials, Toto, duke of Nepi, succeeded in having his brother Constantine 'elected' as anti-pope in June 767, but the clerical party, led by an influential Lateran bureaucrat the *primicerius* Christopher and his son Sergius, soon regained power; with Lombard help, they had their candidate elected as Pope Stephen III in August 768. However, serious difficulties continued, including anti-papal activity in the exarchate and dissension among the papacy's Frankish allies, and in 771–2 a coup staged against Christopher and Sergius' clerical regime led to the rise to power of Paul Afiarta, the pro-Lombard papal chamberlain. After the death of the vacillating Stephen III (768–72), a new pope from a leading Roman family was elected as Hadrian I (772–95), and he proved no mere tool in Afiarta's hands. He had Paul Afiarta arrested in Ravenna and resisted Desiderius' attempts to enter Rome and to have his protégés, the sons of the Frankish king Carloman, anointed there. When Desiderius proceeded to occupy strategic towns in the exarchate, Hadrian prevailed upon the new Frankish king Charlemagne to order their return. When Desiderius refused to comply, Charlemagne led an army into Italy, besieged Desiderius in Pavia and took over the Lombard kingdom (see above, p. 415).

In Hadrian's pontificate, the papacy's alliance with its Frankish protectors grew increasingly close and cordial, especially after Charlemagne conquered the Lombard kingdom in 774 and renewed the grants made by his father, Pippin the Short. Hadrian went to the length of addressing Charlemagne as a new Constantine in 778.<sup>30</sup> Ties with the eastern empire were not formally broken – in 772 criminals were sent to Constantinople for punishment – but in practice turned to hostility. The pope's implicit claim to independence is evident in a letter addressed to Constantine VI (780–97) in which Hadrian wrote of how Charlemagne had 'restored by force to the apostle of God the provinces, cities, strongholds, territories and patrimonies which were held by the perfidious race of the Lombards'.<sup>31</sup> Hadrian's letters reflect his constant fear of a *reconquista* led by the Greeks in alliance with Arichis, duke of Benevento (759–87) and Desiderius' exiled son Adelchis, but the pope was unable to prevail upon Charlemagne to intervene militarily against Benevento. In Rome and its hinterland Hadrian I established new levels of prosperity and stability, largely as a result of his personal position as a powerful family magnate with influential relatives and allies among both the Lateran bureaucracy and the secular aristocracy. Hadrian also succeeded

<sup>30</sup> CC, no. 60, ed. Gundlach, p. 587; tr. King, p. 287. The passage appears to be based on the *Actus Sylvestri*, the main source of the forged 'donation of Constantine'.

<sup>31</sup> Mansi, XII, cols. 1075–6 (= *Regesta pontificum romanorum*, I, no. 2442).

in strengthening papal authority in the countryside around Rome by setting up six papal estate complexes known as *domuscultae* such as Santa Cornelia, 25 kilometres north of Rome. Here he was continuing a policy initiated by Zacharias, who had set up five such complexes, and more estates were set up by his successor, Leo III. These had a number of purposes, including the securing of food supplies for the city at a time when it had lost its traditional sources of provisions in Sicily and southern Italy. However the primary role of the *domuscultae* was to strengthen papal control in the face of endemic disorder in the countryside, and to serve as papal strongholds against local warlords such as Toto of Nepi. The peasant workforce was organised into a loyal *familia Sancti Petri*, and furnished militia contingents which were used to suppress a *coup d'état* in 824 and to fortify the area around St Peter's in 846.<sup>32</sup>

Hadrian, however, experienced continuing difficulties in enforcing his authority over the wider complex of cities, villages and patrimonies often anachronistically termed 'the papal state'. These were particularly acute in areas where the papal claim to be heir of the Roman state was somewhat dubious, such as the Sabine territories around the monastery of Farfa, which had been held by Lombard settlers for generations.<sup>33</sup> Even in the exarchate and the Pentapolis, although opposition to papal rule subsided somewhat with the death of Archbishop Leo of Ravenna in 778, Hadrian complained in 783 that lay officials from Ravenna had appealed directly to Charlemagne, and in 790–1 elements in the city were denying the pope's legal authority. The pope did, however, receive additional territories on the occasion of Charlemagne's visit to Italy in 787 when the king made over a grant of part of Lombard Tuscany stretching from Città di Castello in the north to Viterbo and Orte in the south and a number of towns in the duchy of Benevento. The pope also had problems in establishing his rights to various papal patrimonies in the duchy of Naples, and it was probably to apply pressure for their return – as well as to secure the southern flank of the duchy of Rome – that papal troops seized Terracina from the Neapolitan duchy in 788.<sup>34</sup>

Hadrian's successor, Leo III (795–816), was a less powerful character from a non-aristocratic background. As a result his position was much weaker, and his dependence on the Franks for protection even greater. His first action was to treat Charlemagne in the manner that preceding popes had adopted towards their Byzantine sovereigns by sending him the protocol of his election, together with a pledge of loyalty and the keys and banner of the city of Rome. Matters were brought to a head by a coup in 799, when aristocratic elements associated with Hadrian I accused Leo of various

<sup>32</sup> Christie, Neil (ed.) (1991), pp. 6–8.      <sup>33</sup> Costambeys (2007).

<sup>34</sup> CC, nos. 61, 64, ed. Gundlach, pp. 588, 591–2; tr. King, pp. 288, 289–90.

offences and sought to arrest and mutilate him. Leo fled first to Spoleto and then across the Alps where he met Charlemagne at Paderborn. He then returned in the autumn with an investigating commission of bishops and officials in order to restore his position in Rome. In the following November Charlemagne visited Rome and was crowned emperor in St Peter's on Christmas Day 800. The intentions of the parties involved in this event are the subject of considerable scholarly debate. We will merely note that the papacy's action represents the culmination of a long process of distancing from the Byzantine empire, and that one possible motive for Charlemagne may have been to win support in the 'Roman areas' of Italy such as the exarchate and Rome by exploiting vestigial nostalgia for the Roman imperial title.<sup>35</sup>

As a result of the events of 800, Rome burnt its boats with the Byzantine empire on a political level. An alternative ideological model was instituted, clerical control of the government was enhanced, and Frankish influence became more marked. The pope adopted a strongly pro-Frankish policy – as long as the Carolingian empire lasted, until 888 – and the chronicler Theophanes the Confessor wrote, 'now Rome is in the hands of the Franks'.<sup>36</sup> Thus in 817 Louis the Pious (814–40) issued the privilege known as the *Ludovicianum*, in which the grants of his father and grandfather – Charlemagne and Pippin the Short – were tidied up and made more precise on terms favourable to the papacy.<sup>37</sup> In 824, however, a less generous line was taken by the *Constitutio Romana*, which weakened the papacy's independence by setting up two *missi* in Rome – one papal and one imperial – and by demanding from the Romans an oath of loyalty to the western empire.<sup>38</sup> Byzantium remained a factor, but only of limited importance, in the first half of the ninth century. Fears were expressed of plans for a Byzantine *reconquista*, and there may well have been links between the eastern empire and elements of the secular aristocracy nostalgic for the Byzantine period and eager for an end to the influence of the 'barbarian' Franks. Certainly in 853 a *magister militum*, Gratian, was accused of accepting Byzantine bribes. The situation changed, however, as a result of the growing threat of Muslim naval power to the coasts of Italy, especially after the Muslims' occupation

<sup>35</sup> Classen (1952). Such a policy certainly appears to have had the desired effect in Ravenna since the normally xenophobic local writer Agnellus accepted the legitimacy of Charlemagne's imperial title: Agnell., ch. 94, ed. Holder-Egger, p. 338; ed. Mauskopf Deliyannis, p. 259; tr. Mauskopf Deliyannis, p. 207; see also Brown, T. S. (1986), pp. 109–10; above, pp. 417–18.

<sup>36</sup> Theoph., ed. de Boor, I, p. 472; tr. Mango and Scott, p. 649.

<sup>37</sup> Louis I, *Pactum Ludovicianum*, ed. Sickel. Louis promised not to interfere in papal jurisdiction or to intervene in papal elections.

<sup>38</sup> *Constitutio Romana*, ed. Boretius. Noble (1984), p. 308, argues that the traditional contrast between the two documents is exaggerated and that the *Constitutio* was a logical extension of the *Ludovicianum*. Useful as this corrective view is, it has to be remembered that from 822 Italy was under the direct rule of Lothar I who in general took a firmer line with the papacy than his father, Louis the Pious.

of Bari and their sack of St Peter's in 846. Although the papacy looked primarily to the Frankish emperor Louis II (855–75) to deal with the Saracen danger, it supported his attempts to secure Byzantine naval cooperation, and when Louis' efforts in southern Italy proved a failure, Pope John VIII (872–82) resorted increasingly to diplomatic overtures to Byzantium aimed at involving the empire in a Christian enterprise against the infidel. These papal efforts were not crowned with success, however, before the early tenth century.<sup>39</sup>

On an ecclesiastical level, relations with Byzantium were strained by the second wave of iconoclasm in the east (815–43) and even after the restoration of icons, contentious issues remained. The transfer of jurisdiction and patrimonies in southern Italy and Illyricum to the patriarchate of Constantinople and the closely associated problem of authority over missions to the Balkans proved sources of conflict, especially during the pontificate of Nicholas I (858–67) (see above, p. 299). Nevertheless the papacy retained its claims to primacy over the eastern as well as the western churches, and Rome remained a magnet for eastern pilgrims and exiles. In many respects Rome remained within the Byzantine cultural orbit. Eastern artistic influence on the city remained strong, expressed through a flow of liturgical objects and in all probability also an influx of artists. A number of Greek monasteries continued to flourish in the city, and Rome became a major centre of translation activity, best exemplified by the Latin versions of Greek historical and hagiographical texts produced by the papal librarian, Anastasius Bibliothecarius (see above, p. 427).

On an institutional level, the extent and durability of the Romano-Byzantine inheritance in the duchy of Rome has been a subject of controversy, mainly because of the paucity of evidence for the ninth century. Certain titles from the imperial period continue, such as consul, *dux* and *magister militum*, while others, such as *tribunus*, disappear. There is similar uncertainty over whether the apparently lay judges known as *iudices dativi* constitute a survival from the Roman period. It is clear that any notion of a strong centralised secular authority on the traditional Byzantine model has to be rejected. This had already broken down in the last decades of imperial rule, to be replaced by a decentralised power system in the hands of local warlords. On the other hand, it is likely that most of the families to which the latter belonged established their position in the Byzantine period, and they remained deeply attached to the old imperial titles, even though these were used in an increasingly vague and debased way. In the city of Rome certain institutions persist which can be traced to the imperial past, such as the local militia units (*scholae*) and the strong sense of

<sup>39</sup> Brown, T. S. (1988a), p. 38. See also below, pp. 538, 563. Rome's continuously complex and dynamic relations with Byzantium are reflected in many of the studies in Smith (ed.) (2000).



public rights and property, but these were taken over and transformed under papal control. The papal bureaucracy modelled its workings and titles on that of the Byzantine empire. In certain respects the popes themselves can be seen behaving in self-conscious imitation of emperors, as with Gregory IV's (827–44) naming of the refortified Ostia as Gregoriopolis and Leo IV's (847–55) short-lived foundation of Leopoli following the Arab attack on nearby Civitavecchia. In general there appears to have been a striking nostalgia for all things Byzantine, especially in the sphere of titles, names and dress. This became if anything stronger as the century progressed, with growing disenchantment at Frankish barbarism and impotence. Northern writers pointed to the resemblance between the Romans and the Greeks, especially in the pejorative sense of their effeminacy and cowardliness.<sup>40</sup> The impact of 'une sorte de snobisme byzantinisant'<sup>41</sup> proved more than a passing fashion, since it helped to build support for renewed political relations between the Roman elite and Byzantium in the tenth century.

#### THE EXARCHATE AND THE PENTAPOLIS<sup>42</sup>

The other major area within the central bloc of formerly Byzantine territories – the exarchate and the Pentapolis – was also claimed by the popes after 751, but their authority there was always much less effective. These two closely related areas had developed such strong local institutions in the last decades of imperial rule that the area's takeover by Aistulf had little effect. Ravenna remained dominant as the political and economic centre of the whole region, but power became concentrated in the hands of the city's archbishop, whose church controlled extensive patrimonies from Ferrara to Perugia and whose patronage secured him the allegiance of local elites throughout Romagna and the Marche. The short-lived Lombard overlordship appears to have been benign, and the king was compelled to hand over both areas to papal authority in 755, in accordance with a peace agreement made at Pavia.<sup>43</sup> This settlement aroused bitter opposition in Ravenna and, when Pope Stephen II decided to visit Ravenna in that year in order to make the necessary administrative arrangements, he was refused admission into the city by the local lay and clerical aristocracy, with the apparent connivance of Archbishop Sergius (744–69). A second Frankish expedition proved necessary to make Aistulf fulfil his promises, and a commission of Frankish officials led by Abbot Fulrad was sent to the exarchate.

<sup>40</sup> For references, see Toubert (1973), II, p. 1007.

<sup>41</sup> The phrase is that of Toubert (1973), I, p. 697, n. 1.

<sup>42</sup> For valuable studies, which deal at length with these areas before and after 751, see Berardi *et al.* (eds.) (1990–6), II.1, II.2 (ed. A. Carile) and *Atti* 17.

<sup>43</sup> The tangled history of the early years of papal rule over the exarchate has been convincingly clarified by Bertolini, O. (1950) and a number of other articles republished in Bertolini, O. (1968).

Stephen II despatched two influential Romans, the priest Philip and Duke Eustachius to assume authority in his name; they succeeded in sending the leaders of the local opposition to Rome, where they were imprisoned. Papal administrators such as a *vestararius* were then sent to the area, but it is unclear how much practical power they were able to exercise. Certainly they faced widespread obstruction and hostility from the local population, and considerable *de facto* power remained in the hands of the archbishop, whom Agnellus of Ravenna describes as ruling the areas 'just like an exarch' and 'arranging everything as the Romans [i.e. the Byzantines] were accustomed to doing'.<sup>44</sup> When Archbishop Sergius entered into negotiations with Aistulf to re-establish Lombard rule, he too was arrested and sent to Rome for trial by a tribunal of judges. At that moment Stephen II died, and his successor as pope, his brother Paul I, considered it expedient to reach a compromise, possibly out of fear of a Byzantine attempt to reconquer the exarchate. Sergius was therefore sent back to his city with the right to conduct the day-to-day administration while the pope's overall authority was upheld.

This arrangement seems to have worked relatively well until Sergius' death in 769. The Lombard king Desiderius then joined forces with local military elements led by Maurice, duke of Rimini, to impose a strongly anti-Roman cleric named Michael as archbishop, but he was deposed after a year as a result of popular outrage at his avarice and the arrival of Frankish *missi*. However, the next, legitimately elected, archbishop, Leo (771–8), was equally hostile to papal claims and proceeded to send an embassy to Charlemagne, much to the anger of Pope Hadrian I. The pope complained to Charlemagne that Leo had taken over the cities of Faenza, Forlì, Cesena, Sarsina, Comacchio and Ferrara and expelled papal officials in them and in Ravenna itself. Charlemagne took no immediate steps against Leo, who went on a personal visit to Francia to defend his position in the spring of 775. Charlemagne's reactions are unclear, but Leo certainly behaved as if he had independent control of the exarchate. He claimed that King Desiderius had granted him Bologna and Imola, had prevented papal representatives from obtaining oaths of loyalty to St Peter, had expelled papal officials and had imprisoned a certain Dominicus, appointed count of Gavello by the pope.<sup>45</sup>

After the bitter resistance to the papacy led by Archbishops Sergius and Leo, the situation appears to have become more settled for the greater part of Charlemagne's reign, probably as a result of a compromise agreement.<sup>46</sup> The popes retained overall political authority, together with extensive but imprecisely known rights and lands. At the same time practical power was largely

<sup>44</sup> Agnell., ch. 159, ed. Holder-Egger, p. 380; ed. Mauskopf Deliyannis, p. 337; tr. Mauskopf Deliyannis, p. 284. In general, see Fasoli (1979).

<sup>45</sup> CC, no. 54, ed. Gundlach, p. 577; tr. King, pp. 282–3.

<sup>46</sup> Noble (1984), pp. 172, 251 terms this arrangement a 'double dyarchy'.

in the hands of the archbishop by virtue of his vast patrimonies, his close political and economic ties with the local aristocracy, and his traditional role as focus for the exarchate's traditions and aspirations. The details of these rights and powers cannot be reconstructed from the very patchy sources; even the lively, contemporary local writer Agnellus (*fl.* c. 840) is of little help, since the biographies of most of the bishops of this period are missing in the one surviving manuscript of his work. In addition, the presence of the Frankish rulers as kings of Italy complicated matters; even though most of them respected papal claims, they were susceptible to the imperial associations of Ravenna and aware of the strategic importance of the area with its seaports on the Adriatic and its proximity to the Byzantine possessions in Venetia. Frankish *missi* were also active in the area; Pope Leo III shows awareness of this in letters addressed to Charlemagne: he complains of scandalous utterances made to visiting *missi* by Archbishop Valerius (806–10); and judgements made by *missi* in favour of the papacy were being flouted.<sup>47</sup> This interest of the Franks in the region was exploited with some success by the archbishops of Ravenna in order to obtain privileges.<sup>48</sup>

The rule of Pope Leo III appears to have been particularly unpopular in Ravenna and encouraged the archbishops to solicit Frankish support. Charlemagne seems to have turned a deaf ear to such requests, but the strongly anti-Roman Archbishop Martin (810–17) apparently had success in winning Frankish support against papal claims through a mixture of sycophancy and bribes. The line taken by his successor, Petronax (817–34) was arguably more pro-papal, to judge from critical allusions in Agnellus' work and the privilege which he received from Pope Paschal I (817–24) in 819. When Louis the Pious' son Lothar I took effective control as king of Italy in 822, he seems to have built up strong links with major sees such as Ravenna. The next archbishop, George (834–846), attempted to exploit Lothar's poor relations with Rome to undermine the papal position, and his policy may have been to seek a return to the autocephalous status granted by Constans II rather than the more limited autonomy sought by Sergius and Leo.<sup>49</sup> Certainly the gradual penetration of Frankish authority continued within the exarchate, as is demonstrated by a legal case brought about by the *advocatus* of the archbishop and decided by imperial *missi* at Rovigo in 838.<sup>50</sup> However, George incurred the opposition of his clergy through his personal greed and his costly recourse to bribery of his royal benefactors.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Leo III, *Epistolae*, nos. 2, 9, pp. 91, 101: the expression used in the former is *turpitudine*.

<sup>48</sup> For details of what follows, see Brown, T. S. (1990).

<sup>49</sup> The suggestion is that of Fasoli (1979), p. 102.

<sup>50</sup> *Placiti del 'Regnum Italiae'*, ed. Manaresi, I, no. 43, pp. 139–44.

<sup>51</sup> George's personal visit to Lothar in 841 ended in fiasco when his imperial patron was defeated by his brother, Louis the German, and half-brother, Charles the Bald, at the battle of Fontenoy and the see's treasures were plundered: Agnel., ch. 174, ed. Holder-Egger, pp. 389–91; ed. Mauskopf Deliyannis, pp. 354–7; tr. Mauskopf Deliyannis, pp. 301–4.

Even more bitter hostility to papal overlordship broke out under archbishops Deusdedit (846–50) and John VIII (850–78). The latter dominated the exarchate in conjunction with his brother Duke Gregory and displayed his independence at the time of his consecration by altering the pledges of loyalty to the papacy and Frankish empire which new prelates were expected to sign. He cooperated closely with Louis II, who may have been attempting to incorporate the exarchate within the kingdom of Italy. Unfortunately, like other ambitious Ravenna prelates, he appears to have feathered his own nest and alienated local interests in his opposition to Rome. In February 861, Pope Nicholas I responded to complaints against John by summoning a council in Rome. There the archbishop was excommunicated for heresy, violation of the rights of his clergy, especially his suffragan bishops, and interference with Roman rights in the exarchate. John's appeals to Louis for help proved fruitless, and in a second council of November 861 John acknowledged his guilt and suffered the humiliation of receiving back his see from the pope on strict conditions. Nevertheless, he continued to make trouble for Nicholas I's successors, and was roundly denounced in Pope John VIII's (872–82) letters for usurpation of papal property.<sup>52</sup> The crisis over the succession to the Frankish empire which followed the death of Louis II in 875 gave Archbishop John new opportunities. He sided with the Roman faction led by Formosus, bishop of Porto, which supported Louis the German and Charles the Bald, and in 876 armed pro-Formosan elements sacked the property of papal followers, seized the keys of Ravenna from the papal *vestararius* and handed them over to the archbishop.<sup>53</sup>

Despite their difficulties, the popes had some success in countering this separatist feeling through the backing of their officials and pro-Roman elements in the exarchate and by holding regular councils in Ravenna, as in 874, 877 and 898. Thus Archbishop Romanus (878–88) was excommunicated for his anti-Roman policy in 881 and failed in his attempt to appoint his successor. However, an important change in the balance of forces occurred towards the close of the ninth century. The rule of the Carolingian emperors was replaced by that of local Italian monarchs, who visited the exarchate more often and held assemblies representing their whole kingdom in Ravenna. As a result the exarchate and the Pentapolis became more integrated into the kingdom of Italy, as is reflected in the dating system of documents from Ravenna from around 898 on. Since royal authority was weak, the main beneficiaries were the archbishops who retained their metropolitan status and great prestige, wealth and patronage networks.<sup>54</sup> By the end of the ninth century, however, the area had lost

<sup>52</sup> Belletzkic (1980). <sup>53</sup> John VIII, *Fragmenta registri*, no. 62, p. 312.

<sup>54</sup> Fasoli (1979), pp. 106–9. The exact date and significance of the exarchate's incorporation within the kingdom of Italy is the subject of debate. Some ties with Rome remained, as is shown by Archbishop John IX's election as Pope John X (914–28).

much of its traditional Romano-Byzantine character; a centralised administration system had been replaced by family and patrimonial ties between the Ravenna elite and local elements, and dynastic links were beginning to be forged with neighbouring Germanic families from Tuscany and the Po valley.<sup>55</sup>

The nature of the Byzantine legacy in the exarchate is difficult to assess despite the comparative wealth of evidence, furnished especially by Agnellus and the papyrus and parchment documents preserved by the church of Ravenna.<sup>56</sup> The evidence of the documents reveals remarkable continuity in the Greek and Roman names employed, in the use of Romano-Byzantine titles such as *magister militum*, *dux*, *tribunus* and consul, in the division and management of land, and, most significantly, in the close relations of the lay military elite with the see of Ravenna. This nexus was cemented through the leasing out of church land on generous terms, a practice deriving from an officially encouraged policy of the imperial period.<sup>57</sup> Paradoxically, clear Greek cultural elements were limited in Ravenna, the residence of the emperor's representative. Although there is some evidence for the continued existence of Greek monasteries after 751, it is very limited compared with Rome, and the liturgical or other influence from the east on the see was slight. Nor is there any trace of the translation activity or literary composition in Greek so evident in Rome.<sup>58</sup> Although Agnellus' work includes a sizeable number of Greek terms, his attitude to the Byzantines is one of contempt, and this view was apparently shared by most of his compatriots.<sup>59</sup> A letter which Patriarch Photios (858–67, 877–86) addressed to the archbishop of Ravenna is likely to have been less a reflection of the traditional links between Ravenna and the east than a desire to cause difficulties for the pope with a prelate known to be independent-minded.<sup>60</sup> Even so, there may have been a vestigial attachment to the eastern empire in certain outlying areas of the exarchate, especially those close to the Byzantine province of Venetia; thus a document from Rovigo near Padua was dated by the regnal years of the Byzantine emperors as late as 826.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Fasoli (1979), pp. 110–11; Curradi (1977).

<sup>56</sup> See Agnel., and also *Die nichtliterarischen lateinischen Papyri*, ed. Tjäder, which includes documents up to 700. The collection known as the *Codex bavarus*, ed. Rabotti, records transactions as early as the seventh century. The parchment documents (rare for the eighth century and before, more numerous for the ninth century) are published in *Chartae Latinae antiquiores*, ed. Cavallo and Nicolaj: for the ninth-century ones, see pt. 54 (Italy XXVI, Ravenna I, 2000) and pt. 55 (Italy XXVII, Ravenna II, 1999).

<sup>57</sup> Brown, T. S. (1979).

<sup>58</sup> Brown, T. S. (1988b), pp. 148–9; Sansterre (1983), I. Translation activity, especially of medical works, had been common in the sixth century.

<sup>59</sup> See for example Agnel., ch. 140, ed. Holder-Egger, p. 369; ed. Mauskopf Deliyannis, p. 317; tr. Mauskopf Deliyannis, p. 264.

<sup>60</sup> Phot., no. 267, ed. Laourdas and Westerink, II, pp. 217–18.

<sup>61</sup> The document is referred to in a Frankish *placitum* of 838: *Placiti del 'Regnum Italiae'*, ed. Manaresi, I, no. 43, p. 142.

## VENICE AND ISTRIA

In the early stages of imperial rule in Italy *Venetia et Istria* constituted a single province but at some stage in the seventh century it was divided in two. Istria embraced most of the peninsula, but its northern limits are uncertain, since it came under continual pressure from Lombards, Avars and especially Slavs. Extremely little is known of it during the imperial period, and it fell into Lombard hands for brief periods in or soon after 751 and again between 768 and 772. By 774 it was once more in the eastern emperor's possession, but at some stage in the late eighth century it was conquered by the Franks, possibly at the time of Charlemagne's victory over the Byzantines in southern Italy in 788.<sup>62</sup> It is all the more ironic that the most informative document on the society of Byzantine Italy survives from this obscure region and from the period immediately after imperial rule. In 804 three Frankish *missi* met at Rižana with the patriarch of Grado, the duke of Istria, the local bishops and 172 representatives of the local towns to examine the rights and exactions customary in the times of the Greeks. The resulting report, known as the Plea of Rižana (or Risano) reveals the considerable local power exercised by the landowners and their leaders (*primates*); their attachment to their military offices (such as tribune) and to the titles obtained from the eastern empire (*hypatos* or consul); and the relatively low level of taxes paid to the empire.<sup>63</sup>

Istria's neighbour to the west, Venetia, remained under Byzantine authority and experienced the most dramatic development in our period. The area also presents serious problems because the evidence is scanty and often late and unreliable. The islands of the lagoon from Chioggia in the south-west to Grado in the north-east had received an influx of refugees at the time of the Lombard invasion of 568 and became the predominant element of the Byzantine province of Venetia when the mainland city of Oderzo fell to the Lombards and the residence of the *magister militum* or governor was transferred to Eraclea (also known as Cittanova). The area followed the general pattern of Byzantine Italy, with political and economic power concentrated in the hands of a local elite drawn from the ranks of the imperial garrison but increasingly identified with local interests. Within the islands, however, economic activity must have been based on fishing and local trade as much as agriculture. It was probably as a result of its growing trading role that the duchy was able to make an agreement with the Lombard king Liutprand which defined its boundaries on the mainland.<sup>64</sup> The area's distinctiveness

<sup>62</sup> Ferluga (1988), pp. 174–5; Carile (1996). See also above, p. 426.

<sup>63</sup> *Plea of Rižana*, ed. Manaresi, I, no. 17, pp. 50–6; ed. and Italian tr. Petranović and Margetić, pp. 56–69; Guillou (1969), pp. 294–307. The tax paid by nine towns amounted to 344 *solidi mancosi* in addition to levies in kind and labour exacted by the duke and various obligations to the church, over which there was an argument. See also McCormick (1998b), pp. 47–51.

<sup>64</sup> Referred to in *Pactum Lotharii*, ch. 26, p. 135.

was fostered by the existence of its ecclesiastical structures separate from the mainland under the authority of the patriarch of Grado.

According to later tradition, a period of a century and a half of rule by the indigenous nobility of *tribuni* was followed by the election of the first local doge or duke, supposedly in 697 or c. 715.<sup>65</sup> In reality this event only occurred in 727, with the election of the Eraclean leader Ursus, and it was part of a more general process. As we have seen, many provinces elected their own *duces* that year as a result of general discontent with the policies of Emperor Leo III (see above, p. 441). The step also turned out not to denote a decisive break with the empire, since Ursus was soon recognised by the Byzantines as an autonomous *dux* with the title of *hypatos*, and the area's continued loyalty to the empire was demonstrated by the help given to the exarch Eutychios in recovering Ravenna in the 730s. As elsewhere, the decline of imperial authority and mounting pressure from the Lombards led to an increase in conflict between local factions. The details of these are obscure, but they appear to have stemmed from rivalries between different families and islands, as in 742 when Malamocco revolted against the capital, Eraclea, and elected as duke Deusdedit, the son of Ursus. These internal pressures were exacerbated by the powerful presence of the Franks in the region from the 770s on. Venetia and Istria were not included in the papal claims to former imperial territories expressed in the 'donations' of Pippin from 754 and 756 (see above, p. 444), but they did figure among the lands promised to Pope Hadrian I by Charlemagne in 774.

Loyalty to Byzantium nevertheless remained paramount, and was reflected in the use of imperial titles and customs. For example, the family of Maurizio Galbaio was probably following imperial practice when the founder's son and later his grandson were coopted as dukes. Meanwhile Frankish power in the region was further enhanced by Charlemagne's takeover of Friuli and Istria and defeat of the Avars, and certain factions found it expedient to side with the new western empire. Such a pro-Frankish group seized power in the person of Obelerius in 802. When Charlemagne recognised Venice as a Frankish fief under his son, Pippin, king of Italy, Nikephoros I (802–11) retaliated by sending a fleet under the command of the *patrikios* Niketas. A compromise was reached whereby Obelerius' position as doge was confirmed and he accepted the title of *spatharios* as an imperial official. A truce between the two empires was signed in 807. However, hostilities broke out again when Obelerius showed renewed signs of disloyalty to the empire and a second Byzantine fleet came into conflict with the Franks. Pippin intervened and sacked several of the settlements of Venice shortly before his death in July 810.

<sup>65</sup> Andrea Dandolo, *Chronica*, ed. Pastorello, pp. 105–6; John the Deacon, *Cronaca*, ed. Monticcolo, p. 91.

In the face of this crisis the Venetians sank their differences and established a new centre of settlement and administration at Rialto under a new doge, Agnello Partecipazio (or Particiaco). Local opinion had shifted decisively in favour of attachment to Byzantium,<sup>66</sup> and Venetia was recognised as Byzantine territory by the treaty agreed between the Frankish and eastern empires in 812. Venice benefited from its new-found stability to develop into an important emporium – trading in the luxury items of the east; exporting western timber, slaves, salt and fish; and serving as the empire's listening post in the west. The growth and sophistication of Venice's commercial role is reflected in the will of Doge Giustiniano Partecipazio, who died in 829: in addition to extensive property-holdings, it lists investments in long-distance trading ventures.<sup>67</sup> Venice's relations with Byzantium remained cordial, with widespread use of Byzantine titles and fashions, but in practice the province was increasingly independent.

The doges also wished Venice to enjoy ecclesiastical independence, especially after the suffragan sees of the patriarchate of Grado were placed under the patriarch of Aquileia by the council of Mantua of 827. In the following year the body of St Mark was seized in Alexandria by Venetian seamen and deposited in a new basilica adjoining the ducal basilica in Rialto. The city's new patron rapidly became a symbol of Venetian pride and independence.

The middle years of the ninth century were a period of both danger and opportunity for Venice. The Byzantine and western missions to the Slavs helped open up new areas to Venetian enterprise, but also led to new tensions which complicated Venice's position as a middleman. Even more serious was the wave of naval raids launched by the Arabs of North Africa. Venice's growing naval strength was called upon by the Byzantines to help combat these attacks on Sicily in 827 and in the Adriatic in the 830s and 840s. In 840 a treaty was signed with Lothar I, guaranteeing Venice's neutrality, boundaries and right to trade freely. Frankish recognition of Venice's power and independence was reflected in confirmations of the agreement in 856 and 880 and by a state visit by Louis II to the city in the former year. At the same time Venice faced new dangers from Slav disorder and piracy within its Istrian and Dalmatian spheres of influence and from the reassertion of Byzantine power in the Adriatic following the reconquest of Dalmatia in 868 and of southern Italy from 876 onwards. Yet Byzantium continued to recognise the need for Venetian naval assistance, especially when a planned alliance with the Franks against the Arabs fell through. In 879 an imperial embassy travelled to Venice to confer upon Doge Ursus I Partecipazio gifts and the title of *prōtopatharios*. Ursus I's dogeship also saw the creation

<sup>66</sup> According to Constantine Porphyrogenitus (*DAI*, ch. 28, pp. 120–1), the Venetians told Pippin they preferred to be subjects of the emperor of the Romans. The best survey of early medieval Venetia is now Azzara (1994).

<sup>67</sup> *Documenti relativi alla storia di Venezia*, ed. Cessi, I, no. 53, pp. 93–9.



of *iudices* as magistrates and advisers to curb the doge's authority and the establishment of new bishoprics, including Torcello. From the late ninth century, therefore, many of the characteristic features of medieval Venice were in place, including some distinctive constitutional arrangements, a marked independence in outlook and government, and wide-ranging naval and commercial activities. Yet the city retained its powerful if ambiguous links with the east.

#### THE DUCHY OF NAPLES

The duchy of Naples included the coast and islands of the Bay of Naples, the Terra di Lavoro inland and the outlying towns of Sorrento, Amalfi and Gaeta. Little is known of its history in the seventh century, and the traditional view that its first local *dux* was Basilius, confirmed by Constans II around 661, is now rejected. Its institutions followed the usual Italian model, with a concentration of power and property in the military elite of the *exercitus*, but its loyalty to the empire was consistently greater than that of the territories to the north, probably because of its maritime links with the east and the need for imperial protection against the constant threat posed by Lombard Benevento. Thus the Neapolitans allowed the exarch Eutychios to disembark in their city in 727, when most of Byzantine Italy was in revolt. The duchy was also sympathetic to the Isaurian policy on images, to the extent that the episcopal see was held by an outright iconoclast, Calvus, between 750 and 762. The duchy was unaffected by the fall of Ravenna in 751, having come under the nominal authority of the *stratēgos* of the theme of Sicily for several decades.

Nevertheless, Naples experienced the same trend towards increased autonomy as other areas, and by 755 it had its first locally elected *dux*, Stephen. After his election as bishop in 767, Stephen was able to pass on the ducal office to his two sons, Gregory and Caesarius, in succession, and then to his son-in-law Theophylact. As in Venice, relations with the empire oscillated considerably, probably as a reflection of the ascendancy of rival factions. While the duchy supported the *stratēgos* of Sicily in opposing papal claims to Campania in 779/80, in 812 Duke Anthimus refused to send his fleet to help his nominal superior, the *stratēgos*, fend off an Arab raid on Ischia. In 818 the citizens of Naples petitioned the *stratēgos* of Sicily to appoint a *dux* to govern them, but in 821 one such imperial appointee was deposed in favour of a candidate from the family of Stephen. However, the decisive stage in the detachment of Naples from the empire came with the Arab invasion of Sicily in 827, when the *stratēgos* was too preoccupied to intervene in the duchy and Naples was left to its own devices to resist the growing pressure from the Arabs by sea and the Lombards on land. As an example of the delicate balancing act required, Duke Andrew employed

Muslim mercenaries in 835 against Prince Sicard of Benevento (833–9) and then gave his allies help in conquering Messina from the empire in 842/3. Although Naples attracted considerable criticism for these opportunistic alliances with the infidel, the strengthened position thus attained enabled Andrew to conclude a favourable treaty with the Lombards in 836 (the *pactum Sicardi*), and in 839 Lombard pressure was for a time alleviated by the civil war which split the Lombard principality into two parts, Benevento and Salerno. Later, in the 840s, Duke Sergius, together with his son, the consul Caesarius, turned against the Arabs and won a series of victories culminating in the battle of Ostia in 849. Later, however, the Neapolitans established friendly relations with the Saracens, perhaps in order to prevent raids from Muslim strongholds such as Taranto. These tactics, while necessary to safeguard the duchy's political survival and commercial interests, drew bitter denunciations from the papacy. Once again outside intervention served to foment internal factional strife. Duke Sergius II was deposed and replaced by his brother, Bishop Athanasius II, in 877. *Realpolitik*, however, obliged the new duke to make a new deal with the Arabs, thus earning excommunication by his former patron, Pope John VIII.

Already in the ninth century Naples began to assume an important role as a centre of translation activity from Greek into Latin, although this reached its height in the tenth century. Other evidence shows that the cultural and economic influence of Byzantium was pervasive. Imports of pottery from the east were numerous, signatures to documents in Greek characters were common and a penchant for Byzantine titles such as consul (*hypatos*) remained strong.<sup>68</sup>

To the north, Gaeta had become increasingly important as a centre of communications after Formia was destroyed by the Arabs and its bishopric transferred to the nearby port in the eighth century. It remained nominally part of the Neapolitan duchy until 839, although in practice it often had to align itself with the papacy, whose territories surrounded it. On occasion Gaeta acted independently of Naples, as when it responded to a request from a *stratēgos* of Sicily for help against Muslim raiding parties.<sup>69</sup> From around 839 Gaeta's greater measure of independence is reflected in the title of *hypatos* held by city leaders such as Docibilis I. Although its continuing ties with the Byzantine empire were reflected in the dating of documents by the regnal years of emperors and by the elite's custom of signing their names in Greek characters, the town was forced to adopt policies favourable to the Muslims. In the 880s Aghlabid raiders were allowed to set up a pirate nest at the mouth of the nearby Garigliano river – a move which provoked bitter denunciation on the part of Pope John VIII.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Luzzati Laganà (1983); Brown, T. S. (1988a), p. 34; Arthur (2002).

<sup>69</sup> Leo III, *Epistolae*, no. 6, p. 96.

<sup>70</sup> Merores (1911), esp. p. 15, but see also the comments of von Falkenhausen (1983), p. 348 and Skinner (1992), pp. 353–8.

To the south was the non-Roman settlement of Amalfi, first recorded in 596 as a *castrum* populated by refugees from the Lombards. By the eighth century it was recorded as a naval base used in conflicts with the Lombards, Franks and Arabs, and it assumed increasing importance as a trading centre, while remaining part of the duchy of Naples, perhaps because of the continual pressure it faced from the Lombards. Although its population was temporarily transferred to Salerno after it was sacked by Prince Sicard of Benevento in 839, Amalfi soon after achieved independence from Naples under its own leaders (*comites* and later *praefecturii*). By the late ninth century its tiny territory consisted of a small coastal strip (see fig. 41), the Monti Lattari in the hinterland and the isle of Capri, and a dynasty was established by the *praefecturius* Manso which lasted for seventy years (see below, p. 577). Although the Greek element was never as strong as in Naples and its foreign policy became steadily more independent of the empire, Amalfitan trading links with the east became increasingly important.<sup>71</sup>

#### THE DUCHIES OF CALABRIA AND OTRANTO

The term Calabria was originally applied to a late Roman civilian province corresponding to the Terra d'Otranto. In the mid-seventh century the imperial possessions underwent a severe crisis with the civilian administration finally breaking down and the Lombard dukes of Benevento capturing large areas. It is likely that, as a result of an administrative reorganisation in the late seventh century, the name was applied to a duchy ruled from Reggio and covering both those areas remaining under Byzantine rule, the Terra d'Otranto and southern Calabria (i.e. the lands south of a line running from the Crati river – to the south of Cosenza – to Amantea on the Tyrrhenian coast).<sup>72</sup> This period marked an important stage in the hellenisation of both areas, probably largely as a result of immigration from Greece and Sicily rather than settlements of refugees from the Muslim invasions further east or official transfer of soldiers or peasants. In the early eighth century Otranto was lost to the Lombards and the term 'duchy of Calabria', which previously included present-day Apulia, was confined to the old civilian province of Bruttium in the south-west toe of Italy, which came under the authority of the *stratēgos* of Sicily. The duchy is mentioned in the *Taktikon Uspensky* (842–3) but does not appear in the *Kletorologion* of Philotheos of 899, presumably because it became the main power base of the *stratēgos* of Sicily, when most of Sicily had fallen to the Arabs.<sup>73</sup> Disappointingly little is

<sup>71</sup> Schwarz (1978), especially pp. 16–17.

<sup>72</sup> von Falkenhausen (1978), p. 7; the boundary with the Lombards can be reconstructed from the *divisio* of the principality of Benevento: *Divisio ducatus Beneventani*, ch. 9, ed. Bluhme, p. 222; ed. Martin, p. 205.

<sup>73</sup> *Taktikon Uspensky*, p. 57; see also *ibid.*, pp. 351, 356 (commentary). von Falkenhausen (1978), p. 7, suggests that after 843 Calabria became a *tourma* within the theme of Sicily.

known of the duchy in this period from written sources, but archaeological research has pointed to a move away from settlements on the plains and coast towards hilltop sites and to fairly widespread circulation of eastern goods such as pottery.<sup>74</sup> Only after 885–6, when Lombard Calabria was conquered by Nikephoros Phokas (see above and below, pp. 298, 560) does the position become clearer.

Even less is known of Calabria's imperial neighbour on the heel of Italy, the duchy of Otranto. Otranto and Gallipoli remained Byzantine at the time of the Lombard advances of the late seventh century, but some time after 710 Otranto was lost. It was restored to the empire in 758 by King Desiderius in return for Byzantine help against a rebel duke of Benevento. The case for the area's status as a separate duchy depends on a seal of uncertain date, and the duchy's non-appearance in the *Taktikon Uspensky* (842–3) suggests that at some stage it was reincorporated in the duchy of Calabria.<sup>75</sup> The boundaries of imperial rule are uncertain; the duchy may have been confined to the dioceses which clearly came under the jurisdiction of Constantinople, Gallipoli and Otranto, or it may have included all the Terra d'Otranto including Oria. Excavations have suggested that Otranto was a rich centre, probably thanks to its strategic importance as the main point of entry for imperial troops and officials sent to the west.<sup>76</sup> However, following the swift *reconquista* of Lombard Apulia from 876 the capital became Benevento and later Bari.

#### SICILY

In radical contrast to the separatism evident in most of the Byzantine territories in the Italian peninsula, Sicily assumed a more central place within the imperial orbit from the seventh century. In the first half of the century it appears to have been a prosperous backwater, secure from the Lombard assaults which devastated much of the mainland, and retaining civil government under a *praitōr* and resilient elements of civilian society. Following the first major raid by the Arabs in 652, repulsed by an expedition led by the exarch Olympius, it assumed a more central role on the political stage. After Constans II's decision to abandon Constantinople in 661 and his unsuccessful campaigns against the Lombards of southern Italy, the imperial court moved to Syracuse (see above, p. 232). Although the emperor was murdered in 668, the island gained new importance as a naval base used to oppose Muslim advances in North Africa, and Justinian II elevated it into a theme in the early 690s. Its *stratēgos* came to assume authority over imperial territory in southern Italy, and after the fall of the exarchal

<sup>74</sup> Noyé (1988); Noyé, (1998), pp. 233–43; Dalarun (ed.) (1991).

<sup>75</sup> See also von Falkenhausen (1978), p. 9.

<sup>76</sup> Brown, T. S. (1992), pp. 27–30. On Apulia in general, see Martin (1993).

government in 751 he came to play a leading role in diplomatic negotiations with the Franks, the Lombards and the papacy.<sup>77</sup>

The effects of these changes were mixed. The influx of officials and soldiers from the east accelerated a wide-scale process of hellenisation. The origins of this are uncertain, but there is evidence that a dual Greek and Latin culture existed in the Roman period and that the Greek substrata were reinforced by immigration, most notably from Greece and the Balkans, by the early seventh century. The church remained under the jurisdiction of the see of Rome, but the hellenisation, reflected in the Greek monks encountered by eastern visitors such as Maximus the Confessor and by the Greeks from Sicily who ascended the papal throne, is in sharp contrast to the impression of Latin predominance given in the letters of Pope Gregory the Great (590–604). On the other hand, the militarisation and decentralisation involved in theme organisation must have served to strengthen local elements. One reflection of this was the revolt of the *stratēgos* Sergios in 717–18 (see above, p. 440): he responded to the Arab siege of Constantinople by crowning one of his subordinates, Basil Onomagoulos, as emperor. However, after his defeat of the Arabs, Leo III had no difficulty in quelling the rebellion, executing Basil and forcing Sergios to seek refuge with the Lombards across the Straits of Messina.

The new emperor was prompt to recognise the economic as well as political and military value of the island. He ordered that the vast revenues previously paid to the Roman church should be transferred to the imperial fisc, and Sicily was one of the areas transferred from papal jurisdiction to that of the patriarch of Constantinople (see above, p. 285). Partly as a result of these moves, the Latin element virtually disappeared and the process of hellenisation continued apace, as is demonstrated by a number of important saints' *Lives* and the prominent Greek scholars and churchmen from Sicily of the eighth and ninth centuries, for example Gregory Asbestas, Joseph the Hymnographer, Constantine the Sicilian and the patriarch Methodios (843–7). The dominant Greek culture, with its strong cosmopolitan links with the capital, appears to have been largely confined to elite groups and was limited in its local impact and character. Although several iconodules were sent into exile on Sicily and its neighbouring islands, there appears to have been no large-scale migration as a result of iconoclast persecution. In general the iconoclast crisis seems to have had little impact on the island, apart from the execution of the *stratēgos* Antiochos together with eighteen other iconodule officials in Constantinople in 766, and the appointment of the strongly iconoclastic Theodore Krithinos as archbishop of Syracuse during the second wave of the movement.<sup>78</sup> Rather, the island's attachment to icons and to Greek saints helped to bind it more closely to the empire.

<sup>77</sup> See now Níchanian and Prigent (2003).

<sup>78</sup> Gouillard (1961).

Nevertheless, unrest was clearly growing by the eighth century, although the pattern of this was different from the mainland. One likely factor here was economic decline. Although a full picture is only gradually emerging from archaeological surveys,<sup>79</sup> the island's prosperity was probably adversely affected by the increasing frequency of Arab raids and by the severe plague of 745–6 (see above, p. 256).

The island's ties with the centre were so strong that revolts seem to have reflected personal ambition, or the political and religious conflicts of the capital, rather than local separatism. A case in point is the crisis of 781, when the *stratēgos* Elpidios was accused by the empress Irene of conspiring with her brother-in-law, and the Sicilian *exercitus* prevented his arrest. Irene responded by sending an expedition, which defeated Elpidios' forces and compelled him to seek refuge in Africa, where he had himself crowned emperor with Arab support.<sup>80</sup> Unlike the mainland provinces of Italy, Sicily lacked one dominant political and cultural centre analogous to Ravenna, Rome or Naples, or an independent-minded military elite with a strong sense of local collective identity and a tradition of autonomy. As a result, the population's reaction to the upheavals of the 820s was divided and in some respects passive.

Discontent broke out early in the decade, possibly sparked off by the revolt of Thomas the Slav in the east. An attempt by Michael II (820–829) to raise taxation from the island triggered a rising by an anti-imperial faction. By 826 this faction was led by the ambitious commander of the Sicilian fleet, the turmarch Euphemios, who had led successful raids against North Africa.<sup>81</sup> When the *stratēgos* Constantine moved to arrest him, probably for his disloyalty rather than as result of the romantic excesses ascribed to him by later legend,<sup>82</sup> Euphemios responded by seizing Syracuse, proclaiming himself emperor and then defeating and killing Constantine in Catania. However, some of Euphemios' supporters then switched their loyalty to the imperial government and he was forced to flee to Africa, where the Aghlabid amir Ziyadat Allah I recognised his title and granted him a fleet to attack the island. In June 827 the predominantly Arab force landed at the western port of Mazara and soon afterwards defeated the Byzantine *stratēgos* Plato. Despite fierce resistance and some Byzantine successes, the Arabs gradually extended their hold over the island, conquering Palermo in 831, Cefalù in 857 and Enna in 859. A decisive blow was struck when the capital, Syracuse, fell after a nine-month siege in 878 and its population was massacred.<sup>83</sup> A few outposts, however, survived into the tenth century.

<sup>79</sup> See Wickham (2005), p. 737 and references in n. 91.

<sup>80</sup> For details, see Treadgold (1988), pp. 66–7. <sup>81</sup> Alexander (1973), pp. 9–14.

<sup>82</sup> Later accounts claim that Euphemios had abducted his niece from a nunnery and forced her into marriage.

<sup>83</sup> For a contemporary, if melancholy and impersonal account, see Theodosios the Monk, *Letter*, ed. Zuretti.

## SARDINIA

The worst-documented Byzantine province in the Italian theatre is Sardinia. In the seventh century it had close administrative ties with the exarchate of Africa, although ecclesiastically it came under the see of Rome. It suffered from Lombard naval attacks, but these appear to have been successfully repulsed, to judge from an inscription attributing victories to the emperor, whether he was Constans II, Constantine IV or even Constantine V.<sup>84</sup> After the fall of the exarchate of Carthage in 698, imperial rule over the island became increasingly nominal. However, Byzantine-style institutions and Greek titles survived in the eighth and ninth centuries. By the latter century numerous attacks from the Arabs further weakened links with Constantinople and power became concentrated in the hands of locally appointed officials (*iudices*).

## CONCLUSION

Over the two centuries Byzantium's position in Italy had turned virtually full circle, from the outwardly hopeful but in practice precarious position of 680, to the verge of a new period of power and influence in the late ninth century. Despite, and in some measure because of, the short-lived political and ecclesiastical peace which prevailed at the beginning, discontent and separatist feeling had grown rapidly. As a result of the election of local military leaders as *duces*, the power of the emperor and his representative, the exarch, had become marginal from the late 720s. The fall of Ravenna in 751 was only one stage in the fragmentation of the Byzantine territories, but it did promote distinct development in each area. Only in the theme of Sicily and the associated duchies of Calabria and Otranto was traditional imperial control effective, assisted by a steady process of hellenisation. In Venetia and the various component parts of the duchy of Naples, nominal loyalty to the empire survived side by side with growing economic sophistication and political independence under leaders chosen locally from the traditional military elite. Elsewhere, as in the exarchate, the Pentapolis and duchy of Rome, the predominant power came into the hands of senior churchmen, but these had to work out a *modus vivendi* with lay aristocratic families, and with the Frankish rulers of the kingdom of Italy after 774. In each area, however, developments were conditioned by the decentralisation underway as early as the seventh century; and distinctive traditions and institutions, more often Roman than strictly Byzantine, remained powerful, as can be seen in the persistence of titles, names and legal institutions.

If Byzantium's power and influence were in decline for most of the period, it remained a force to be reckoned with, as can be seen in its successful

<sup>84</sup> Mazzarino (1940). A dating to Constantine V's reign has been proposed by Fiori (2001). In general on Sardinia, see Spanu (1998).

defence of its interests in Venetia, and the preoccupation of both the Franks and the popes with their relations with the empire. In the economic, artistic and literary spheres, Byzantium's impact was as considerable as ever, and was channelled through Rome as much as through the nominally Byzantine centres. Byzantine naval power was always significant, and it is this which especially enabled the empire to come into its own again as a player on the Italian scene in the second half of the ninth century. Byzantium's position was reinforced by the devastation of the Arab raids; by disenchantment with Frankish political and military weakness; and by the aggressive yet pragmatic policy pursued by Michael III (842–67) and Basil I (867–86). The reconquest of much of the Lombard territories in Apulia, Calabria and Lucania, including Bari and Taranto (retaken in 876 and 880 respectively) ushered in a new era of Byzantine domination in southern Italy.



CHAPTER 12

THE MIDDLE BYZANTINE ECONOMY

(600–1204)

MARK WHITTOW

INTRODUCTION

The Byzantine economy is an important subject on a number of grounds. It is arguably the key to the history of the Byzantine state, society and culture; it forms part of the picture of a transition from the ancient world to the middle ages – and part of the debate as to whether those are meaningful concepts at all; it is a test case for whether we should be talking about particular regional economies, such as the ‘Byzantine economy’, or whether we should instead be thinking in terms of a general pre-modern Mediterranean economy, of which the economic activities of the Byzantine world were merely a part. It is a subject, too, upon which there was once considerable agreement among scholars, but there is now some uncertainty. The recent publication of *The economic history of Byzantium*, a substantial multi-authored work in three volumes, has been a major achievement and it serves as an important reference work and body of data; it does not represent an end to debate.<sup>1</sup>

THE BYZANTINE ECONOMY: LATE ANTIQUITY TO 1204

All that said, there are considerable areas of scholarly agreement and it is the aim of this section to set these out. It is also worth saying that the volume and quality of evidence available has improved markedly, particularly since the 1980s. The study of Byzantine coins, the excavation of Byzantine sites, including underwater archaeology, the study of pottery types and the publication of texts and associated linguistic studies have all made great advances. But it is also important to recognise that Byzantium is not a well-documented society. Late antique Egypt provides an exception, but it was lost to the Muslims by the mid-seventh century. The rich materials from the Cairo Genizah will be referred to later, and the vivid picture they give of Mediterranean commerce in the eleventh and twelfth centuries is a reminder of what we are missing. The masses of largely monastic documentation that underpin so much of traditional economic history in the

<sup>1</sup> *EHB*; see now also Laiou and Morrisson (2007).



Map 22 The Byzantine economic world

west do not exist for the Byzantine world. After 1204, Latin documentation will make a significant difference, not only by reason of its quantity, but because we are talking of new types of evidence: commercial documents preserved in secular archives. This material begins to appear before 1204, but its real contribution comes later (see below, pp. 843–4).

This would not matter so much if the lack of documents were offset more fully by archaeology. Recent advances in our understanding of the economy of western Europe during this period have come as much from this direction as any other. Pottery studies, for example, have shown that even remote villages were involved in networks of exchange. Pollen studies have shown both the early date and ultimately the permanent effects of medieval agricultural expansion. Similar work has been done for the Byzantine world, but it lags behind what has been achieved in western Europe.<sup>2</sup> Even so, there are considerable areas of scholarly agreement and the story of Byzantine economic history over the last thirty years has been one of solid achievement.

### *The late antique inheritance*

A once widespread picture of late antique decline has been replaced by an appreciation of the wealth and complexity of the late antique economy. Throughout the territories of the Roman empire in Egypt, the Levant, Asia Minor, the Aegean world and Africa, the general picture is of a monetarised and commercial world, where agricultural expansion in some areas had reached its pre-modern peak. Much of the Balkans and Italy are exceptions to this rosy picture. Military insecurity in the one case and the aftermath of the Justinianic reconquest in the other appear to have had disastrous effects (see above, pp. 214–15). But these are exceptions. The rule in the eastern empire is of late antique prosperity.

The basis of this rosy picture lies in archaeology. In particular, Georges Tchalenko's publication between 1953 and 1958 of the extraordinary villages and monasteries of the limestone massif between Antioch and Aleppo in northern Syria compelled historians into a new view of the late antique economy.<sup>3</sup> These for the most part fifth- and sixth-century structures, that now strike us as vivid testimony to a prosperous rural world, had been partly published by the Princeton expeditions at the beginning of the century. But their significance was overlooked. At that date they were seen as material for art history rather than as evidence for the economy. Tchalenko was explicit. His book is illustrated with village plans that mark fields, pasture and tree crops, and his thesis is that the rise and fall of the economy of the limestone massif is explained by the production of olive oil for export; but

<sup>2</sup> Pals (1987); Durand (1998); Geyer (2002); Argant (2003).

<sup>3</sup> Tchalenko (1953–8).

it took until the 1970s or even the 1980s before the message sank in. Their eyes opened, archaeologists and historians have come to see the evidence for late antique prosperity everywhere.<sup>4</sup>

Recent work throughout the Levant, in Libya and along Turkey's southern shore has produced more well-preserved sites to match those of the limestone massif. Tchalenko's villages now seem part of a pattern and exceptional only to the extent that the recent remoteness of these limestone hills has saved the stones from modern reuse. Survey projects that draw on newly gained knowledge of late antique pottery types to identify settlements where no standing remains survive have made it clear that fifth- and sixth-century Syria, Palestine, North Africa and parts of Greece too, shared in the rural prosperity.<sup>5</sup>

Towns, too, have been approached in a new light. Rich citizens of late antiquity did not build theatres, public baths or gymnasia, in the same way that their ancestors had in the second or even third century AD, but they did build churches, houses, private baths and city walls. They spent money on marble and mosaic. If one judges late antique urbanism by the standards of the richest sites of the first century AD, it may appear a fallen world; by other standards, those of the long-term history of urbanism in the Middle East or Mediterranean, for example, it appears thriving.<sup>6</sup> Hierapolis in Phrygia, now famous as Pamukkale, a key site of the Turkish tourist industry, is a case in point. In AD 60 the city was destroyed by an earthquake and then lavishly rebuilt with imperial funding. In the mid-fourth century an earthquake struck again. This time the emperors were not interested. The city was rebuilt from local resources. Columns were patched and re-erected, damaged buildings made good. Compared with the first-century work it is a come-down; in the long-term history of Anatolian urbanism, late antique Hierapolis appears an example of robust local prosperity.<sup>7</sup>

New knowledge of late antique pottery types has already been mentioned as a tool for survey projects, but in its own right this knowledge has transformed our picture of the late antique economy. We can now identify the amphorae that carried oil and wine around the Mediterranean and the distinctive forms of red-slip pottery that went on the same boats and so can be treated as trace elements for goods not carried in amphorae. Tchalenko is now generally thought to have overstated the dependence of the limestone massif on the production of olive oil for export, but a lively Mediterranean exchange economy is an undoubted fact. The best-known types of red-slip pottery are those made in Tunisia (African red-slip)

<sup>4</sup> Foss (1995), pp. 213–23.

<sup>5</sup> Recent surveys include Ward-Perkins (2000a), pp. 315–32; Ward-Perkins (2000b), pp. 350–61; Morrisson and Sodini (2002); Chavarría and Lewit (2004); Wickham (2005), pp. 443–65; Foss (1994).

<sup>6</sup> Recent surveys include Ward-Perkins (1998), pp. 403–9; Lavan (2001); Wickham (2005), pp. 609–35.

<sup>7</sup> Whittow (2001), pp. 140–2.

and western Turkey (Phocaeen red-slip).<sup>8</sup> They are found throughout the Mediterranean basin and beyond. More recently, Sagalassos in west-central Anatolia has been identified as a major centre of red-slip pottery production too. The implications are intriguing. The city of Sagalassos is separated from the sea by 100 kilometres and a mountain range. What else was the Sagalassos region exporting that involved its pottery in a complex network of exchanges across these roads to the wider world? Timber, pitch and wool, either as a raw material or as finished cloth, have all been suggested. Whatever the answer, the Sagalassos pottery is proof that late antique trade was not bound to the shores of the Mediterranean and its immediate hinterland. The vitality of the late antique economy was a far-reaching phenomenon.<sup>9</sup>

Coinage tells the same story. Since the fourth century the empire's monetary system had been based on the gold *solidus* or *nomisma*, supplemented by a copper coinage, based since 498 on the *folles*, whose value fluctuated against that of the gold coin. A *nomisma* was a coin of high value used for paying salaries and making capital purchases. Day-to-day payments involved *folles*, and it is the ordinariness of late antique copper coins which attracts attention. Stray copper coins are common finds all over the empire and on all sorts of sites, villages as well as cities like Ephesos, Antioch, or Constantinople itself. This was a world where money was a normal part of almost everyone's lives.<sup>10</sup>

Silver was not minted in the late antique east. But it was an important part of the late antique economy. Made into dishes and bowls, jugs and lamp-stands and marked with date stamps that guaranteed its precious metal content, silver was a vital means of storing and displaying wealth. What is striking is the ordinariness of so much late antique silver. There are stunning fifth- and sixth-century silver treasures, but many such objects clearly belonged to people who did not rank among the super rich. The church silver from Kaper Koraon in the limestone massif, or that from the monastery of Holy Sion in south-western Turkey, make the same point as the Sagalassos pottery, or the copper coins.<sup>11</sup> The late antique economy was doing well, for a comparatively large number of people.

### *The 'dark age'*

If the idea of late antique prosperity in the east has become generally accepted, so too has that of the seventh century marking the onset of a 'dark age', at least in the Byzantine world. Those areas fortunate enough to have been conquered by the Muslims prospered. In Syria, Palestine and

<sup>8</sup> The classic study of this material is Hayes (1972).

<sup>9</sup> Poblome and Waelkens (2003), pp. 185–6.

<sup>10</sup> Morrisson and Sodini (2002), pp. 212–19.

<sup>11</sup> Boyd and Mundell Mango (eds.) (1992); Mundell Mango (1986).

Egypt, the picture appears very much one of business as usual. Not just for the inhabitants of Damascus which became the new Islamic capital (see above, p. 221), but for many provincial cities too the seventh century was a 'good' period. The buildings, public and private, the coinage, the pottery and the small finds from such well-excavated sites as Pella and Gerasa (Jerash) in Jordan, or Scythopolis (Bet Shean/Baysan) and Caesarea Maritima in Israel tell a clear story. For the villagers of the limestone massif too, recent work has done much to show that life carried on much as before, and field survey projects throughout the region give the same picture.<sup>12</sup> But for the rump of the Roman east, those territories that stayed under the rule of Constantinople and made up the world of Byzantium, this period was grim. Anatolia and the remaining territories in Greece and the Balkans experienced recession on a scale that justifies the description 'the collapse of the ancient economy'.

The evidence is seemingly incontrovertible and rests on the same sorts of indices that have been used to show the dynamism and vitality of the late antique economy: buildings, pottery and coinage. In a series of seminal publications Clive Foss looked at the evidence coming from a number of excavated ancient cities in Turkey. At Pergamon, Ephesos, Sardis, Magnesia-on-the-Maeander, Priene, Miletos and Aphrodisias on the west coast, at Side on the south coast and from Ankyra in the interior of Anatolia the same picture emerged. A centuries-old urban economy came to a halt. The construction of public buildings, which in late antiquity may have shifted from theatres and baths to churches, was now limited to defensive walls and minimal repairs. The amphorae and red-slip pottery characterising late antique sites disappear – to be replaced by local, hand-made products. Copper coins, the loose change of late antique urban life, similarly vanish. The graphs of stray coin finds on these sites make the message plain. Once common, their number falls to almost nothing for the seventh and eighth centuries. Ephesos, one of the great cities of the late antique east, contracted to a walled settlement around the harbour. The decline of Sardis was starker still. The seventh century saw it transformed into a hilltop fortress, with a few knots of primitive dwellings on the plain beneath (fig. 31a). More or less the same can be said for the other sites too. Hierapolis, the city that had recovered robustly from a fourth-century earthquake, was struck again in the seventh century. There was no rebuilding this time. Hierapolis survived as a scatter of very basic farmhouses.<sup>13</sup>

Even Constantinople appears not to have been immune. There was certainly more coinage available in the imperial capital. A graph of stray coin

<sup>12</sup> On Syria, see Foss (1997); Walmsley (2007); on Palestine and Arabia: Tsafir and Foerster (1994); Zeyadeh (1994); Walmsley (2000); Walmsley (2005); Hamarneh (2003); on Egypt, see Wickham (2005), pp. 132–44.

<sup>13</sup> Foss (1975); Foss (1976); Foss (1977a); Foss (1977b); Foss (1979a); Foss (1996b); Brandes (1989); Brubaker and Haldon (2001), pp. 146–56; Wickham (2005), pp. 626–35.



Figure 31a The Byzantine hilltop fortress of Sardis, viewed from the Temple of Artemis

finds from the city-centre excavation of the church of St Polyeuktos shows a rate of coin loss that continued at a steady level right through these centuries. Similarly, although in Constantinople as elsewhere late antique pottery types had disappeared by the end of the seventh century, what replaced them is much clearer here. Constantinopolitan white ware, a type of glazed pottery made from local clay, appears in the seventh century to fill the gap left by the end of the red-slip tradition.<sup>14</sup> Yet, even in the capital there is no doubting the basic trend. Late antique Constantinople was a boom town with a major building industry, capable of carrying out such huge projects as the long-distance water supply of the city, six kilometres of the Theodosian land walls, and 45 kilometres of the Anastasian long walls of Thrace, as well as erecting Justinian's massive church of St Sophia in under five years. Projects like this, which in turn are only a fraction of the total number of houses, palaces, churches, cisterns, colonnades and monuments put up during these years, required brick production on an industrial scale. Recent work on the stamp markings of Constantinopolitan bricks has shown as much.<sup>15</sup> All this came to a halt in the seventh century. For the following two centuries one has the impression of a huge salvage site. The paltry new building-work done in these years employed reclaimed bricks and marble

<sup>14</sup> Hendy (1986); Harrison and Hayes (1986–92), II, pp. 12–18.

<sup>15</sup> Bardill (2004), I, pp. 28–39.



Figure 31b Marble column drums, probably from the Temple of Artemis, reused for the walls of the Byzantine hilltop fortress at Sardis

and was decorated with reused mosaic cubes. Medieval Constantinople, like medieval Rome, would seem to have been living amidst the ruins left by giants.<sup>16</sup>

Recent work at Sagalassos tells the same story. The prosperous city of late antiquity came to an end in the seventh century. The tradition of public building and the Sagalassan pottery industry stopped. Hannelore Vanhaverbeke's survey shows that neither the city nor the surrounding countryside were deserted; rather, life continued, but with fewer people and on a simpler scale. Pollen analysis suggests the disappearance of olives as a major crop, a decline in cereal production, the spread of woodland and perhaps a shift to pastoralism. What we seem to see is a society and economy top-sliced: deserted by its elites, leaving a poorer, tatterier, rural world.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Mango (1990), pp. 51–62; Magdalino (1996a), pp. 17–50.

<sup>17</sup> Vanhaverbeke and Waelkens (2003), pp. 285–315; Vermoere *et al.* (2003); Vanhaverbeke *et al.* (2004).



*The middle Byzantine revival*

By the tenth century at latest it is clear that the Mediterranean economy was reviving and, equally, that the Byzantine world shared in this process. Using the same indices that plotted the decline of the late antique economy – buildings, pottery, coinage, settlement surveys and pollen analysis – a new prosperity can be seen emerging.

One rough-and-ready index is provided by church-building. While there is very little to show for the seventh and eighth centuries, from the ninth century onwards the numbers of urban and rural churches rise and continue to go up through the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries. Byzantine church architecture achieves its classical form during these years, characterised by small domed buildings, their interiors covered in wall-paintings or mosaic, their exteriors enlivened by decorative brickwork.<sup>18</sup> Similarly Byzantine glazed pottery, jars and amphorae become much more common. Likewise with coinage: the graphs of stray coin finds that ‘flatline’ for the seventh and eighth centuries take off again from the ninth century onwards, slowly at first, but on a steepening gradient. By the eleventh century, stray finds of copper coins are commonplace.<sup>19</sup> Pollen analysis and patterns of alluviation can also be brought into play. The clearest pictures to date come from Greece and Crete, where from the ninth century onwards tree pollens decline and those from plants associated with agriculture and deforestation go up; a cycle of erosion and the silting-up of coastal plains appears to have been triggered by growing exploitation of fragile hill-slopes.<sup>20</sup>

Survey projects in central and southern Greece, on Cyprus and Crete and now in Turkey too, all point towards middle Byzantine rural growth. Everywhere there are more sites with more things; and the more we can identify middle Byzantine pottery types, the more obvious does this trend appear.<sup>21</sup> Cappadocia is perhaps the most striking example, since there the rock-cut churches, houses, store-rooms and water-systems actually survive as visible structures and the churches can be dated by their wall-paintings. New caves were being dug in the later ninth century. Numbers increase through the tenth, and the region was clearly thriving in the eleventh.<sup>22</sup> Towns follow the same pattern. The excavation of middle Byzantine towns may not have revealed anything very photogenic, but the houses, churches, workshops, alleys, yards, cisterns and rubbish dumps

<sup>18</sup> Mango (1976). <sup>19</sup> Spieser (1991); François and Spieser (2002); Dark (2001); Morrisson (2002).

<sup>20</sup> On Greece, see Bellier *et al.* (1986), p. 104; van Andel *et al.* (1986), p. 122; Atherden and Hall (1994), pp. 118–20; Zangger *et al.* (1997), pp. 594–5; on Crete, see Atherden and Hall (1999), p. 190.

<sup>21</sup> Projects include those on Greece: Cavanagh *et al.* (1996–2002); Bintliff (1996); Bintliff (2000); on Cyprus: Given and Knapp (2003); on Crete: Watrous *et al.* (2004); Nixon *et al.* (2000); on Turkey: Baird (2000).

<sup>22</sup> Thierry (2002); Ousterhout (2006).

of Athens, Corinth and Sparta in Greece, Amorion, Aphrodisias, Pergamon and Sardis in Turkey show much more happening than had been the case in the seventh century. The story of Byzantine Constantinople is obscured by the fact that modern Istanbul lies on top of it, and the record of urban archaeology in the city is patchy at best; but the basic trend shows through.<sup>23</sup>

Written sources confirm this picture. Merchants, craftsmen and markets are a commonplace in middle Byzantine texts. The *Book of the eparch*, dating from the late ninth or early tenth century, regulates the commercial world of Constantinople. We hear about guilds and money-dealers, merchants coming with silk from Syria and the trade that brought sheep, pigs and cattle to feed the city. Much of this trade in livestock had its roots in Anatolia. In the eleventh century, John Mauropous described his see of Euchaita in Anatolia as the centre for an important annual livestock market. One of the termini for the drove-roads heading to the imperial city was Pylai on the Gulf of Nikomedeia. Leo, metropolitan of Synada, banned from the capital in the late tenth century, could grumble that there was an express service for animals to the imperial city, but not for him. Boats appear in documents from the monasteries of Mount Athos, as do shops, acquired as investments. Jewish merchant communities are known, not just from Constantinople, but from Mastaura, a small town in western Turkey, 100 kilometres from the sea. The *Life of Metrios* describes the saint picking up a bag of gold coins dropped by a merchant, heading for market in the next small Paphlagonian town. Agricultural expansion, too, is well attested. The Athos archives talk of the opening up of new land and the planting of new vineyards and olive groves. Michael Psellos talks about doing much the same for the monastery of Medikion which he had acquired on the shore of the Sea of Marmara. Eustathios Boilas' will shows him opening up extensive new farmland near the empire's eleventh-century borders.<sup>24</sup> These references could easily be multiplied, but to count them up would have no statistical value. They are cited as examples of the ordinary, and to illustrate the fact that in town and country, commerce, manufacture and agriculture, the middle Byzantine empire appears to have been a prosperous world.

<sup>23</sup> Bouras (2002); Magdalino (1996a), pp. 51–90.

<sup>24</sup> *Eparch*, II–III, V, XV, ed. and German tr. Koder, pp. 84–91, 94–7, 122–5; tr. Freshfield, pp. 10–15, 19–20, 38–9 (repr. pp. 230–5, 239–40, 258–9); John Mauropous, *Quae . . . supersunt*, no. 180, ed. de Lagarde, p. 135; Leo of Synada, *Correspondence*, ed. and tr. Vinson, no. 54, pp. 86–7; on Athos boats, see *Actes du Protaton*, ed. Papachryssanthou, no. 8, pp. 226–7; *Actes de Lavra*, ed. Lemerle et al., I, no. 55, pp. 282–7; on shops: Oikonomides (1972); on Jews at Mastaura: Reinach (1924); *Greek Jewish texts from the Cairo Genizah*, ed. and tr. de Lange, no. 1, pp. 1–10; Barnes and Whittow (1993), pp. 130–1; on Metrios: *Synaxarion of Constantinople*, cols. 721–2; on land clearance: *Actes de Xénophon*, ed. Papachryssanthou, I, no. 1, pp. 70, 72; *Actes de Lavra*, ed. Lemerle et al., I, no. 26, p. 178; Michael Psellos, *Letters*, ed. Sathas, no. 29, pp. 263–5; Eustathios Boilas, *Testament*, ed. Lemerle, pp. 21–2. See also below, pp. 532–3, 673–4.

During the later decades of the eleventh century the empire suffered a profound and prolonged crisis. By the later 1080s most of Anatolia had slipped from imperial control, the south Italian provinces were lost, and it appeared likely that the Balkan provinces would go the same way. Under Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118), his son and grandson, the empire pulled back from the brink, but much was lost for good (see below, pp. 610–12, 629–46).

The crisis' economic consequences are palpable. The Cappadocian rock-cut building boom came to an end; in the central Anatolian theme of the Anatolikoi, the bustling – if not very smart – eleventh-century town of Amorion survived only as a small village, the former cathedral becoming a storehouse and stable.<sup>25</sup> Cappadocia and the Anatolikoi were lost to the Turks, but the effects were no less profound in what remained of imperial territory. Constantinople as a centre of demand and population inevitably dominated the Byzantine economy more fully than it had done before; at the same time, even if not severed by a strict frontier, the imperial city was now separated from much of its natural hinterland. The Anatolian drove-roads, the livestock markets, the new farms of Eustathios Boilas' eastern estates would never be Byzantine territory again.

The loss of territory entailed loss of tax revenue. The empire had until now paid its servants in gold coin, in an annual ceremony that saw the highest earners drag bags of gold coin across the palace floor. This cash fuelled demand for land, services and goods. The system was showing signs of strain under Isaac I Komnenos (1057–9), but under Nikephoros III Botaneiates (1078–81) it went bankrupt and under Alexios I Komnenos was permanently pruned. The Byzantine state still raised taxes and still paid some of its servants in gold coin; but it could no longer do so for them all. The twelfth-century empire saw a great deal more tax farming, in cash and kind; and many more of the state's servants were now rewarded with land not gold.<sup>26</sup>

Yet, although in some respects these years of crisis were a watershed, in others they were clearly not. As Michael Hendy pointed out,<sup>27</sup> in those areas remaining under Byzantine rule (in other words Greece, the Balkans and, after the reconquests of the early twelfth century, most of the coastlands of Asia Minor) the tenth- and eleventh-century trend seems to have continued, if anything on an increased scale. Hierapolis has been cited twice already, as an example of late antique provincial prosperity and as one of subsequent urban collapse. Growing again from the ninth century on, it was in the twelfth century very much in the empire's 'wild east', a frontier territory where a deacon could be described as an expert sheep-rustler and Turkish raiders could be seen from the city walls. Yet even here the ruins

<sup>25</sup> Lightfoot *et al.* (1998), pp. 325–6.

<sup>26</sup> Oikonomides (1997a), pp. 207–10; Harvey (2003).

<sup>27</sup> Hendy (1970).

of the ancient baths were reoccupied as workshops for potters and blacksmiths, and excavation has uncovered quantities of good-quality glazed pottery for which there was clearly a market.<sup>28</sup> Similar evidence could be cited from town and country, from all parts of what was left of Byzantine territory. Despite the changes brought about by the late eleventh-century crisis, Byzantium did not enter a renewed 'dark age'. Rather, the evidence points to the twelfth century as actually the peak of the middle Byzantine revival.

### *The coming of the Latins*

The other uncontroversial story of the Byzantine economy is that of the Latin take-over of the Mediterranean. Latin sailors, traders and travellers came from the west to Byzantium throughout the period and Michael McCormick's recent collection of data on eighth- and ninth-century Mediterranean travellers would suggest that even in the 'dark age' they did so in significant numbers.<sup>29</sup> But by the mid-twelfth century it is clear that the Latin presence was on a new scale and a large proportion of Byzantium's internal and external trade was in Italian hands. A crucial factor in this take-over were the treaties made by Alexios I Komnenos and his successors with first the Venetians, then the Genoese and Pisans, offering commercial privileges in exchange for military support. The terms varied, but essentially those so favoured gained a 10 per cent reduction in costs against their competitors, including of course their indigenous Byzantine competitors. No wonder that by the second half of the century the provisioning trade of Constantinople was largely in Italian hands and with it much of the carrying-trade of the Aegean.<sup>30</sup> Halmyros, on the Aegean coast in central Greece, is not even mentioned before 1108, but thereafter the fact that Venetian, Pisan and Genoese merchants had made it their base for buying Thessaly's agricultural produce, above all grain, ensured its rapid growth at the expense of older regional centres.<sup>31</sup> Further south, Thebes tells a similar story. By the mid-1140s this hitherto unremarkable provincial town had become a major centre for the production of high-quality silk cloth, so much so that in 1147 it was sacked by the forces of Roger II of Sicily (1130–54) and its expert silk-workers taken as booty. Despite this, the town soon recovered and by 1162, when the Jewish traveller Benjamin of Tudela was there, its silk industry seems to have been thriving as ever. On one level the prosperity of middle Byzantine Thebes is just another example of what

<sup>28</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 197; tr. Magoulas, p. 111; Böhlendorf-Arslan (2004), I, pp. 258–60; Şimşek (1995).

<sup>29</sup> McCormick (2001), pp. 123–8.

<sup>30</sup> Laiou (2002a), pp. 749–54; Magdalino (1993a), pp. 142–50; Lilie (1984b).

<sup>31</sup> Harvey (1989), pp. 221–2; Koder and Hild (1976), pp. 170–1.

was described above: a prosperity which reached out into the provinces; but it is clearly more than that. The silk industry was a particularly high-value business that needed a stable market of wealthy consumers. Provincial aristocrats and clergy no doubt wore silk, but the chief centre of consumption in the Byzantine world was inevitably Constantinople. The rise of this particular industry in Thebes, some 600 kilometres from the imperial city, therefore suggests its chief market was not Constantinople, but the west.<sup>32</sup>

The rise of the Latins certainly does not mean that there were no Byzantine merchants; but by the end of the twelfth century, the Italians had taken a commanding position in the Byzantine economy. The rulers of Genoa, Pisa, and above all Venice, drew large profits from the eastern trade. Many of them spent much of their lives in Byzantine territory, either in the privileged Italian enclaves along the Golden Horn in Constantinople, or in places like Halmyros or Thebes. They built family houses and churches, where they buried their relations.<sup>33</sup> Like the British East India Company in the eighteenth century, they had not come to conquer, but by the end of the twelfth century they had too much invested to leave its management in wayward local hands.

#### INTERPRETING THE EVIDENCE: DOUBTS AND DISAGREEMENTS

So far, so uncontroversial, for most scholars at least. To go beyond what has been said above is to run into problems, but it is also to open up the debates that make the economic history of Byzantium a lively, and intellectually vibrant, area of research. The problems are essentially two: our lack of documents and the underdeveloped state of middle Byzantine archaeology.

The first point is less true of the period up to the early seventh century when to some extent the ancient practice of inscribing texts on stone continued, and when Egypt remained part of the empire and hence the mass of Egyptian evidence preserved on papyrus is still relevant. But after that date there is no avoiding the fact that Byzantium is an ill-documented world. The same could be said of seventh- and eighth-century western Europe, but thereafter monastic and cathedral documents survive in increasing quantities, making possible the sort of detailed regional studies of the agrarian economy that cannot be written for Byzantium. From the twelfth century onwards additional types of evidence become available in the west: fiscal records, rent rolls, notarial registers. None of these are available for Byzantium in anything more than a few fragments.

The second problem, the condition of middle Byzantine archaeology, is more remediable, in fact already changing, but this is still an

<sup>32</sup> Louvi-Kizi (2002); Koder and Hild (1976), pp. 269–71.

<sup>33</sup> Magdalino (2000a), pp. 223–6; Magdalino (1996a), pp. 85–90; Jacoby (2005c), pp. 13–19; Maltezos (1995).

under-exploited source. Throughout the territories of the former Byzantine world urban development too often goes ahead with inadequate archaeological record, the less glamorous deposits attracting least attention. Considering how much of our knowledge of the western medieval economy comes from rubbish dumps, it is clear how much we have lost and are still losing for Byzantium. Furthermore, until recently, survey projects tended to neglect the middle Byzantine period, with very few of them looking at Turkey. Even in Greece the coverage was patchy. Things are now changing. Current survey projects in Boeotia in central Greece, the Sagalassos region and the Ikonion plain in Turkey are among those taking the middle Byzantine period seriously and using the full range of available techniques to explore the past landscape.<sup>34</sup> But there is a great deal to be done and archaeology is a cumulative discipline. Patterns emerge in one project that can be tested in another; questions are asked that lead to the collection of data that would otherwise have been destroyed. The outlook is hopeful, but the fact remains that archaeological evidence which has the potential to transform our picture of the middle Byzantine economy is still to a large extent untapped.

That said, going beyond the bounds of consensus is what makes the subject interesting and important. The study of any medieval economy gains from being an exercise in economic anthropology, with the potential to ask fundamental questions about the nature of production, growth, access to resources and their relationship to forms of society and culture. The study of the middle Byzantine economy raises particular questions because of the contrast with the west. Above all, how is a pre-modern economy shaped by the existence of a powerful state? Was Byzantium a rich society, ultimately plundered by Latin and Turkish predators? Or was it a comparatively poor world, where the distribution and exploitation of resources was skewed by its political superstructure?

#### LATE ANTIQUITY: 'CRISIS? WHAT CRISIS?'

If the late antique economy was so robust, why did it not ride out the troubles of the seventh century? One answer would be that it was already in difficulty by the mid-sixth century. The plague which hit the Mediterranean world in 541 cut the population by perhaps as much as half, and in a pre-industrial economy, the number of people is the basic factor which underlies output and growth. Climate change may have been a factor, too, possibly involving a shift to a warmer and drier phase. There is also evidence from tree rings for a 'dust-veil event' – in other words an event sending dust into the atmosphere sufficient to reduce the amount of sunlight reaching the

<sup>34</sup> Bintliff (1996); Vanhaverbeke and Waelkens (2003); Baird (2004).

earth – in 536–7, caused either by a massive volcanic eruption, or a comet hitting the earth. The sources seem to suggest more frequent earthquakes and famines in these years too. Military defeat by the Persians and Arabs may therefore have simply been the factor tipping an already fragile economy into profound recession.<sup>35</sup>

These arguments attract considerable support, but equal criticism. Many familiar with the relevant evidence are not convinced that it shows an economy in trouble after 550. In Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Egypt it is easy to find evidence that suggests continuing prosperity right through the sixth century and beyond. Coinage remains common and on sites such as Pella and Gerasa in Jordan, or Caesarea Maritima and Scythopolis in Israel, the ceramic record carries on unbroken through the sixth century and through the seventh too. On the limestone massif in northern Syria it appears that the building boom had halted after 550, but dated silver treasures from the area imply no lack of resources, and the villages appear to have been occupied much as before for centuries to come. Further south, in the Hawran and the Jordan valley, building-work continued. Investment in fine mosaics and new churches could be seen as a fearful response to a worsening world, but most historians would be happier to see these buildings, more prosaically, as a sign of people with resources to spare.<sup>36</sup>

The plague is equally problematic. Assuming that its mortality was as high as usually supposed, comparison with the impact of the Black Death on fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Europe would not necessarily suggest disastrous economic consequences. High mortality is likely to benefit survivors, who can take advantage of higher wages and more available land. Unless there is some other factor regulating numbers at a lower level – as seems to have happened in fifteenth-century England for example – populations will tend to bounce back to their previous level.<sup>37</sup>

The same sort of points can be made about earthquakes, famines and dust-veil events. Things happen; and life goes on. If 536–7 was a ‘year without summer’, then so too was 1816.<sup>38</sup> Both Justinian and his critics saw plague, famine and earthquake as events of cosmic significance. It is not necessary that we should feel the same.

In many ways we know more about the late antique economy than we do about that of the middle Byzantine period that followed. Yet the evidence is still too patchy and imprecise to settle these arguments, and that is particularly true for those territories of the late antique world that came to form medieval Byzantium. We know more about areas such as the Levant or Egypt, which in the seventh century were to pass under Muslim rule,

<sup>35</sup> Koder (1996); Meier (2003), pp. 45–55, 359–87; Gunn (2000); Keys (1999); Baillie (1999). See also above, pp. 120–3.

<sup>36</sup> Whittow (1990); Walmsley (1996).

<sup>37</sup> Horden (2005); Whittow (2001), pp. 149–51.

<sup>38</sup> Stommel and Stommel (1983).

than we do about Asia Minor, the Balkans, or Constantinople itself. Even the evidence from sites such as Aphrodisias, Sardis and Ephesos, which do not have modern cities on top of them and which have undergone decades of excavation, is ambiguous. On each of these sites, opinion is divided as to whether the evidence shows continuity through the sixth and into the early seventh century, or a down-turn after 550.<sup>39</sup> And since everyone would agree that a city needs to be seen as a single economic unit with its rural hinterland, the lack of any survey looking at the hinterland of these sites is a drawback. At Sagalassos, Marc Waelkens' Belgian team is pointing the way with an integrated programme of urban excavation and rural survey, but even here the implications are debatable. If investment in substantial new buildings seems to have stopped after 550, Sagalassos was still occupied up to the seventh. Is this evidence of a widespread 'crisis' in sixth-century Anatolia, or the local consequences of an earthquake in 518 that had deprived Sagalassos of a suitable water supply?<sup>40</sup>

Another approach to the late antique economy is to examine its relationship with the state. It is beyond question that in pre-modern terms the Roman empire was a powerful state, capable of having a major impact upon its citizens' lives. What effect did the state have on the economy? Did the state's collection of goods in kind through taxation and their transport across the empire by means of subsidised shipping – in other words the *annona* system (see above, p. 11) – subvert the market to such an extent that when the state collapsed, the late antique economy went with it? Or should we be looking at the economic impact of state salary payments, skewing investment and development in peculiar ways? In any case, was the apparent prosperity of the late antique world effectively a creation of the state and hence vulnerable to the political and military crisis that unfolded in the seventh century?

The scale and archaeological visibility of the *annona* makes the first an attractive argument. We know that Rome and Constantinople were fed substantially on grain, wine and oil imported from Africa and Egypt. More than a century's work dating and identifying the amphorae that carried the oil and wine, and the identifying of the huge harbour facilities built to receive the annual grain fleets, combine with the evidence of the *Codex Theodosianus* and the *Codex Iustinianus* to make this clear. The *annona's* impact on the wider economy is at first sight obvious enough too. Throughout late antiquity, pottery types carried in the state-subsidised ships that transported these foodstuffs appear to dominate Mediterranean markets. Private shipping and alternative centres of production could not compete. Such a system fed first Rome and then Constantinople effectively, but it starved other centres of investment and diverted more natural patterns

<sup>39</sup> Whitton (2001), pp. 137–49.

<sup>40</sup> Vanhaverbeke and Waelkens (2003), pp. 285–98.



of exchange. When crisis struck the *annona* system in the early seventh century, there was no lively network of private and inter-regional trade to take its place.<sup>41</sup>

Twenty years ago this was a more convincing argument. Since then, however much remains obscure, it has become clear enough in the Levant and Egypt that the late antique economy was much more various and complex than once seemed the case. Whereas identifiable late antique pottery once meant in effect imported red-slip wares and amphorae, now a number of regional pottery types have come to light; and significantly, where the data has been collected, it is these regional types that dominate the ceramic assemblages. As usual, we know less about Anatolia and the Balkans, but the identification of Sagalassos ware should serve as a warning that there are likely to be many centres of regional and local late antique pottery production still to be discovered. To talk of 'an economy dominated by *annona* transport' may be overstating the case.<sup>42</sup>

The second and more recent suggestion, that we should be looking at the economic impact of state salary payments, has been made by Jairus Banaji and Peter Sarris and it fits more easily with the emerging picture of a complex late antique economy, where inter-regional and local trade was as important as what was carried on the *annona* trunk routes. Compared with its first- to third-century predecessor, the late antique empire was characterised by far greater numbers of official posts. The late antique aristocracy, particularly in the east, were holders of imperial office. The monetary economy of the earlier empire had been based on silver; that of the late antique empire was based on gold, specifically the *solidus*, struck from 309 onwards at seventy-two to the pound. It was a high-value and stable currency, and was used to pay official salaries. A middle-ranking official in the praetorian prefecture in Constantinople could earn 1,000 *solidi* a year and aristocratic fortunes were calculated in tens of thousands of *solidi*.<sup>43</sup>

To put this in context, the number of copper *folleis* to the *solidus* varied during the sixth century between 180 and 480, the former a short-term revaluation in the wake of the plague, the latter being the mode.<sup>44</sup> Bare survival was possible on a couple of *folleis* a day; a workman might earn between five and twelve *folleis* a day. A *solidus* might buy a pig, three *solidi* a donkey, fifteen a camel, thirty a skilled slave. Forty *solidi* was the dowry for the daughter of an army veteran living in a Palestinian village. It might cost 400 *solidi* to build a village church.<sup>45</sup>

By the sixth century, the papyri evidence shows that much of the Nile valley was organised into great estates owned by this gold-rich aristocracy,

<sup>41</sup> McCormick (2001), pp. 27–114; Wickham (2005), p. 72.      <sup>42</sup> McCormick (2001), p. 116.

<sup>43</sup> Banaji (2001), pp. 213–21; Sarris (2004), pp. 290–5; Kelly (2004), pp. 138–85.

<sup>44</sup> Morrisson (1989), pp. 244–51.      <sup>45</sup> Morrisson (1989), pp. 252–6; Morrisson and Cheynet (2002).

who ran them as commercial enterprises, producing primarily for the market. That in turn fuelled further commercial activity and economic growth. All the indications are that late antique Egypt was highly monetarised and market-oriented.<sup>46</sup>

The papyri are effectively unique to Egypt, but the archaeological evidence cited above for late antique prosperity suggests that the Egyptian pattern held true for the sixth-century east as a whole. If this interpretation is right – and it seems to fit the evidence better than the alternatives – the state's contribution to the success of the late antique economy was threefold. It provided a stable gold currency; it organised the fiscal system that underpinned the stability of that currency; and through official salaries it channelled wealth into the hands of the aristocracy, whose activities in turn fuelled prosperity. Such an economy could have ridden out climate change, dust-veil events and plagues – and the Egyptian evidence suggests strongly that it did – but it would have been vulnerable to political and military crisis, and that was what it faced in the seventh century.

### *A dark age?*

Why was the Byzantine empire, which survived the rise of Islam and continued to rule relatively extensive territories in Anatolia and the Balkans, apparently so much poorer than its late antique predecessor, or indeed than its Muslim neighbour? Some believe the answer lies in plague or climate change; others, as we have seen, do not. A more straightforward answer would be to cite Persian and then Arab devastation. But Anatolia, in particular, is a large place. Would it not have required remarkably Stakhanovite raiders to have had this sort of global economic impact? The poorer and more primitive world revealed by the Sagalassos survey seems to require a more complex explanation than direct enemy action.

One approach, casting back to what has been said above about the late antique economy, is to look to the economic role of the state; but, not surprisingly in view of the disagreements about that role before the seventh century, there is no more unanimity for the period that follows. Was the Byzantine empire of the seventh and eighth centuries a weak state? If the late antique economy was dominated by the demands of the *annona*, or even if the state's role was more a matter of organising taxation and a stable currency, did the weakening of the state in the seventh century lead to economic collapse? The persistence of a monetary economy in Constantinople and its apparent withering elsewhere could be seen as fitting this model rather well. The Byzantine state clearly survived and where it had real control, a more complex economy survived too, but its reach did

<sup>46</sup> Banaji (2001), pp. 39–88, 134–70.

not extend far into its nominal territories and so neither did a monetary economy. On the other hand, one might think about Byzantium during these centuries in terms of a powerful state, which survived the early middle ages by becoming a highly militarised society, based upon efficient and ruthless exploitation of its resources. This was not so much a poor world, as one where resources were focused on a very particular end.<sup>47</sup>

Comparison with the caliphate does not answer these questions, but it underlines their significance. Recent research has made the wealth of the Islamic world during these centuries steadily more obvious. This was a society with a prolific silver coinage, with a standard of living certainly no lower than that of late antiquity and capable of undertaking at Baghdad and Samarra building projects on a scale that makes the Byzantinist, let alone the historian of the early medieval west, boggle. Was the caliphate fulfilling the economic role once played by the late antique empire and no longer provided by its Byzantine successor? Or was the wealth of this world due to the fact that the caliphate could afford to be less intrusive? To find high-quality seventh- and eighth-century church architecture, it is interesting that one needs to look outside Byzantium: to Syria, Palestine and, above all, to Armenia (see above, pp. 340–1, 344–5 and fig. 22). Is that because of the paradoxical survival of the late antique state in the form of the caliphate, or is it because the church-building classes outside the empire were able to spend their resources on fine architecture rather than footing tax bills?<sup>48</sup>

Behind these uncertainties is the fact that written evidence for the seventh- and eighth century economy is virtually non-existent and the archaeological evidence, at first sight so secure, is not. Current interpretations rest, as explained in the first section of this chapter, on treating stray coin finds, pottery and buildings as proxy indices of economic activity. But in each case there are grounds for caution.

Copper coins of the seventh and eighth century collected as stray finds from the excavations of ancient city sites in western Turkey and Greece are certainly very rare, but the same coins seem not to be so rare when Turkish villagers show what they have picked up from their fields. Is this because cities were no longer so important as central places, and transactions were taking place at other sites, possibly rural fairs?<sup>49</sup> The very fact that the empire continued to mint gold throughout this period is worth noting. To do so required taxation in gold and that in turn depended upon the fact that tax-payers could obtain gold coins through trade. Even if most gold coin passed rather as tokens from the emperor to his servants and back again, it

<sup>47</sup> Haldon (2000a); Whitton (2003), pp. 410–14.

<sup>48</sup> Hodges and Whitehouse (1983), pp. 123–57; on Samarra, see Northedge (2001); on church architecture, see Mango (1979), pp. 89–107; Schick (1995), pp. 119–23; Piccirillo (1993), pp. 196–201, 218–31, 234–5, 238–9, 266–7.

<sup>49</sup> Whitton (2003), pp. 411–12; Lightfoot (2002).

must have been supplemented by gold reaching tax-payers by other means. In the west, minting in gold had to be abandoned in the eighth century. Its continued minting in Byzantium may have been largely due to the survival of the tax system, but it presumably also indicates a more than minimal monetary economy.

The same inference may be drawn from the survival in Byzantium of a multi-denominational coinage. From the eighth century to the thirteenth, western mints produced only single-denomination silver coins. The emergence of a more complex system in the west was a response to economic growth and the consequent demand for something more practicable and flexible. A two-tier coinage in Byzantium might be explained as a simple consequence of the need to keep minting the ideologically critical gold *solidi*, while at the same time providing some other lesser-value coin; but the emergence of a successful three-tier system from the 720s, with the silver *miliarēsiōn* (worth twelve to the *solidus*) supplementing the existing gold and copper coins, likewise suggests a more than minimal monetary economy. It equipped Byzantium with a highly flexible system of coinage.<sup>50</sup>

The pottery, too, tells an ambiguous story. Certainly an ancient tradition of manufacturing red-slip pottery and distributing it across the Mediterranean world came to an end in the seventh century. The standard types of late antique amphorae similarly disappear during these years. Constantinopolitan white ware, which certainly dates from this period, is neither common nor widely distributed. But the problem is as much an inability to identify seventh- and eighth-century pottery as it is one of absence. The excavations of the Saraçhane site in the middle of Istanbul produced a continuous sequence of coins through the dark age; John Hayes' study of the ceramics has produced a similarly continuous sequence of tableware, cooking pots and carrying vessels. Large water jars commonly found on sites in western Anatolia were certainly in production by the eighth century. Hannelore Vanhaverbeke's impression from the Sagalassos survey coincides with that of others: that much of the unidentified pottery found on Anatolian sites is locally or regionally produced, some likely dating to the seventh and eighth centuries. In the Levant, the study of local wares has helped transform the picture of the early Islamic centuries. The same may be about to happen for dark age Byzantium.<sup>51</sup>

Ceramics are manufactured objects; they are also trace elements for trade. If we cannot recognise seventh- and eighth-century pottery we lose this

<sup>50</sup> Morrisson (2002), pp. 920–30; see above, p. 270.

<sup>51</sup> In general, see Brubaker and Haldon (2001), pp. 148–56; Vroom (2003), pp. 229–32; Vroom (2005a), pp. 30–66; on Constantinople, see Hendy (1986); Harrison and Hayes (1986–92), II, pp. 12–18, 41–3, 55–7, 71–3; on water jars from western Asia Minor, see Whittow (2003), pp. 413–4, and figs. 1 and 2; Arthur (1997); on Sagalassos: Vanhaverbeke *et al.* (2004); on the Levant: Sodini and Villeneuve (1992); Watson (1992); Magness (1993); Magness (2003).

means of plotting movement and have tended to assume the minimal worst. But there are other trace elements. Michael McCormick has assembled the evidence for journeys of all sorts in the dark age Mediterranean and what he has found suggests much more activity during this period than has generally been imagined. Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell note the evidence for dark age piracy and point out that piracy will only occur when there is something to steal. These are straws, but they need to be taken into account.<sup>52</sup>

With buildings too, there is a danger that we currently underestimate the evidence already to hand. Seventh- and eighth-century Ephesos, for example, was not on the same scale as its late antique predecessor, yet the huge church of St John was kept standing and the cut-down church of St Mary remained in use. In any case the largest building project of these years was not a church but the circuit of walls. Although they enclose only a small part of the ancient city, at something over 2.5 kilometres long and 3.4 metres thick they were a major undertaking in themselves, and more so when seen as part of programme of fortification which covered the empire's territories with castles.<sup>53</sup> When in 766 Constantine V (741–75) wanted to restore the aqueduct of Valens in Constantinople, 'he collected artisans from different places and brought from Asia and Pontos 1,000 masons and 200 plasterers, from Hellas and the islands 500 clay-workers and from Thrace itself 5,000 labourers and 200 brickmakers.'<sup>54</sup> The building industry was not on the late antique scale, but it did exist.

Constantine's activities are a reminder of the continuing importance of Constantinople itself. No doubt much smaller than it had been in the sixth century and far smaller than Abbasid Baghdad, the Byzantine capital was still a large city with, for example, over eighty churches built before 600 and kept in repair through the following centuries. One of Cyril Mango's many contributions to Byzantine studies has been to pour cold water on over-optimistic interpretations of all sorts. His vision of Constantinople is of a city whose population plummeted in the seventh century from perhaps 400,000 to 40,000. Others would be more optimistic. Paul Magdalino suggests a population of not less than 70,000; Michel Kaplan talks of not less than 150,000. For any of these figures the supporting evidence is slight. Until recently the same could be said of early medieval Rome and an equally depressing picture was drawn. But medieval archaeology has come of age in Italy and the remains of early medieval Rome are beginning to receive proper attention. A new picture of the city is emerging, certainly far smaller-scale even than its late antique predecessor, but by the criteria of the early middle

<sup>52</sup> McCormick (2001), pp. 852–972; Horden and Purcell (2000), pp. 157–8.

<sup>53</sup> Foss (1979a), pp. 103–15; Müller-Wiener (1961), pp. 89–91.

<sup>54</sup> Theoph., ed. de Boor, I, p. 440; tr. Mango and Scott, p. 608; see above, p. 274.

ages a large and prosperous place. For the moment one can only speculate, but it is at least quite likely that when comparable archaeological work is done in Istanbul, the same sort of positive re-evaluation will follow.<sup>55</sup>

If seventh- and eighth-century Byzantium was incontestably a poorer society than in late antiquity, or than its contemporary Muslim neighbour, we need to be careful before coming to bleakly minimalist conclusions (see above, pp. 469–70, 472). This was a world that increasingly looked to the steppes and Turkic central Asia for cultural models. Constantine V married a Khazar bride and by such routes was a new material culture introduced to Byzantium, a culture that displayed wealth in textiles and in metalwork. Wealthy Byzantines of the new age wore turbans and kaftans, prayed on carpets, reclined on cushions, dined off silver. Not-so-wealthy Byzantines likewise wanted to emulate the east. The disappearance of red-slip pottery is a fact about production; it is also a matter of cultural choice, as consumers took to green- and brown-glazed wares, a fashion that ultimately had its origins in China. The wealth of late antiquity is obvious to us because it was still spent in the ancient manner on buildings and marble. By contrast much of the wealth of Byzantium was spent on perishable textiles and recyclable silver. We have hints in the texts, but little survives.<sup>56</sup>

Although ‘dark age’ Byzantium is a term that some find jarring, it has its uses. The term does not necessarily imply that seventh- and eighth-century Byzantium lapsed into prehistoric poverty – which would certainly be overdrawn – but it does carry a message that this period is obscure, with much resting on assumption and more research needed. The currently available evidence strongly suggests a poorer society with fewer resources than its late antique predecessor; beyond that much remains obscure. There is a case, sketched out above, that dark age Byzantium was less poor and more economically active than we have come to believe. The thesis will have to be tested in the years ahead, but at the least it opens interesting perspectives. If the economy of dark age Byzantium was more active than tends to be supposed, this would have implications, not just for the seventh and eighth centuries, but for what followed in the ninth to twelfth and more generally for the grand narrative of middle Byzantine economic history.

<sup>55</sup> On Constantinople, see Mango (1990), pp. 51–62; Magdalino (1996a), p. 18; Kaplan (1992), p. 446, n. 5; on Rome: Wickham (2000b), pp. 162–4; Paroli (2004).

<sup>56</sup> On links between Byzantium, the steppe world and China, see Noonan (2000), pp. 286–8; Bálint (2000); Vaissière (2004), pp. 213–28; on Constantine V and his Khazar bride, see Whittow (1996a), pp. 225–6; on turbans and carpets: Mango (1981b), pp. 51–2. The implications of glazed ceramics for the orientation of Byzantine culture remain valid even if the lead-glaze technology used by Byzantine potters came from Mesopotamia via Italy and not from central Asia or the far east: François (2005), pp. 211–13.

*The middle Byzantine revival: a feudal revolution?*

The mounting prosperity of the Byzantine world from the ninth century is a phenomenon common to the contemporary west; this encourages one to look for explanations valid for both. Two potentially global explanations are the end of outbreaks of the Justinianic plague in the eighth century or a shift to a more favourable climate, in either case triggering population growth. Although both theses attract support, most scholars consider the evidence too slight and inconclusive. As with the arguments that invoke the impact of plague in late antiquity, comparison with the Black Death tends to be discouraging. In the sixteenth-century west and in the Ottoman empire the economy and also population levels recovered long before the outbreaks of the plague abated; in fact they coincided with a period of worsening climate.<sup>57</sup>

Improved security was certainly a factor. In Byzantium it is obvious that economic growth and the end of Arab raiding roughly coincide, and that will have encouraged investment in provincial property. Cappadocia is a case in point. The excavation and decoration of new cave complexes begins just as the region ceases to be an exposed frontier zone. In the west the argument works less well. The end of Viking, Hungarian and Arab raiding probably has a bearing, but in general violence and economic growth seem to go hand in hand. Historians have therefore tended to look elsewhere.

Since the 1950s and Georges Duby's seminal work on the Mâconnais, an explanation that envisages aristocratic demand pushing reluctant peasants onto the market has been widely favoured, and for Byzantium this 'feudal revolution' model now underlies the prevailing narrative. The great estates of late antiquity, according to this thesis, broke up in the seventh century, leaving an economically static peasant economy, as pictured in the *Farmer's law* of the seventh or eighth century. The ending of Arab raids encouraged a new generation of aristocratic landowners to emerge from the later ninth century onwards; this is reflected in the body of land legislation from the tenth century, through which successive emperors tried and failed to halt the trend. The eleventh century was a new era of great estates and these survived the crises of the later eleventh century to flourish in the twelfth. They provided the motor of Byzantine economic revival. The land legislation was not only a failure, it was misconceived, being set against the very process that was enriching Byzantine society as a whole. Emperors might regret the loss of independent peasant farmers and the potential political unreliability of this new aristocratic class; but the richer material culture attested by field surveys and excavation-work, especially in

<sup>57</sup> Yun (1994), p. 126.

Greece, suggests an economy where a broad section of the population was benefiting.<sup>58</sup>

What limited the success of the Byzantine economy was not the rampancy of its landlords, but the immobility of its peasants. When Michael Choniates, the metropolitan of Athens and brother of the historian, complained in the late twelfth century about the injustice of already privileged landowners gaining further exemptions while the poor were ruthlessly fleeced, he may have been morally right, but his economic diagnosis was wrong. The Byzantine economy needed not more protection for peasants, but less.<sup>59</sup>

Up to a point this looks a convincing model, but its assumption that peasants are merely a drag on economic growth is now somewhat dated. It also fails to engage with the effects of the late eleventh-century crisis. Recent work by anthropologists and development economists has emphasised the extent to which peasant agriculture can generate growth, not least because self-sufficiency in an uncertain world requires substantial margins of extra production and the most effective way to insure against shortage is engagement with the market. Far from peasants being averse to the market, producing cash crops for the market is essential for their survival. In an even partially monetary economy this allows the building-up of surpluses and hence the creation of an insurance against the inevitable bad years. The chief brake on Byzantine economic activity may not have been peasant immobility, but aristocratic self-sufficiency. Only the rich could afford to be self-sufficient.<sup>60</sup>

Such insights in turn fit with the evidence emerging in various parts of western Europe that suggests economic growth started in some areas as early as the seventh or eighth centuries, rather than the tenth or eleventh, and that the roots of such growth lay in peasant enterprise. Rather than thinking of peasants needing to be forced onto the market and so launching an economic revolution, we should perhaps be thinking of a world where landowning aristocrats hijacked the fruits of pioneering peasant enterprise.<sup>61</sup>

To Byzantinists this will sound curiously like a return to the ideas of an earlier generation. Before the current consensus that the seventh century ushered in a poorer, more primitive world, the seventh to tenth centuries were painted as a golden age for Byzantium, or at least for Byzantine peasants. A contrast was drawn between the evidence from the late antique law

<sup>58</sup> On the feudal revolution model, see Duby (1971); Fossier (1999), pp. 50–63; on Byzantium, see Harvey (1989) pp. 244–68; Hendy (1989a); Lefort (2002), pp. 283–308.

<sup>59</sup> Michael Choniates, *Epistulae*, ed. Kolovou, pp. 41, 87. On Michael, see Herrin (1975), pp. 270–1, 274.

<sup>60</sup> Horden and Purcell (2000), pp. 175–230; Kaplan (1992), pp. 521–40; Devroey (2003), pp. 174–5.

<sup>61</sup> Devroey (2003), pp. 30, 38, 129–30.



codes for a semi-free peasantry tied to the land and a picture derived from the *Farmer's law* of independent peasants free from landlordly exploitation, who rebuilt the Byzantine economy on new and healthier foundations. For good reasons it is an idea that has largely fallen out of fashion. It was the product of an intellectual current, widespread in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that saw an independent peasantry as a moral and economic good in itself, and it was innocent of archaeology. But there is a case for taking its basic thesis more seriously.<sup>62</sup>

The tenth-century land legislation offers clues. It is now usually taken as evidence for the rise of a landed aristocracy, but it is also undeniable evidence for the existence of a free peasantry whom the emperors wanted to protect. The term peasant does not inevitably imply 'very poor'. In fact, as Rosemary Morris pointed out over thirty years ago, the terminology of the land legislation makes plain that the lawmakers were specifically not concerned with a destitute rural underclass, but with the 'powerless'.<sup>63</sup> It has become customary to dwell upon the failure of the land legislation, which makes it a natural progression to link eleventh-century growth with the rise of an aristocracy and to see one as a principal cause of the other. But when one turns to the collection of eleventh-century legal judgements known as the *Peira*, or looks at the contrast between the place of free peasants in Byzantine southern Italy and their position in the same areas following the eleventh-century Norman conquest, or considers the contrast between the status of peasants before and after the Frankish conquest of Greece, what stands out is the *effectiveness* of the land legislation.<sup>64</sup> The legislation did protect the rights of free peasants and it did act as a brake on the expansion of aristocratic estates. The growing economy of the eleventh century took place in a world where a substantial proportion of the empire's output was generated by free peasant farmers responding to their own agenda. Archaeological data from southern and central Greece has been cited already. The many new churches are an obvious feature, and some such as Skripou and Hosios Loukas are undoubtedly evidence of aristocratic expenditure, but what is most striking overall is the *un aristocratic* culture of eleventh-century Greece. The new building revealed at Corinth, Athens or Thebes seems very ordinary. The associated material culture appears to be one that would fit well with a prospering peasant world.<sup>65</sup>

If such a pattern provides a key to the development of the Byzantine economy, a number of implications follow. They would fit with a

<sup>62</sup> Ostrogorsky (1966); Górecki (1986); Górecki (2004).

<sup>63</sup> JG, ed. Zepos and Zepos, I, pp. 207, 208–9; ed. Svoronos, no. 3, pp. 82, 83–4; tr. McGeer, pp. 53, 54–5; Morris (1976), pp. 17–20.

<sup>64</sup> *Peira*, ed. Zacharia von Lingenthal, pp. 32, 38–40, 52–3, 85–6, 228; on Italy, see Martin (1993), pp. 293–328; on Greece, see below, pp. 772, 773–4.

<sup>65</sup> See above, nn. 21 and 23; on Skripou and Hosios Loukas, see Megaw (1966), pp. 20, 23–5; Connor (1991), pp. 112–21.

reinterpretation of the seventh and eighth century putting a more positive gloss on the cessation of the great aristocratic enterprises of late antiquity; they would highlight the importance of the survival in Byzantium of a flexible monetary system whereby peasant farmers could effectively produce for the market; they might also suggest a less optimistic view of the twelfth century.

Since 1970 most historians have followed Hendy's line that the twelfth century saw a continuation of the growing prosperity of the tenth and eleventh centuries. In terms of its value for the economy, the loss of Anatolia to the Turks did not matter because the most valuable parts of Asia Minor either remained in Byzantine hands, or were soon recovered. Anatolian stock-raisers may no longer have lived under imperial rule, but they would have had little option but to supply Byzantine demand. In other words business as usual; the indices of coins, ceramics and buildings show all was well and, in some areas, better than ever. Michael Choniates was no doubt telling the truth as he saw it when he describes rapacious tax-collectors destroying the poor; but he wrote in the 1180s and 1190s, a time when the empire was ringed by enemies, much territory had been lost and what remained was bound to be taxed hard.<sup>66</sup>

The crucial issue for the twelfth century as a whole is not taxation, but the role of the great landed estates. A number of documentary texts make it plain that vast areas of the Komnenian empire were run as the estates of various Constantinopolitan landlords – a category that includes the emperor, his kinsmen, the church and those monasteries and other pious institutions known as the 'pious houses'.<sup>67</sup> If the economic revival of the tenth and eleventh centuries was driven by aristocratic pressure, this phenomenon does not matter, or can be seen in a positive light, a return to the conditions underlying late antique prosperity. Rather than taking demand out of the system, the bankruptcy of the previous system of remunerating the state's servants in cash would have encouraged aristocratic landlords to put the produce of their estates on the market and indeed run their estates with the market in mind.<sup>68</sup> But if the economic revival of the middle Byzantine period was in fact driven from below, these vast estates might look more like a stifling of Byzantine economic enterprise. Did the great estates necessarily promote local and regional economic enterprise, or did they dampen such activity in favour of self-sufficiency and the provision of goods in kind to feed their dependents in the capital? Is the growth of Latin commerce a sign of the economic vitality of Byzantium, or rather a symptom of an economy where Byzantine traders were disadvantaged in favour of outsiders servicing the great estates? An economy, in other

<sup>66</sup> Hendy (1989a), pp. 46–7.

<sup>67</sup> Magdalino (1993a), pp. 160–71.

<sup>68</sup> Oikonomides (1997a), pp. 210–15.

words, shifting, like that of later medieval eastern Europe, to become one of great estates producing for a profitable export market, but in so doing fundamentally damaging its social base. Good cases can be made on both sides of the argument. For want of sufficient documentary evidence to shed light on how estate and society interacted at local and regional levels, any judgement must ultimately rest on a more general view of the state of the twelfth-century economy. How rich was Byzantium?

## 1204: A BALANCE SHEET

In 1204 the Crusaders had expected a great deal of the empire. One of their number, Robert de Clari, wrote, 'I do not think that in the forty richest cities of the world there has been so much wealth as was found in Constantinople. For the Greeks say that two-thirds of the wealth of this world is in Constantinople and the other third scattered throughout the world.' But when it was actually counted, two-thirds of the world's wealth only amounted to 300,000 marks.<sup>69</sup>

So perhaps the empire was not as rich as it appeared to be. Its reputation for wealth owed a lot to Constantinople, the tax system funnelling resources into the city, and the court culture that ensured they were spent there, partly on luxury goods manufactured in the city (see below, p. 776). It also owed a lot to deliberate image-making, keeping up appearances of stupendous wealth. Outside the imperial capital, as a succession of Latin and Muslim observers noted, the empire was far less impressive.<sup>70</sup> Athens, Ephesos, Corinth, Sparta, Thessaloniki and the like may have been doing better in the twelfth century than they had in the past, but from a contemporary European perspective, they were not great cities. A comparison between Byzantine and Latin church-building in the twelfth century is telling. Byzantine architecture may have its aesthetic merits, but seen simply in terms of scale and resources, the achievements of the Latin building industry in the age of the Romanesque and early Gothic dwarf those of Byzantium.<sup>71</sup>

To some extent Byzantium was disadvantaged by geography. A great deal of imperial territory was taken up by mountains and arid plateaux, but one should not press that too far. Some of these same areas did very well under other rule. Central Anatolia thrived during the thirteenth century under the Seljuqs; western Turkey prospered in the late middle ages and again in

<sup>69</sup> Robert de Clari, *Conquest of Constantinople*, ed. Lauer, pp. 80–1; tr. McNeal, pp. 101–2; Queller and Madden (1997), pp. 199–200.

<sup>70</sup> *Leg.*, ch. 63, ed. Chiesa, p. 216; tr. Scott, p. 55; Ibn Hawqal, *Surat*, tr. Kramers and Wiet, I, p. 192; Odo of Deuil, *Expedition*, ed. and tr. Berry, pp. 88–9; *Hudud al-'alam*, tr. Minorsky, ed. Bosworth, p. 157: 'In the days of old cities were numerous in Rum, but now they have become few.'

<sup>71</sup> Mango (1979), pp. 108–67; Ousterhout (1999), pp. 7, 51.

the eighteenth century; in Greece and the Balkans the later middle ages and the eighteenth century also stand out.

A major achievement of the last half century in studies of the Byzantine economy has been the recognition of the prosperity of the middle Byzantine period and of the fact that in some respects this carried on through to 1204. But it seems equally clear that by 1204, at least, the Byzantine economy was not fulfilling its potential. In 934 Romanos I Lekapenos (920–44) had justified his land legislation to protect the free peasantry on the grounds that it was 'beneficial to the common good, acceptable to God, profitable to the treasury and useful to the state'.<sup>72</sup> Robert de Clari's disappointment in 1204 may go to show that his concerns were not misplaced.

<sup>72</sup> *JG*, I, ed. Zepos and Zepos, p. 207; ed. Svoronos, no. 3, p. 82; tr. McGeer, p. 54.

## CHAPTER 13

# EQUILIBRIUM TO EXPANSION (886–1025)

JONATHAN SHEPARD

### INTRODUCTION: COEXISTENCE WITH THE CALIPHATE

As earlier chapters have shown, the empire's military situation was alleviated by political upheavals in the Muslim world and the abatement of hammer blows directed by the Abbasid leadership. The caliphate itself had more recourse to diplomacy, recognising Ashot I Bagratuni ('the Great') (884–90) as paramount prince among the Armenians and bestowing a crown on him. Soon afterwards, Basil I (867–86) responded with *démarches* of his own towards Ashot.<sup>1</sup> The later ninth century probably saw the elaboration of the *basileus'* diplomatic web eastwards, drawing in political elites in central and eastern Caucasia such as 'the chiefs of Azia', lords of the Caspian Gates.<sup>2</sup> By the reign of Leo VI (886–912) the court was maintaining well-to-do Turks from the Fergana valley as well as Khazars, and these young men were making substantial down payments of gold in order to receive annual *rogai* as members of a unit of the imperial bodyguard.<sup>3</sup> The chinks in Muslim power were shown up in other forms, such as the prisoners-of-war kept at court. The more prominent among them were enrobed in the white garments of catechumens at the emperor's Christmas and Easter banquets, as if to affirm willingness to adopt the religion of the Christians.<sup>4</sup> Triumphal parades of Basil I, as of Theophilos (829–42), celebrated with spectacular props the emperors' occasional forays into Muslim-held regions, and a poet could write of Basil as a new David, who with God's help will vanquish the enemy hosts.<sup>5</sup>

A triumphalist note is likewise sounded by orators such as Arethas in his praises for Basil's son Leo VI at the turn of the ninth century. However, there is little talk of outright reconquest of lands from the Muslims. Arethas' accent is, rather, on the benefits bestowed by Leo on the city of Constantinople through translation there of the relics of St Lazaros, from

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 353; Shepard (2001), pp. 27–8.

<sup>2</sup> *DC*, II.48, ed. Reiske, I, p. 688; Zuckerman (2000c), pp. 537–9, 542–8.

<sup>3</sup> *DC*, II.49, ed. Reiske, I, pp. 692–3.

<sup>4</sup> Simeonova (1998b), pp. 91–9, 103–4.

<sup>5</sup> McCormick (1990), pp. 147–50, 154–7; Markopoulos (1992), p. 231, lines 212–14, p. 226 (commentary).



Map 23 The empire in the tenth and eleventh centuries: key towns in the Balkans and Asia Minor

the border-zone island of Cyprus.<sup>6</sup> The humbling of the barbarians was refracted through Constantinopolitan lenses, presenting Basil and his son as, respectively, generals and masters of strategy, gaining spoils and additional supernatural protectors for the City. But in fact Leo was hard-pressed to cope with the repercussions for the border regions of the Abbasids' internal political problems. In many ways the vigorous jihad waged by the *ghazis* of the Tarsus region,<sup>7</sup> like the burgeoning piratical fleets operating from Syrian and Cretan ports, were signs of the increased wealth and military capability available to freebooters and true believers of various stripes at the interface between the imperial and Islamic dominions.

The dislocation of the resource-rich Abbasid caliphate was, in short, a mixed blessing for Byzantium. Oft-quoted is the declaration of Patriarch Nicholas I Mystikos (901–7, 912–25): 'there are two lordships, that of the Saracens and that of the Romans, which stand above all lordship on earth, shining out like the two mighty beacons in the firmament.'<sup>8</sup> This is a figure of speech, but its context is suggestive. Nicholas was writing to Caliph al-Muqtadir (908–32), urging him in effect to disown the measures taken against the civilian population of Cyprus by Damian, an apostate Christian who had gathered a large fleet and operated semi-autonomously, albeit notionally on the caliph's behalf. Byzantium's state of co-existence with the caliphate was neither peaceful nor wholly stable. But the emperor could exchange embassies, gifts and courtesies with the caliph, thereby maintaining dignity. The numerous humiliating if petty challenges to his authority from pirate fleets could be as politically debilitating as any caliphal hammer blow. From this perspective, there was *Realpolitik* in Patriarch Nicholas' rhetoric concerning 'lordships'. The events of the mid-tenth century tend to bear out the unarticulated grounds for imperial statesmen's caution in exploiting Abbasid disarray. The jihad waged by an ambitious amir intent on legitimising his new regime in Aleppo would eventually overturn the underlying equilibrium, and equilibrium was the best that palace-based emperors could realistically hope for.

#### IMPERIAL IDEALS, BORDERLAND REALITIES

It is against this background that one should view the various manuals of governance and law-collections dating from Leo's reign. They evince his enthusiasm for order, godliness and good learning. Besides commissioning, compiling or interpolating these works he wrote numerous sermons. He aspired to be acknowledged as the fount of wisdom and pious enlightenment, judging by the description of his bathhouse near the palace complex.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Arethas, *Scripta minora*, ed. Westerink, II, pp. 16, 31–4; Shepard (2002b), pp. 67–8.

<sup>7</sup> Bosworth (1992), pp. 274–6, 281–5.

<sup>8</sup> NM, no. 1, pp. 2–3.

<sup>9</sup> Magdalino (1988b), pp. 103–10, 116–18.

Leo's sobriquet, 'the Wise', implied in the bathhouse imagery, acclaimed by contemporary courtiers and derided by Symeon of Bulgaria, was not wholly undeserved. Like his father Basil I, he wished his rule to be associated with illustrious figures of the Christian empire's acknowledged heyday, notably Constantine and Justinian. At the same time he propagated the idea of renewal in, for example, his highly euphemistic version of Basil's accession: the former state of affairs had been removed together with Basil's senior co-emperor, Michael III, 'for the purpose of fresh and well-ordered change'.<sup>10</sup>

The concept of 'cleansing' government and society of the corrupt and the obsolete is threaded through the *novellae* of Leo VI, an assemblage of 113 ordinances, mostly dating from the earlier years of his reign. They are largely concerned with morality and church discipline, and envisage a well-tempered society whose laws apply to all men save the emperor; he has been granted 'discretionary powers' (*oikonomia*) over earthly affairs by God. The laws, it is repeatedly asserted, are to help men, bringing benefits to their souls as well as to their bodies.<sup>11</sup> How far Leo's *novellae* were practicable administrative instruments and how far they were enforced is, however, uncertain.

The *Book of the eparch* was issued in 911 or 912 in the name of Leo VI. Its preface invokes by way of analogy the tablets upon which the Law was disclosed by God's 'own finger' for all mankind,<sup>12</sup> but its scope is confined to Constantinople, whose administration was supervised by the eparch. It regulates the conduct of nineteen guilds, and lays down harsh penalties for those who breach the regulations. General professions of concern for the welfare of the emperor's subjects are here juxtaposed with detailed administrative procedures. The *Book of the eparch* reveals something of the government's assumptions and priorities. It is particularly concerned with top-quality products such as silks, purple dyes, silver- or goldwork and spices. Five guilds connected with the silk industry receive detailed attention, whereas tanners and leather-softeners get cursory treatment and numerous other known guilds are not mentioned at all. The monopolisation and rationing out of luxury goods was the stock-in-trade of imperial statecraft, at home and abroad. Great efforts were made to ensure that the various stages of production and retail of silk remained in the hands of different professions, and dealers in less valuable goods such as groceries, meat and soap were also not to merge their enterprises. Small-scale units could safely be allowed to monitor their own operations and their own tax assessments and collections to a large extent; fewer officials were thus required

<sup>10</sup> Leo VI, *Funeral oration for Basil I*, ed. and French tr. Vogt and Hausherr, pp. 56–7. See also Tougher (1997b), pp. 25, 65–7.

<sup>11</sup> Leo VI, *Novels*, ed. Noailles and Dain, pp. 131, 197, 329–31, 345, 361.

<sup>12</sup> *Eparch*, preface, ed. and German tr. Koder, pp. 72–3.



for them. The *Book of the eparch* essentially envisaged self-regulation by craftsmen and traders in conjunction with the City authorities.

A still more urgent priority for the government was provisioning at affordable prices. The heads of the fishmongers' guild were to report to the eparch at dawn on the night's catch, whereupon he set a price. The prices of meat and bread were likewise set by him; rigorous inspection of all weights and measures was enjoined. The drafters or revisers of the *Book of the eparch* assumed that residence in Constantinople was a privilege, and 'exile' was a harsh penalty in itself. No clear distinction was drawn between provincials and foreigners: for example, anyone 'from outside' bringing any kind of merchandise 'into the God-protected city' was to be closely supervised by the eparch's deputy; a list of their purchases was to be made at the end of their stay, 'so that nothing forbidden should leave the reigning city'.<sup>13</sup> The sale of pigs and sheep was regulated in detail; the express aim was cheaper food for the populace, and the interests of provincial producers were secondary.

All this probably had a positive effect on the citizens' well-being, but it also publicised the emperor's solicitousness. An emperor enjoying the citizens' goodwill was screened against would-be usurpers. Leo broadcast his piety and accentuated the mystique of emperors born in the Porphyra (himself and his son Constantine). He maintained the festival celebrating the consecration of the Nea Ekklesia built by Basil I. A dirge composed soon after Leo's death linked Constantinople and the reigning family thus:

O City, sing, intone the praise  
of Basil's noble offspring,  
For they impart a deeper hue  
To thy imperial purple.<sup>14</sup>

Bread-and-butter issues were at least as important as pomp in winning the sympathies of the populace. Leo seems to have realised this.

Concentration on the emperor's home town rather than the provinces is not particularly surprising. More striking is Leo's assumption, in compiling his *Tactica* in (for the most part) the 890s, that the provinces are vulnerable to enemy attack and that this will continue indefinitely. He states that the work is for fighting the Saracens, who harass his subjects 'day by day'.<sup>15</sup> Warfare is essentially defensive, and commanders must ensure that all necessities

<sup>13</sup> *Eparch*, XX.1, ed. and German tr. Koder, pp. 132–3; tr. Freshfield, pp. 44–5 (repr. pp. 264–5); see also XIII.2, ed. and German tr. Koder, pp. 120–1; tr. Freshfield, p. 36 (repr. p. 256); XV.1, ed. and German tr. Koder, pp. 122–3; tr. Freshfield, p. 38 (repr. p. 258); XVII.4, ed. and German tr. Koder, pp. 128–9; tr. Freshfield, p. 41 (repr. p. 261); XVIII.1 and XVIII.4, ed. and German tr. Koder, pp. 128–9, 130–1; tr. Freshfield, pp. 41–2 (repr. pp. 261–2).

<sup>14</sup> Ševčenko (ed.) 'Poems', pp. 202 (Greek text), 205 (translation); see also pp. 225, 227.

<sup>15</sup> Leo VI, *Tactica*, XVIII.142, cols. 981–2. Leo's predecessors had had similar concerns; see above, p. 393.

are removed from areas under attack to safe places, livestock dispersed and the population evacuated. The Arab raiders should be attacked only when returning, weary and preoccupied with booty. Here, at least, the emperor was attuned to life as it was lived in the eastern provinces. Much the same tactics are advocated in *Skirmishing*, which drew on first-hand experience of the ninth- and earlier tenth-century borderlands and was composed in the milieu of the Phokas family; it presupposes that humans as well as livestock will be amongst the raiders' encumbrances, and the *stratēgos* is to assume that his troops will be numerically inferior to the raiders.<sup>16</sup>

The subterranean settlements of Cappadocia provide material evidence for the insecurity of the south-eastern provinces. Some predate the Arab invasions, but others, such as Salanda, 80 kilometres west of Caesarea, were created then. Several of the millstones which closed its numerous entrances are still extant, though such ingenuity did not prevent this redoubt from being captured in 898 and again in 906–7. *Skirmishing* sets notably less store by man-made fortifications than by familiarity with mountain heights and natural defences from which observers can gauge enemy numbers and movements.<sup>17</sup> Rapid movement was here at a premium, thus limiting what the mounted raiders could take back. Their numbers seldom exceeded 10,000, and were often far smaller. The brunt of the seasonal land raiding was borne in the south-east borderlands. Nonetheless, *Skirmishing's* preoccupation with finding out the raiders' targets betrays the difficulty of keeping track of them, let alone of mustering soldiers from widely scattered agricultural holdings. Its detailed provisions for coping with major invasions, replete with siege equipment, bespeak a state of alert and uncertainty as to where the next blow would fall.

No less uncertainty overhung the southern and western coastal districts of Asia Minor. The amir of Tarsus despatched or led naval *razzias*, and these, like the piratical fleets operating from north Syrian ports, enjoyed a safe haven in Crete, if needed. It was there that the pirate chief Leo of Tripoli withdrew after sacking Thessaloniki, the empire's second city, in 904, and there 22,000 prisoners were counted before being auctioned to the Cretans. For a while Leo's fleet was expected to attempt an attack on Constantinople; it was probably this, rather than just the humiliation at Thessaloniki, that spurred Leo VI into large-scale countermeasures. But a combined land-and-sea operation soon collapsed. The commander of land forces, Andronikos Doukas, had recently led a successful incursion into Cilicia. He now fell under suspicion of rebellion and fled to Baghdad after holding out in the fortress of Kabala for six months in 905.

<sup>16</sup> Leo VI, *Tactica*, XVII.76–80, XVIII.126–7, XVIII.134, cols. 931–4, 975–6, 977–8; *Skirmishing*, prologue, chs. 4, 19, ed. and tr. Dennis, pp. 146–7, 156–9, 214–15.

<sup>17</sup> *Skirmishing*, chs. 1–3, 8, 11, 12, ed. and tr. Dennis, pp. 150–5, 164–5, 184–7; Howard-Johnston (1983a), p. 259.

A later, massive task force under the command of a trusted civil servant and relative-by-marriage of Leo VI, Himerios, was directed at least partly against Crete, from which the Byzantines had vainly tried to dislodge the Arabs in the ninth century. Himerios was no more successful in 911–12, even though he seems to have followed the precepts of Leo's *Tactica*, and Leo of Tripoli remained at large in the Aegean for ten more years.<sup>18</sup> Arab raids are quite commonplace in tenth-century hagiography; the tales may be fabulous, but their setting has substance. The sermons of Peter, bishop of Argos (c. 852–c. 922), and his *Life* concur in suggesting that the locals looked to the saints and to Peter himself, rather than to the emperor, for protection.<sup>19</sup> Peter regularly ransomed captives from pirates who put in at Nauplion; and, reportedly through the miraculous production of flour, he acted to relieve a famine. Peter's ransomings were not far removed from tribute, and it seems that a regular form of tribute was exacted from the inhabitants of southern Aegean isles such as Naxos.

At one level these facts of provincial life make a mockery of the *bien pensant* Leo VI's public pronouncements. Yet the raiding fleets were normally modest, and the boats in everyday piratical use needed to be small and light, to facilitate swift concealment in Aegean coves. So their carrying capacity was restricted. In any case, not even Byzantine or Muslim authorities could achieve high standards of seaworthiness; naval technology did not allow either side to dominate the seas, and vessels of any bulk tended to ply a limited – and predictable – range of routes. The Muslim fleets seldom liaised with one another, being intent on plunder, not conquest. The account of one of Leo of Tripoli's captives of 904 suggests there was more or less covert trafficking between the Muslim and Christian zones, involving redeemable prisoners and other commodities.<sup>20</sup> The smattering of copper coins belonging to Cretan amirs found on the Greek mainland may hint at commercial exchanges. In the border regions, local self-reliance and deals with the men of violence were unavoidable.

Some of the areas most exposed to enemy raids actually showed signs of increasing economic activity and wealth. In Sparta and Corinth the coin sequences which had begun in the mid-ninth century continue uninterrupted through the first half of the tenth. Still more suggestive is the proliferation of painted chapels and churches in the rocks of Cappadocia. Some formed part of monasteries, but most were lay foundations, serving

<sup>18</sup> See above, pp. 297–8. It may be that this campaign was an extension of the major raid on the region of Latakia in 910, the Syrian ports and Cyprus being targeted as the ultimate bases of the pirates' operations: Haldon (2000b), pp. 240–3, 339–40.

<sup>19</sup> *Life of Peter of Argos*, ed. Kyriakopoulos, pp. 34–5, 48–9, 174–5 (sermons); 242–3, 244–5, 246–7, 250–1 (*Life*); see also Morris (1995), pp. 113–14.

<sup>20</sup> John Kaminiates, *De expugnatione Thessalonicae*, chs. 70, 73, ed. Böhlig, pp. 59, 63; tr. Frendo and Photiou, pp. 115, 123.

as shrines, marks of piety and oratories. Similar monuments may well have been raised above ground in other provinces, particularly those in north-west Asia Minor, long secure from Arab raids. On the fertile southern shore of the Sea of Marmara lay several large wealthy monasteries, and ports such as Kyzikos, Pylai and Trigleia offered outlets to convey produce and livestock to the megalopolis. Under intensive police and customs scrutiny, the Sea of Marmara was the inner sanctum of the empire, prosperous and secure. There are signs of economic dynamism at Constantinople itself in the early tenth century. The size of the population remains uncertain, but the number of buildings was apparently increasing. Leo's *novellae* regulate building land and the spaces to be preserved between buildings, in ways not found in the Justinianic planning legislation, and this hints at greater building density.<sup>21</sup>

Yet even in the megalopolis, driver of the Byzantine economy, the scale of activity and growth was modest. The citizens' needs could apparently be met by twenty-four notaries. Five of the nine owners of the shops listed in a mid-tenth-century rental note were officials or title-holders, and only one is identifiable by his trade. The richest pickings came from supplying the state or holding office, and the government was by far the largest employer in Constantinople. The palace complex required many hundreds of servants; eunuchs, pages and foreign bodyguards were reportedly numbered in their thousands. Most of those attending banquets or other ceremonies were holders of offices, heads of guilds or other such city worthies, but persons who held titles yet lacked a state function could attend. A text deriving from Leo VI's reign specifies the sums payable for certain court titles and offices, and indicates the *roga* payable annually by the treasury to title-holders according to their rank. Provided that the purchaser lived on for several years, he could make a profit, but the advantage lay mainly in the conspicuous connection with the imperial court, invaluable given the multifarious dealings which any man of property would have with tax inspectors and other officials.<sup>22</sup>

The purpose of the unrelenting palace ceremonial was set out by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (945–59) in the preface to the handbook on ceremonies he commissioned: 'may it be an image of the harmony of movement which the creator gives to all creation, and be regarded by our subjects as more worthy of reverence and therefore more agreeable and marvellous.'<sup>23</sup> The establishment over which the emperor presided was as just and as immutable as God's, and attempting to overturn it was tantamount to challenging God's order of things – and no less wicked or

<sup>21</sup> Leo VI, *Novels*, ed. Noailles and Dain, pp. 257, 373–5.

<sup>22</sup> *DC*, II.49, ed. Reiske, I, pp. 692–4; Lemerle (1967), pp. 80–3, 99–100.

<sup>23</sup> *DC*, preface, ed. Reiske, I, p. 5; ed. and French tr. Vogt, I, p. 2.

futile. The ceremonies also dramatised the emperor's role as the sole source of legitimate authority, and of serious money. Leo VI recommends the appointment as general of a 'good, well-born and rich [man]' even while piously urging a more meritocratic approach.<sup>24</sup> Leo probably appreciated how much the running of his army in the provinces depended on officers' local connections and resources. The rank and file did not receive substantial regular cash wages, and Leo's *Tactica* discusses the problem of ensuring a high turn-out of well-drilled soldiery after a call to arms. His solution is a combination of fiscal privileges for the soldiers with the arousal of religious fervour throughout provincial society, so that non-combatants would be predisposed to contribute unstintingly to the war effort. In this respect, at least, the Muslims' mobilisation of their society to participate in the jihad appeared to Leo a shining example.<sup>25</sup>

The reforms would have to be carried through by one of the army's few full-time components, officers above the rank of *droungarios*. These were appointed directly by the emperor and drew their salaries from him, but their effectiveness would not be the less for their being gentlemen of private means. The *stratēgos* who commanded them had to cope with enemy incursions. He had to take major decisions, and possessed sweeping powers to requisition and to evacuate civilians. He was left largely to his own devices, but the term of office was short and he was forbidden from owning land in the theme he governed, a provision evidently designed to prevent close ties growing up between the governor and local society. It could not always be enforced, especially in the distant south-eastern borderlands. Yet on the whole a balance was struck between affiliations, imperial and local.

Imperial propaganda did not merely proclaim an ideal of good order from the palace. The palace rites nearly all involved prayer or the veneration of the sainted. Many involved liturgical celebrations in St Sophia or churches outside the palace complex. The emperor constantly led his entourage in prayers for the welfare of his subjects, acting together with the patriarch and fortified by the concentration in his palace of Christendom's finest relics, the Instruments of Christ's Passion among them. The rhythmic intercession gained in significance from the disorder which many provincials endured, constituting both an oasis and a clarion call for supernatural aid. Such a combination of imprecation and material splendour amidst all-enveloping turbulence could be found in the west, in Cluny, and the spell which Cluny's sumptuous liturgies cast on the propertied classes of Francia was perhaps akin to that of the *basileus'* festive prayers in Byzantium. His ritual displays of intimacy with God and *philanthrōpia* for his subjects were the

<sup>24</sup> Leo VI, *Tactica*, II.25, cols. 687–8.

<sup>25</sup> Leo VI, *Tactica*, XVIII.128–33, cols. 975–8; Dagron (1983), pp. 221–3, 230, 233–9.

visible accompaniment of works of legislation and tabulations of good administrative practice.

Those who did not view their interests or spiritual salvation as best served by the imperial establishment were too poor, localised and ill-equipped to take concerted action; the nearest they came was to respond tardily, if at all, to the general call-to-arms which the authorities periodically issued. Widespread if unchronicled apathy meant that *stratēgoi* had little hope of turning their forces against the government successfully. Their regular soldiers were too few and often too dispersed, and their principal mode of guerrilla warfare was ill-suited for an assault on Constantinople's formidable walls, which were ringed by water.

#### PALACE INTRIGUES AND COUPS

These underlying stabilisers of 'the great laden ship of the world'<sup>26</sup> pass virtually unnoticed in the chronicles composed in Constantinople, which focus on the colourful factional rivalries between leading courtiers and generals. Thus the eunuch Samonas tried unsuccessfully to flee to the caliphate c. 904, but was soon restored to favour in the palace, rising to the position of *parakoimōmenos* in 906. But ultimately he depended on the emperor's favour, and once this was withdrawn, in June 908, Samonas became a political nullity confined to a monastery. The patriarch could sometimes, if determined enough, exert moral pressure on the emperor about matters with some religious or ethical content. In 906–7 Patriarch Nicholas I Mystikos made an issue of the marriage of Leo to his mistress, who had recently borne him a longed-for male heir, Constantine. This, Leo's fourth marriage, flagrantly violated canon law and a recent edict issued by Leo and his father Basil. Nicholas caused the emperor acute political embarrassment, and his involuntary abdication in 907 was galling to many churchmen. But deposed he was. One of the charges laid against him was that he had written a letter to the domestic of the Schools, Andronikos Doukas, urging him to continue with his stand at Kabala (see above, p. 499) and promising that 'the City by our exhortations will soon ask for you'.<sup>27</sup>

Whether authentic or not, the letter touched on the rawest of political nerves. Andronikos belonged to one of the families which had risen to prominence in the army in the later ninth century through martial talents and imperial favour. Andronikos' son, Constantine, who had fled with him to Baghdad, later returned, to be pardoned and even promoted. He became domestic of the Schools in the last years of Leo's reign or during that of Leo's brother, Alexander (912–13). However, the latter's death and

<sup>26</sup> *DAI*, ch. 1, pp. 48–9.

<sup>27</sup> Nicholas I Mystikos, *Miscellaneous writings*, ed. and tr. Westerink, p. 16.

the infancy and debatable legitimacy of Constantine VII presented Doukas with an opportunity, and he is alleged to have been 'ever longing for the crown'.<sup>28</sup> His attempt to seize control of the palace met with stiff resistance from the reigning emperor's bodyguards, and in the house-to-house fighting within the palace complex he was killed. After this foiled coup attempt in June 913, the Doukai ceased to hold senior army commands.

The family which became the military mainstay of the Macedonian dynasty was neither illustrious nor particularly wealthy by origin. Its first outstanding member, Nikephoros Phokas, rose thanks to the favour of Basil I. He must have acted largely on his own initiative while domestic of the Schools on the eastern frontier, yet his exploits are approvingly mentioned by Leo VI, who repeatedly calls him 'our general'.<sup>29</sup> Nikephoros was the *prōtostratōr* during Leo's childhood, a post entailing close contact with the emperor. He most probably won Leo's trust then. The emperor on the Bosphorus, culling ancient writers on strategy for his generals' benefit, was demonstrating that he was still supreme commander, making his unique contribution to the war effort. The artificial convention of imperial omniscience was one to which the Phokades were normally willing to subscribe. *Skirmishing* cited Leo's work as the source for an exploit of Nikephoros, even though the account given in *Skirmishing* is much fuller than that in Leo's *Tactica*.<sup>30</sup> The two families had risen together and their interests were furthered by mutual praise and material aid. The build-up of lands, wealth and local connections of the Phokades in Cappadocia was set in motion by imperial patronage and office.

Nikephoros' elder son, Leo, was seemingly made *stratēgos* of the single most important theme, the Anatolikoi, in the early tenth century. The post was held subsequently by Leo's younger brother, Bardas. The Doukai were then in the limelight and Andronikos Doukas was clearly regarded by some courtiers as a budding usurper. Perhaps for that very reason ties were kept up with the Phokades. Constantine Doukas' coup attempt appeared to confirm the courtiers' darkest suspicions. It could be a sign of contemporary Byzantine preoccupation with coups that Symeon of Bulgaria's march on Constantinople later that summer was assumed to be aimed at the throne. Nicholas I Mystikos, the chief regent, had no special reason to cherish the boy emperor; his refusal to sanction Leo VI's marriage to Constantine's mother, Zoe, had cost him his patriarchal throne. He regained it only after Leo's death, and upon becoming chief regent in June 913 he expelled Zoe from the palace. Nicholas is not implausibly alleged to have incited

<sup>28</sup> TC, p. 382.

<sup>29</sup> Leo VI, *Tactica*, XI.25, XV.38, XVII.83, cols. 799–800, 895–6, 933–4. See also above, p. 298.

<sup>30</sup> Leo VI, *Tactica*, XI.25, XVII.83, cols. 799–800, 933–4; *Skirmishing*, ch. 20, ed. and Dennis, tr. pp. 218–19, 223, n. 1; ed. and French tr. Dagron and Mihăescu, pp. 167–8. *Skirmishing* was composed in the milieu of Nikephoros II Phokas.

Constantine Doukas' attempted coup. In a letter to Symeon of July 913 Nicholas seems to hint that if only Symeon will stop short of outright usurpation, a role as guardian of the boy emperor may yet be found for him. Nicholas' position was insecure within the palace, understandably enough given his attitude to Constantine VII, and early in 914 the boy's yearning for his mother was cited as grounds for ousting Nicholas from the regency council. Zoe returned to the palace, and took charge.

The following six years are commonly regarded as a break in the generally orderly political history of tenth-century Byzantium. However, the period of overt jockeying for power was relatively brief. Moreover, Zoe seems to have maintained a stable regime for some three years, renewing the imperial axis with the Phokades. Leo Phokas was appointed domestic of the Schools, probably at the same time as or soon after the eunuch Constantine was restored as *parakoimōmenos*, early in 914. Leo is said by the main chronicle to have been endowed with 'courage, rather than a commander's judgement'.<sup>31</sup> A court orator was even less flattering, dubbing him 'the deer-hearted brother-in-law'<sup>32</sup> of the *parakoimōmenos*. But the expeditions sent to distant theatres in Armenia and central Italy were successful, and the government felt confident enough to attempt to 'annihilate' Symeon of Bulgaria (893–927) with a surprise attack.<sup>33</sup> Bitter recriminations followed the disastrous defeat at Anchialos on 20 August 917. An attempt was made to lay heaviest blame on the admiral of the fleet, Romanos Lekapenos, for failing to ferry the nomadic Pechenegs across the Danube to attack Symeon from the north, and also for not picking up survivors. These allegations probably represent an official attempt to exonerate the land army's commander, Leo Phokas. He proceeded to station himself at Constantinople with his surviving soldiers, as did Lekapenos with the imperial fleet.

#### ROMANOS LEKAPENOS: REGIME, ACHIEVEMENTS AND EXILE

Romanos I Lekapenos (920–44) was a provincial without particularly close court connections, but he exploited the fact that Constantine VII was now too old to be ignored. Romanos struck early in 919, benefiting from surprise, sympathisers in the palace and the apparent paralysis of Zoe and Phokas, once the intelligent *parakoimōmenos* had been seized and stowed aboard one of Lekapenos' ships. Lekapenos claimed to be acting in response to a handwritten appeal from the boy emperor. On the morrow the thirteen-year-old Constantine announced that he would assume imperial power in conjunction with Patriarch Nicholas and a veteran courtier, Stephen

<sup>31</sup> TC, p. 388. <sup>32</sup> Dujčev, 'Treaty of 927 with the Bulgarians', p. 276.

<sup>33</sup> *aphanisai*, TC, p. 388. For the expeditions to Armenia and Italy, see pp. 354, 563. For the 'first strike' against Symeon, see Shepard (1999), pp. 574–5.



*magistros*. Zoe was to be expelled from the palace – although her tearful pleas at once made her son relent – and Phokas was to be replaced as domestic of the Schools. Remarkably, Phokas' reaction was merely to insist, before leaving the palace, that a brother and nephew of the *parakoimōmenos* be appointed to key commands. Still more remarkably, when these were also immediately expelled from the palace, Phokas turned to Lekapenos for consolation and support. Oaths of mutual assistance were sworn between them. Phokas' prominence at court had not been in reward for political skills. Romanos Lekapenos, in contrast, was a politician to his fingertips, who even capitalised on his status as an outsider to the palace and posed as disinterested arbiter. He made the modest request of access to the palace, the better to guard the *porphyrogenitus*. Although in late March he resorted to a display of force, arraying the entire fleet in the main harbour of the palace, he relied heavily on a small number of active sympathisers in the palace and acceptance by courtiers loyal to the *porphyrogenitus*. He entered the massively fortified precincts with only a few followers 'to perform obeisance' to the emperor,<sup>34</sup> exchange oaths and be appointed commander of the imperial bodyguard.

Once installed in the palace, Romanos Lekapenos acted promptly yet circumspectly. Letters in Constantine VII's name were sent to Leo Phokas, who had withdrawn to Cappadocia, warning him not to contemplate rebellion. Equally promptly, Romanos betrothed his daughter to Constantine. The marriage was celebrated on 9 May 919 and Romanos assumed the title 'father of the palace' (*basileiopatōr*). His rapid rise now alarmed well-wishers of the *porphyrogenitus*; but Lekapenos controlled the fleet and the palace, as well as Constantine's person and thus his validating authority. It was the last of these cards that he played against the large army which Phokas led from Cappadocia to Chrysopolis, across the straits from Constantinople. A letter from the emperor was read out to the rebels, singing Romanos' praises as his most trustworthy guard and denouncing Phokas as a traitor who had 'always' coveted the throne.<sup>35</sup>

Upon hearing this, the soldiers apparently deserted *en masse* and Phokas, who tried to flee, was caught and blinded. These events suggest the focal role of the emperor, in whose cause all parties professed to be acting, even though Constantine VII's forebears had only worn the purple for half a century and even though he had been born out of wedlock. It was Romanos' talent to harness this sentiment to his own interests. More than eighteen months elapsed before Romanos induced his son-in-law and Patriarch Nicholas to crown him co-emperor, on 17 December 920. By mediating between Nicholas Mystikos and his enemies Romanos had given Nicholas a stake in the perpetuation of his rule. Romanos was now about fifty years old and so

<sup>34</sup> TC, p. 394.

<sup>35</sup> TC, p. 396.



Figure 32 *Nomismata* of Romanos I Lekapenos showing the jockeying for power: on Class V of AD 921 (left), Christ crowns Romanos I on the obverse, while Christopher Lekapenos holds the cross with his hand above that of the smaller, beardless, Constantine VII on the reverse; on Class VII (right), Christ reigns on the obverse, while Romanos I Lekapenos and Christopher occupy the reverse, to the exclusion of the *porphyrogenitus* (this type, which is exceedingly common, is datable to 921–31)

he needed to move fast, yet any outright deposition of Constantine would outrage the very sensibilities which he had harnessed to seize power. On 17 or 20 May 921 Romanos induced the *porphyrogenitus* to crown his eldest son, Christopher, co-emperor. The 'unusual profusion of patterns and ceremonial issues'<sup>36</sup> of coins in the 920s reflects Romanos' aspirations, but also his hesitation about promoting Christopher to the exclusion of Constantine VII. On certain classes of *nomisma* Constantine appears smaller than Christopher and (unlike him) beardless, while on the commonest class of the 920s only Romanos and Christopher are depicted. Nonetheless, Constantine retained his formal position as second after Romanos in the palace ceremonies.

In the early 920s Romanos constructed, in effect, an alternative palace with adjoining monastery on the site of his private residence, over one kilometre to the west of the Great Palace. The new complex, although small by comparison, was clearly intended to be the shrine of the Lekapenos dynasty, and Romanos' wife was buried there in 922. The Myrelaion might lack a Porphyra, birthplace of emperors, but the monastery implied that in piety, at least, the new imperials were unimpeachable. Romanos also sought

<sup>36</sup> *DOC*, III.2, p. 529.

to demonstrate his philanthropy to the citizens of Constantinople through charitable foundations.

Even so, Romanos could be branded a 'stranger and intruder' by Symeon of Bulgaria,<sup>37</sup> and charged with imposing himself upon Constantine. The furiousness of Romanos' denial said it all; the Bulgarian had put his finger on the speciousness of the pretext for Romanos' rise to power.<sup>38</sup> However, if Symeon hoped to destabilise Romanos' regime, he was to be disappointed, and his armies' repeated attacks on Constantinople may well have rallied support behind the seasoned naval commander. In autumn 924 Symeon led his host in person, and at a preliminary meeting with Patriarch Nicholas he requested an encounter with Romanos. Romanos is credited with delivering a miniature homily, exhorting Symeon to desist from slaughtering fellow Christians and demonstrate his Christianity by making peace. Symeon is depicted as being shamed by these words and agreeing to make peace, though in reality nothing firmer than an accord was negotiated; the account most probably echoes contemporary imperial propaganda. Romanos also turned the Bulgarian problem to political advantage in 927, when emissaries from Symeon's heir, Peter (927–69), arrived, proposing peace. A treaty was soon ratified and on 8 October the young tsar was wedded to Maria, daughter of Romanos' eldest son, Christopher.

Romanos had his reasons for publicising the wedding. Losses in the Bulgarian war had been substantial, and peace was more than welcome to the citizens and also to the provincials in Thrace who had lived through years of Bulgarian occupation. Romanos also sought to advance his own son's status through the marriage: the Bulgarians were 'barbarians', and Peter's father had styled himself emperor only from, probably, 913, but Peter's family had long been royal. It was most probably at Romanos' prompting that the Bulgarians insisted on Christopher's name being acclaimed before that of Constantine at the wedding, and Romanos bowed to their protests. The predilections, and imperial style, of the Bulgarians could thus be yoked to Lekapenan aspirations. In so far as the interests of these two families converged, the court rhetoric about 'union' and fellowship had an unsuspectedly solid foundation. Christopher's imperial credentials were enhanced and he could be described as revitalising his father's old age through 'flourishing in his turn in majesty, and he nourished [it] with hopes of [his] succession to the throne'.<sup>39</sup>

Romanos Lekapenos is said to have been devastated by Christopher's death in August 931. He does not seem to have had the heart to set

<sup>37</sup> Theodore Daphnopates, *Correspondance*, ed. and French tr. Darrouzès and Westerink, no. 6, pp. 72–3.

<sup>38</sup> Theodore Daphnopates, *Correspondance*, ed. and French tr. Darrouzès and Westerink, no. 6, pp. 70–3.

<sup>39</sup> Sternbach, 'Christophorea', p. 17.

about advancing his younger sons Stephen and Constantine ahead of the *porphyrogenitus*; they were still only boys. Constantine VII was restored to the gold coins, even occupying a position senior to Romanos', a move which reflects the uncertain political outlook. Constantine was neither assured of the succession nor involved in decision-making. His bitter disdain for his father-in-law is patent in his *De administrando imperio*, most explicitly in his dismissal of the Bulgarian marriage arranged by the 'common and illiterate fellow'.<sup>40</sup>

This uneasy *ménage* was upset publicly by Romanos' show of favour towards Constantine VII: he proposed that Constantine's son should marry the daughter of his domestic of the Schools. Stephen and Constantine Lekapenos protested vehemently and the plan was dropped. It is striking that the domestic, John Kourkouas, was brought into play by Romanos to counteract the tensions of court factions, inevitably aggravated by his advanced age. Romanos' alertness to the post's significance is suggested by the brevity of domestics' tenure early in his reign, in contrast with Kourkouas' twenty-two-year stint. Kourkouas was under thirty when appointed in 922, and he had no record of associations with the Macedonian house, probably a prime recommendation in Romanos' eyes; his experience of pitched battles on the eastern borderlands was then minimal. But Kourkouas proved to have military talents. From the later 920s onwards, he was repeatedly sent eastwards and won praise from Byzantine chronicles for all the towns, forts and castles, allegedly numbering over 1,000, that he captured from the Saracens. The troublesome Muslim raiding bases of Melitene and Theodosiupolis were repeatedly attacked. Melitene was finally annexed in 934, and Theodosiupolis was eventually captured in 949. Muslim forts along the upper Euphrates and its tributaries were turned into Byzantine strongpoints. One of them was renamed Romanoupolis, in the emperor's honour. The domestic, who was aptly compared with Belisarius, gained for his sedentary master an aura of expansion. He is credited with having doubly benefited *Romania*, stemming the Muslim raids deep into Asia Minor and extending Roman borders as far as the Euphrates and even the Tigris.<sup>41</sup> More impressive is the fact that Kourkouas' offensives could be sustained for almost twenty years without much overt foreboding of *coups d'état*.

Romanos chose the theatres of operations no less shrewdly. They lay for the most part in Armenia and Mesopotamia. He did not mount ambitious combined operations of the sort that had come to grief in Leo VI's reign, nor was there much concentrated effort in the south-eastern borderlands. Instead, the pressure was applied further north, on Armenia and adjoining regions. Theodosiupolis and Melitene lay in fertile countryside and were

<sup>40</sup> *DAI*, ch. 13, pp. 72–3.

<sup>41</sup> *TC*, p. 427; Savvides (1990), pp. 11–25.

important trading centres. They could yield ample revenues and Melitene was declared an imperial *kouratoreia*, an establishment whose proceeds went straight to the emperor's coffers. The rocky slopes of the Taurus and the Anti-Taurus, by contrast, were neither fertile nor well-populated, while the Cilician plain was studded with Muslim forts. One further advantage of Romanos' eastern strategy was that it did not rely on Byzantine military resources alone. John Kourkouas and his brother Theophilos were able to gain the collaboration or formal submission of certain Armenian princes, while Romanos himself sought to forge bonds with individual princes, offering titles or a residence and estates in Byzantium. He thereby complemented and, at the same time, kept track of Kourkouas' activities. The princes' ties were with Romanos himself.

The most spectacular of Kourkouas' *tours de force* induced the citizens of Edessa to surrender their famed *mandylion*, the cloth with the miraculous imprint of Christ's features. In return, Romanos issued a chrysobull, pledging that Byzantium would never again molest the region of Edessa.<sup>42</sup> Edessa lay little more than 100 kilometres south from Melitene, but was clearly not regarded as a desirable candidate for annexation. The gaining of the relic showed up the caliph's impotence and the *mandylion* was conveyed through the provinces to Constantinople. But the high-pitched celebration of its arrival had much to do with Romanos' domestic problems. Some time earlier he had had to yield to his sons' protests at his scheme to marry Constantine VII's son to Kourkouas' daughter. Now he was too frail for the main procession, from the Golden Gate to St Sophia, and the advent of the image may unintentionally have bolstered the standing of his two unfavoured younger sons; they played a leading role in the celebrations welcoming the image to Constantinople, whereas Kourkouas is not recorded as having been present.<sup>43</sup>

By the autumn of 944, Kourkouas had been dismissed. That same autumn Romanos made another gesture in favour of Constantine VII, issuing a testament declaring him 'the first emperor' and threatening his own sons' imperial status should they attempt anything against Constantine.<sup>44</sup> Acting, presumably, in light of this, the young Lekapenoi struck against their father on 20 December 944. He was secretly abducted to one of the islands in the Sea of Marmara. It is uncertain whether Constantine

<sup>42</sup> TC, p. 432; von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, p. 75\*\*. The environs of Edessa were traversed by Byzantine forces on several occasions, and as early as 949 Samosata, a city named in the chrysobull, was attacked and, nine years later, devastated. However, these were essentially countermeasures against Saif al-Dawla, who was the first to breach the terms of the chrysobull: Canard (1953), p. 751; Segal (1970), p. 216.

<sup>43</sup> Kalavrezou (1997), pp. 55–6; Morris (2003), pp. 249, 251; Engberg (2004), pp. 132–5. On the relic's later fortunes, see Wolf *et al.* (eds.) (2004); contributions to Durand and Flusin (eds.) (2004); Hetherington (2006).

<sup>44</sup> TC, p. 435.

VII connived with the plotters: what is (and was) clear is his status as the sole adult emperor to have been born in the Porphyra. When a rumour spread that he had been murdered by the two Lekapenoi, the populace gathered outside the palace, calling for Constantine. It was placated only by his appearance, poking his bare head out through a lattice.

The citizens of Constantinople seem to have associated the Macedonian house with their own well-being, just as Leo VI had intended. But the *porphyrogenitus* did not rely on aura alone. He is said to have immediately appointed Bardas Phokas as domestic of the Schools, the brother of the man against whose alleged ambition for the throne Lekapenos had launched his own political career.<sup>45</sup> Bardas' first loyalty was patently to Constantine VII, and the appointment was a first step towards the undoing of the Lekapenoi. They themselves were apparently hatching a plot against the *porphyrogenitus* when they were seized in the palace on 27 January 945. They were, without any reported popular outcry, abducted to the Princes' Islands and a new life as exiles. Had their father backed them whole-heartedly, they might perhaps have supplanted the *porphyrogenitus*. But Romanos had not repeated his efforts to advance Christopher. At home, as abroad, his hard-headed ambition did little more than maintain the status quo.

#### CONSTANTINE VII AS LEADER

##### *Erudition, education, prayer*

The reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus as senior and dominant emperor (945–59) has traditionally been viewed as the apogee of Byzantium as a great power resplendent in culture and learning. It would be more accurate to say that the gathering strength of the economy and manpower began to be harnessed to imperial politics in spectacular ways, in the palace and on the battlefield. Constantine, like his father Leo VI, saw himself as a writer and instructor, and he was interested in many branches of written knowledge. This was partly a matter of theoretical knowledge or erudition about the past, but Constantine regarded the practical experience relayed by writings as indispensable to an emperor, as he stated in his preface to the *De administrando imperio*, a handbook devoted principally to foreign peoples and compiled for the instruction of his young son so that foreign nations 'shall quake before thee as one mighty in wisdom'.<sup>46</sup>

Constantine's public stress on learning reflected his own views and there is no reason to doubt the characterisation by the author of a *Synaxarion*, a history of the saints celebrated through the church year, commissioned by the emperor. Constantine, rising before the birds, was zealous to study

<sup>45</sup> TC, p. 436.

<sup>46</sup> *DAI*, preface, pp. 46–7.

'every book' and read through 'the ancient . . . histories' from which one could become 'experienced . . . in all kinds of matters'.<sup>47</sup> This, like the standard preface to the fifty-three instalments of extracts from classical and early Byzantine historical works commissioned by Constantine, asserts the special access of the emperor to wisdom through the books amassed in his palace. An emperor who exploited these reserves of past experience and piety was uniquely wise and reverend. But Constantine was simultaneously offering the 'benefit' of his digests 'to the public', in the words of the preface.<sup>48</sup> This exaltation of book-learning was in the tradition of Constantine's father, Leo 'the Wise'; both were palace-dwellers, and both asserted that the books and learning accumulated behind its closed doors were, through their mediation, relevant and advantageous to their subjects.

Constantine may have been guided partly by the example of another early tenth-century emperor, who had also filled his palace with books and whose reputation for learning was known to the Byzantines: Symeon of Bulgaria. Constantine and Symeon both accepted the ruler's duty to educate his people. This notion had been propounded by ninth-century scholar-ecclesiastics like Photius,<sup>49</sup> and became engrained in the propaganda and self-image of the Macedonian dynasty, although Constantine's education had in fact been very limited. His piety was sometimes patently dynastic. Thus he appropriated the acquisition of the *mandylion* from Edessa; the texts celebrating the event composed in the opening years of his reign represent the arrival of Christ's image as prefiguring and even precipitating Constantine's advance to sole rule.<sup>50</sup> Probably already by January 946 Constantine had brought 'home' to the capital the relics of Gregory Nazianzen; the casket was borne to the palace on purple cloth, restoring the 'sanctity and reverence' of which it 'had previously been deprived'. Subsequently the relics were installed in the church of the Holy Apostles, the burial-place of emperors, and a panegyric extolled the emperor responsible for all this as 'our new Moses'.<sup>51</sup>

Constantine emphasised most prominently his least controvertible qualities, invaluable assets even in his infancy: birth in the purple (declared on his silver coins from 945 onwards); and the supposed link between his well-being and that of the citizens of Constantinople, asserted in the acclamations chanted before large crowds in the Hippodrome. Constantine, by commissioning the *Book of ceremonies*, in large part an almanac of

<sup>47</sup> *AASS Novembris, Propylaeum*, col. XIV; Ševčenko, I. (1992a), p. 188, n. 52.

<sup>48</sup> Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *Excerpta de legationibus*, ed. de Boor, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> See above, p. 301; Shepard (1999), p. 572.

<sup>50</sup> von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, pp. 79\*\*, 85\*\*; Morris (2003), p. 251; Engberg (2004), pp. 133–6; Hetherington (2006), pp. 193–7. See also Dubarle, 'L' Homélie de Grégoire le Référendaire.

<sup>51</sup> *AASS Maii*, II, p. 452; Flusin, 'Le Panégyrique de Constantin VII Porphyrogénète', pp. 12, 21–5, 32–7.

the emperor's participation in church festivals and celebration of imperial power, showed his regard for both book-learning and the rhythm of the ritual; he claimed to be both restoring old practices and introducing new ones.<sup>52</sup> The rites he described and prescribed amounted to one long round of intercession, and the relics which Constantine amassed underlined the traditional designation of the palace as 'sacred'. They also enhanced his ability to gain supernatural protection for favoured subjects, such as soldiers out on campaign; the saints, present through their relics, would heed the emperor's prayers, protecting his armies and bringing victories. The power of imperial prayer is stressed in the *Life of Basil*, yet another of the works issued under Constantine's auspices, and the theme is also implicit in three works of art probably emanating from court circles which show Constantine with a relic or in prayer.<sup>53</sup>

### *Law and property*

Yet prayer and book-learning were not enough to sustain a regime. The balance between piety and practicality ascribed to Basil I in the *Life* probably represents Constantine's own line of thinking. One symbol of his concern for those beyond the City walls was the promulgation of laws valid throughout the empire. Eight are extant, at least one more known. A *novella* of 947 survives in versions addressing the themes of the Thrakesioi and the Anatolikoi, strengthening the sanctions and impediments on the purchase of land from 'the poor' by 'the powerful' laid down by Romanos in a *novella* of 934. Another attempts to protect the land-holdings of those enrolled to supply military service in the themes.<sup>54</sup>

There is little doubt that smaller peasant proprietors were increasingly alienating their lands to 'the powerful'. But it is unclear how far they were acting involuntarily and how far they were trying to profit from a more active property market. The two explanations are not mutually incompatible and, taken together, they could imply a gradual increase of population and quickening of commercial transactions (albeit largely in agricultural produce) as Muslim land raids abated. It appears that 'the powerful' of keenest concern to the emperors were those trying to take over lands in the fertile coastal region of western Asia Minor and also in the most strategically

<sup>52</sup> *DC*, preface, ed. Reiske, I, pp. 3–4; ed. and French tr. Vogt, I, pp. 1–2; Jolivet-Lévy (1987), pp. 452–4; Moffatt (1995), pp. 379–84.

<sup>53</sup> *TC*, pp. 299, 315–16; Weitzmann (1971a), pp. 242–6; Weitzmann (1972), pp. 59–60; Jolivet-Lévy (1987), pp. 452–4, 458, n. 68. See figs. 33, 34.

<sup>54</sup> *JG*, ed. Zepos and Zepos, I, pp. 214–17, 222–6; ed. Svoronos, nos. 4, 5, pp. 98–103, 118–26; tr. McGeer, pp. 63–7, 71–6; Lemerle (1979), pp. 87, 94–8, 117–25. See above, pp. 268–9, 489. Lawmaking, often in response to requests for rulings by officials in the provinces, was an important imperial function in the reign of Constantine VII's heir Romanos, too: Fögen (1994), pp. 61–8.





Figure 33 Moscow ivory of Constantine VII being crowned and blessed by Christ (mid-tenth century)



the central administration and buying up properties from the hard-pressed peasants who were left to shoulder the burden in their now depleted tax unit (*chōrion*); hence the paradoxical-seeming attempts to hinder the accumulation of landed estates in the hands of persons of influence. This was a problem of success for the empire which would become more acute with the elaboration of the state's apparatus and financial needs, and these, in turn, were driven largely by the demands of the military machine.

*Partnership with the Phokades and the shift to the offensive*

Constantine VII's legislation registers governmental concern about the material underpinning of the theme army in the wake of Kourkouas' repeated offensives in the east. Constantine's *novella* on 'military lands' was issued not long before the expedition of 949 to reconquer Crete, a cherished project. Extravagant rhetoric celebrated the emperor's supposed victories and his extension of the frontiers. In a poem in honour of Romanos II, Constantine is described as growing weary from writing down the roll of subjugated cities:<sup>56</sup> Tarsus and Crete tremble, as peoples and cities race to submit to the emperor. In reality, though, most of these towns were sacked rather than occupied, and the Cretan expedition ended ignominiously. It was part of the continuity Constantine sought to maintain, especially with his own father's reign; then, too, a Cretan expedition of some sort had been launched and land campaigning concentrated on the south-eastern borderlands. Equally, Constantine looked to the Phokades to provide military leaders, and the poem likens Bardas Phokas, domestic of the Schools since 945, to 'a glittering broadsword or a flame of fire, kindled by thy father's [Constantine's] prayers'.<sup>57</sup> These lines evoke the 'special relationship' between the Phokades and the Macedonian house which Romanos Lekapenos had so dexterously disconnected in 919. Constantine seems nevertheless to have balked at entrusting a major command to any military man of repute. The commander of the Cretan expedition, Constantine Gongylios, had been in charge of the imperial fleet since 945, but was described as 'without experience of war'.<sup>58</sup> Our sole detailed account of the expedition blames him for its failure and alleges that he failed to take the elementary precaution of establishing a secure camp on the island.<sup>59</sup>

Constantine's early years as senior emperor remained within the framework of essentially static, palace-based rule implied by the preface to the *De administrando imperio*. This work, compiled at his command between c. 948 and c. 952, bears his fingerprints more markedly than any of the other

<sup>56</sup> Odorico, 'Il calamo d'argento', p. 91.      <sup>57</sup> Odorico, 'Il calamo d'argento', p. 91.

<sup>58</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, p. 245; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, pp. 206–7; see also TC, p. 436.

<sup>59</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, pp. 245–6; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, pp. 206–8.

works associated with him. Diplomacy was an activity which a sedentary emperor could conduct highly effectively on his own account, and its ceremonial workings were focused on his mystique alone. But even as the compilation got under way, a military crisis developed in the east which was eventually to force Constantine to depart from the strategy of previous generations. The catalyst was Saif al-Dawla, a scion of the Hamdanid clan that had tightened its hold on Mosul and other prosperous parts of Mesopotamia, to the detriment of the caliph of Baghdad. By the end of 947 Saif was in firm control of Aleppo and its commercial wealth. He embarked on a series of devastating, if strategically insignificant, raids into Asia Minor. The Byzantines responded to this energetic warlord on their borders with major reprisals, taking captives and razing the walls of foreposts such as Hadath and Germanikeia. Hadath, a fortress on a key pass leading towards Byzantine-occupied Melitene, was the scene of several battles involving sizable Byzantine armies intent on demolishing the walls and Muslim units no less determined to defend or rebuild them. Bitter as the fighting was, it formed part of a broader strategy. At the same time as attempting to deny Saif secure bases, Byzantium sent embassies proposing truces and prisoner exchanges. However, Saif seems to have taken these as signs of impending Byzantine collapse. He rejected offers of an exchange of prisoners, and the poets in his entourage proclaimed his courage and the imminence of victory.

Saif al-Dawla's militancy and obduracy seem to have persuaded the reluctant Constantine that he would have to be worsted or removed, if his own authority was not to be tarnished. In, probably, 955 Nikephoros Phokas was appointed domestic of the Schools. He is said to have raised his soldiers' morale, training them to attack in good order and to occupy enemy territory confidently 'as if in their own land'; heavy cavalry charges were now central to tactics.<sup>60</sup> The reason for this more aggressive strategy is given by Abu Firas, a member of Saif's entourage: after suffering incessant incursions and after Saif had refused a truce except on extraordinary terms, Constantine made treaties with neighbouring rulers, sought military aid from them and sent out a large and expensive expedition to break Saif's power.<sup>61</sup> In the summer of 958 Samosata, on the Euphrates, was captured and demolished, and Saif was heavily defeated trying to relieve Raban, in October or November. Next spring the Byzantine force reached Qurus, only about 60 kilometres from Aleppo, and took many prisoners. Muslim sources suggest that Byzantium was fielding much larger forces than before, heavily armoured cavalry and units of Rus, Khazar and other foreign fighters.

<sup>60</sup> TC, p. 459; McGeer (1995), pp. 179–80, 280–315, 327.

<sup>61</sup> Abu Firas, *Diwan*, French tr. in Vasil., p. 368.



Figure 35 Illustration from the Madrid Skylitzes of Byzantine cavalry pursuing fleeing Muslims

Whether Constantine VII would have refrained from launching a large-scale *reconquista* must remain uncertain; death, on 9 November 959, relieved him of the problems posed by departure from his own model of static, 'Solomonic' kingship. Constantine's right-hand man, Basil Lekapenos the *parakoimōmenos*, was arguing for another assault on Crete during Constantine's last months. Even in court circles, the temptation to put to new uses the military machine assembled to break Saif al-Dawla was growing all but irresistible.

#### NIKEPHOROS II PHOKAS, JOHN I TZIMISKES AND VICTORIES IN THE EAST

Basil Lekapenos was dismissed by Constantine's heir, Romanos II (959–63), but the new *parakoimōmenos*, Joseph Bringas, also urged an attack on Crete, and Romanos himself seems to have been enthusiastic for military success at the outset of his reign. The greater part of the empire's armed forces embarked for the island in a huge flotilla in June 960. The ensuing hard-fought campaign lasted until March 961. Contemporaries were well aware of the significance of this feat. The author of a poem composed just after Crete's fall looks forward to the invasion of other Muslim lands: the vultures of Egypt will devour the victims of the emperor's sword. As the preface acknowledges, the real hero of the poem is Nikephoros Phokas, for all the dutiful praise awarded to Romanos.<sup>62</sup> Nikephoros was now allowed to strike at Aleppo, from which Saif had continued to harass the empire's borderlands. Saif's army proved no match for the Byzantine heavy cavalry and he fled ignominiously. Byzantine soldiers entered the city on 23 December 962.

<sup>62</sup> Theodosios the Deacon, *De Creta capta*, ed. Criscuolo, pp. 1, 36.

Double question-marks now hung over Byzantium: would the offensive against the Muslims be sustained, now that Saif had been humbled? And how would relations fare between Nikephoros and the young emperor, depicted in chronicles as a dissolute youth much given to pig-sticking?<sup>63</sup> The second question was resolved by Romanos' sudden death on 15 March 963, from poison according to some sources, and before the slighting of Aleppo had been celebrated. Phokas was summoned to the capital by Joseph Bringas, was hailed as 'bravest conqueror',<sup>64</sup> a pun on his first name ('victory-bearer'), and then withdrew to the east; but the temptation or pressure to claim the throne was strong. Unlike his uncle Leo Phokas in 919, Nikephoros had a large victorious army at his disposal and the officers seem to have felt prime loyalty to him. If we may believe a source biased heavily in his favour, they proclaimed Nikephoros emperor willy-nilly, maintaining that he, rather than an 'ignoble eunuch with sucklings [the infant *porphyrogeniti*, Basil II and Constantine VIII] should be giving out orders to men of blood'.<sup>65</sup> Nikephoros also enjoyed active support among the Constantinopolitan populace, and whereas Leo Phokas had been opposed by the fleet under Romanos Lekapenos, Basil the ex-*parakoimōmenos* managed to seize the docks and their warships armed with Greek fire. Basil Lekapenos' web of patronage was extensive, while in the palace the mother of the *porphyrogeniti*, Theophano, seems to have been in sympathy with Nikephoros. Basil sent ships, including the imperial yacht, inviting him into the City, and on 16 August 963 Nikephoros made a triumphal entry, receiving such acclamations as 'Nikephoros for emperor the public good demands'.<sup>66</sup> He was crowned in St Sophia. In little more than a decade, the army had become not only a battering-ram against distant Muslim foes but also a sought-after presence in the political life of the capital.

Constantine VII had claimed the inheritance of Constantine the Great through his veneration of the True Cross; Nikephoros bid for the succession by acts of conquest. An inscription on an ivory reliquary from his reign reads: 'Formerly, Christ gave the Cross to the mighty master Constantine for his salvation. But now the lord by the grace of God Nikephoros, possessing this, routs the barbarian peoples.'<sup>67</sup> It fits with the notion that the empire's military fortunes hinged upon Nikephoros' personal survival, expressed in a book of prophecy, the *Visions of Daniel*, shown to Liudprand of Cremona at Constantinople in 968.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>63</sup> TC, p. 472; Skyl., ed. Thurn, p. 248; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, p. 209.

<sup>64</sup> *andriōtate nikēta*: DC, I.96, ed. Reiske, I, p. 438.

<sup>65</sup> Leo the Deacon, *History*, III.4, ed. Hase, p. 40; tr. Talbot and Sullivan, p. 91. According to Leo, this was the argument put by Phokas' second-in-command, John Tzimiskes, to other senior officers.

<sup>66</sup> DC, I.96, ed. Reiske, I, p. 439.

<sup>67</sup> Frolow (1961), p. 240; Frolow (1965), p. 101.

<sup>68</sup> *Leg.*, ch. 39, ed. Chiesa, p. 204; tr. Scott, pp. 14, 43; Morris (1988), pp. 94–5.

Nikephoros, acclaimed as 'conqueror' at his coronation as well as at his triumphs, kept his forces engaged; in some years there were two or three expeditions in progress on different fronts. The disastrous outcome of the 964 Sicilian expedition did not prevent Nikephoros from reducing the numerous Muslim fortifications beyond the Taurus and Anti-Taurus ranges, in Cilicia and northern Syria. He is plausibly credited with the capture of 'more than a hundred towns and forts'.<sup>69</sup> This was a very fertile, well-populated region which had not suffered ruination from Byzantine campaigning earlier in the century, being studded with 'hard' targets. The forts, most notoriously Tarsus, had served as bases for raids, and in 965 Tarsus itself surrendered. That same year, a Byzantine force occupied Cyprus. Nikephoros commanded an expedition as far as the outskirts of Aleppo in 966 and briefly laid siege to Antioch. Pressure was resumed in the autumn of 968: he initiated another siege of Antioch and then left a blockade under subordinates; almost a year later, on 28 October 969, Antioch surrendered.

The fall of Antioch had considerable *éclat*, for this was an ancient Christian city. The Muslims' execution of its patriarch on a charge of treachery in 967 gave edge to claims that Nikephoros was 'armed with the holy spirit'.<sup>70</sup> Yet the fundamentally defensive cast of his strategy is indicated by the truce which Peter Phokas concluded with the amir of Aleppo in January 970: a blueprint for coexistence and commerce, biased in Byzantium's favour but leaving the emirate as a semi-autonomous power. The amir was to inform the emperor of the military movements of his fellow Muslims, and 'if any Muslim troops arrive to invade the Rum . . . [he is] to hinder them, saying "Pass through other regions and do not come into the land of the truce!"'<sup>71</sup> The terms were probably not very different from those initially offered to the amir of Melitene some forty years earlier (see above, p. 509), and they presupposed that Byzantium would rest content with its gains in Cilicia and along the Euphrates valley.

The terms had almost certainly been approved by Nikephoros, but by the time the truce was made he was dead and headless, murdered during the night of 11 December 969. His fall was a quintessential palace coup; his wife, Theophano, had been attracted to his former right-hand man, John I Tzimiskes (969–76), who personally participated in the killing of Nikephoros and had the severed head displayed to the guards who came, too late, to the rescue. Tzimiskes' first measure, after consultation with Basil Lekapenos the *parakoimōmenos*, was to decree that looting or violence would be punished with death, a stern pronouncement against the lawlessness that had been dogging the City in the later part of Nikephoros' reign.

<sup>69</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, p. 271; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, pp. 227–8.

<sup>70</sup> 'Office inédit en l'honneur de Nicéphore Phocas', ed. Petit, p. 401. This comes from an office venerating Nikephoros, written soon after his death.

<sup>71</sup> Canard (1953), pp. 833–4; Farag (1977), pp. 2–3.



Figure 36 Illustration from the Madrid Skylitzes of the head of Nikephoros II Phokas being shown to his supporters outside the palace

This endeared him to the propertied classes, as did his remission of the hearth tax, and he increased the stipends payable to senior officials and title-holders. He was also more attentive to the material needs of ordinary citizens than Nikephoros had been. Reportedly, he had to be restrained by the *parakoimōmenos* from emptying the treasury through distributions to the poor.<sup>72</sup> He took steps to alleviate famine in the countryside, but pacification of the City was probably his first priority. When celebrating a triumph through the streets, he had them bedecked with laurel branches and cloths of gold 'like a bridechamber',<sup>73</sup> thus invoking the emperor's role as bridegroom of the City. The procession was staged to mark his victory over the Rus, thwarting Prince Sviatoslav's attempt to instal himself on the Danube; but it gave Tzimiskes the opportunity to demonstrate to the citizens 'ignorant of military matters' the utility for their own security of large, well-equipped armed forces, and the indispensability of military leadership.<sup>74</sup>

The need to rekindle personal loyalties among the former soldiers of Nikephoros Phokas was one of the reasons for the spectacular campaigns against the Muslims which John I Tzimiskes launched from the autumn of 972 onwards. Byzantine propaganda even claimed that in 974 he led an all-conquering army to Baghdad itself; he certainly levied tribute from the amir of Mosul. In 975 Tzimiskes penetrated as far south as Damascus, levying tribute from its governor and taking Beirut by storm. Relics were

<sup>72</sup> Leo the Deacon, *History*, VI.3, ed. Hase, p. 97; tr. Talbot and Sullivan, p. 147.

<sup>73</sup> Leo the Deacon, *History*, IX.12, ed. Hase, p. 158; tr. Talbot and Sullivan, p. 201.

<sup>74</sup> Leo the Deacon, *History*, IV.6, ed. Hase, p. 63; tr. Talbot and Sullivan, p. 112. The 'Bamberg silk', commonly associated with Basil II, may well commemorate this triumph: Prinzing (1993a). On Sviatoslav's campaigns, see Franklin and Shepard (1996), pp. 145–51.



sent back to Constantinople, as they had been by Nikephoros II after several of his campaigns. In a letter to Ashot III Bagratuni ('the Merciful') (953–77), 'king of kings' of Armenia, Tzimiskes claimed to have received tribute from Ramla, Jerusalem and other towns, and that the liberation of Jerusalem was his ultimate goal.<sup>75</sup> Such propaganda was partly for domestic consumption, but it also bolstered the emperor's moral, and eventually political, authority over the Armenian princes.

#### BASIL II VERSUS REBEL GENERALS

John I Tzimiskes' designs on Armenia had, however, no time for fruition. On 11 January 976 he died of typhoid or poison. The elder son of Romanos II, Basil II (976–1025), was about eighteen years old. No formal regency was required, although his great-grandfather Romanos I's bastard son Basil Lekapenos the *parakoimōmenos* dominated the administration for a further ten years. Basil II's speech was staccato, 'more that of a peasant than a gentleman',<sup>76</sup> a description which would surely have pained his bookish grandfather Constantine Porphyrogenitus. In fact Basil, with his single-minded devotion to his army and preoccupation with drill and military formations, had far more in common with Nikephoros Phokas, another celibate ascetic. The role of war leader, which he assumed in early adulthood, became habitual and congenial and was highlighted in portrayals of Basil. He is depicted in military uniform on the frontispiece of a celebrated psalter, opposite verses explaining such images as the archangel Michael handing Basil a spear.<sup>77</sup> A predominantly martial note was also struck in the verses engraved on his tomb:

No one saw my spear lie still . . .  
but I was wakeful through all the time of my life  
and guarded the children of the New Rome . . .<sup>78</sup>

Basil's watchfulness was in reality directed as much at his own subjects and officers as at foreign foes. The resentment of the Bulgarians at the dissolution of their ancient state was exploited by four sons of an Armenian officer in the Byzantine occupation army. Soon after Tzimiskes' death, if not before, the Kometopoulou ('sons of the *komēs*') deserted, and they were soon leading Bulgarians in rebellion.<sup>79</sup> More immediately menacing was the revolt of the eastern army within months of Tzimiskes' death. The

<sup>75</sup> ME, tr. Dostourian, pp. 30–1; Walker (1977), pp. 319–27.

<sup>76</sup> Psell., I.36, ed. and French tr. Renauld, I, p. 23; ed. and Italian tr. Impellizzeri *et al.*, I, pp. 54–5; tr. Sewter, p. 49.

<sup>77</sup> 'Psalter of Basil II'; Cutler (1984), p. 115 and fig. 412, p. 253; Stephenson (2003), p. 51–2, 61–2. See fig. 37.

<sup>78</sup> Mercati (1970), p. 230.

<sup>79</sup> Shepard (1999), p. 584.



Figure 37 Illustration from the 'Psalter of Basil II', showing Basil II in parade armour, crowned by Christ with defeated foreigners and rebels grovelling at his feet

new claimant was Bardas Skleros, the general upon whom the government had relied to combat the Rus and also to quash the rebellion of Bardas Phokas, a nephew of the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas, in 970. Skleros forced the Taurus mountain passes, and after further battles he gradually closed on Constantinople. Basil the *parakoimōmenos* turned to none other than Bardas Phokas, but the troops which Phokas mustered in his family heartland around Caesarea were no match for the array of regular units which Skleros could field, and Phokas was defeated twice in the summer

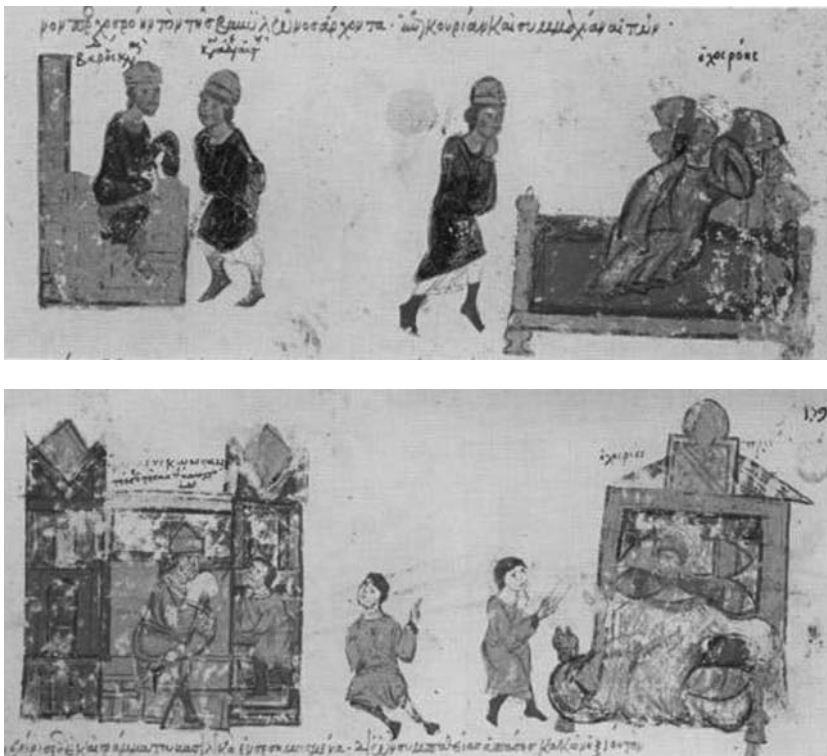


Figure 38 Illustration from the Madrid Skylitzes showing intensive negotiations between Bardas Skleros, the caliphate and Basil II, who tried to secure Skleros' handover from Baghdad: (above) Bardas Skleros sends a message to the caliph; (below) the emperor sends a counter-message to the caliph

and autumn of 978. The Macedonians' plight was undoubtedly dire, even though Skleros hesitated to march straight for Constantinople. The day was saved by the arrival of a 12,000-strong force of cavalry despatched by David *kouropalatēs*, the ruler of Tao, the region of western Georgia adjoining Theodosiupolis. The Georgians joined up with the remnants of Phokas' army and surprised and defeated the rebels to the west of Caesarea, in the theme of Charsianon, on 24 March 979. Bardas Skleros fled to Muslim territory and lengthy negotiations about his repatriation ensued between Byzantium and Baghdad.

Skleros eventually returned, but as a claimant to the throne, not a deportee. In 985 Basil II dismissed the *éminence grise* of tenth-century politics, Basil Lekapenos the *parakoimōmenos*, and subsequently exiled him from the City, upon suspicion of plotting with various generals of the eastern army. Basil II resolved to take charge of the army himself and to undertake an

operation independently of his overbearing and well-connected generals. Bulgaria offered at once an opportunity and a real threat to his regime. In 985 and early 986 Samuel of Bulgaria (987/8–1014), who was emerging as dominant among the Kometopouloi, was systematically reducing important forts and towns in Thrace and northern Greece. He transplanted the inhabitants of Larissa to Bulgaria and enrolled the males for military service. Basil led a large army to Sofia, a key strategic centre, but he failed to reduce the town and his army was ambushed withdrawing through the pass at Trajan's Gates; Basil himself barely escaped. Basil II's first steps in soldiering thus ended in ignominy and Bardas Skleros seized the opportunity to negotiate his release with the authorities in Baghdad and make his second bid for the throne early in 987. Then, on 15 August 987, Bardas Phokas, to whom Basil had earlier turned for assistance against Skleros, was himself proclaimed emperor: with the help of Maleinos and other Cappadocian notables he had raised local troops, supplementing the *tagmata* already under his command. A pact was negotiated between the two rebel generals, whereby Skleros would become master of Antioch and other recently gained or still unconquered territories to the south and east of that city.

By the end of 987 Bardas Phokas had gained control of most of Asia Minor and was able to send a detachment to Chrysopolis, in the footsteps of his grandfather Leo Phokas in 919. He himself laid siege to Abydos, at the other end of Byzantium's 'inner sea'. Once again, the mystique of imperial authority seems to have dispersed a Phokas-led army, but this time the mystique worked on a distant foreign ruler, and not on rank-and-file Byzantine soldiers. A marriage was negotiated between Basil II's sister, the *porphyrogenita* Anna, and the ruler of the Rus, Vladimir Sviatoslavich of Kiev. In return for Anna's hand, Vladimir would send warriors to the emperor's aid and, according to an almost contemporary Armenian writer, 6,000 Rus arrived at Byzantium. They surprised and routed the rebel force encamped at Chrysopolis.<sup>80</sup> However, they were infantrymen, and probably could not have prevailed over the heavy cavalry of the eastern army. It was hugely to Basil's good fortune that on 13 April 989 his most formidable enemy, Bardas Phokas, died suddenly of a stroke and the rebel army dispersed. Bardas Skleros emerged to make common cause with the dead man's sons. In June, Skleros wrote to the Turkish general in charge of Baghdad, requesting his aid. No prompt aid was forthcoming, and this may well have been one reason why Skleros entered into negotiations with the Byzantine government. Basil granted him an amnesty in the autumn of 989. Only then did

<sup>80</sup> ST, French tr. Macler, p. 164; Psell., I.13, ed. and French tr. Renauld, I, p. 9; ed. and Italian tr. Impellizzeri *et al.*, I, pp. 22–3; tr. Sewter, pp. 34–5; Skyl., ed. Thurn, p. 336; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, pp. 280–1. On the conversion of Rus, which these events triggered, see above, pp. 325–6; Franklin and Shepard (1996), pp. 162–9.

the citizens of Antioch drive Leo Phokas (Bardas' son) out of their city and acknowledge Basil II's regime.

#### BASIL II'S BULGARIAN WARS

As the ruler of a greatly enlarged empire, Basil became his own general, thereby dispensing with the military 'establishment' which had been the mainstay of governance in the first years his reign. Basil's intimate knowledge of the characters of individual soldiers and his supervision of promotions reduced the risk of plots and coups. He maintained the strictest military discipline. Basil's martinet-like stance probably sprang from a mixture of personal proclivity and political calculation. He had, in any case, little choice but to take up the challenge which Samuel of Bulgaria was posing.

On 14 June 987 or 988 Samuel had his own brother Aaron and most of his family put to death, becoming in effect sole ruler. He was determined to found a new dynasty based in the Macedonian highlands, forswearing Symeon's Preslav. The gain of Dyrrachium – apparently without violence – relieved him of the danger of surprise attacks from the west, and Samuel married Agatha, daughter of Dyrrachium's 'leading man' John Chryselios,<sup>81</sup> who presumably swung the town behind him. Samuel also aspired to control Thessaloniki, the counterpart of Dyrrachium; they stood at opposite ends of the Egnatian Way, where it reached the Aegean and Adriatic seas. There were already a number of significant towns in the *massif* traversed by the Egnatian Way, comprising bishoprics and monastic centres; these stood to benefit from the grain grown in the plains of northern Greece, an area that Samuel was set to dominate. Byzantine and Armenian captives were settled by him in areas adjoining the Egnatian Way and so, probably, were the deportees from Larissa. Samuel made an island on Lake Prespa his principal residence, building an immense cathedral, some forty-four metres long, and also a palace. He installed in the church the relics of St Achilleus, removed from Larissa in 985 or 986. He was thus acquiring for his seat not merely supernatural protection but also legitimacy, for the erstwhile patron and guardian of Larissa would not have allowed an impious usurper to abduct his remains. Samuel could hope to gain through such imperial measures acceptance and even allegiance from his motley assemblage of subjects: Bulgarians, Vlachs, Albanians, Armenians and Greeks.

Samuel's dispositions give no hint of designs upon the Byzantine throne. Nonetheless, an upstart astride the Balkans menacing the emperor's revenues from the fertile Thessalian plain would have been unpalatable even to rulers less martially-minded than Basil, and by about 990 the lower

<sup>81</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, p. 349; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, p. 292.

Danube was under Samuel's sway. Basil turned to the Bulgarian problem once he considered the eastern provinces to be quiescent, in early spring 991. Four years of campaigning brought the recapture of Berrhoia, some 60 kilometres south-west of Thessaloniki. Basil had Berrhoia and several other recaptured fortresses demolished, evidently assuming that they could not be held indefinitely against Samuel. In 995, while Basil was away on the eastern front, Samuel counter-attacked, sending patrols up to the walls of Thessaloniki itself. In one clash the *doux* of Thessaloniki himself was killed, and Samuel's raids ranged further south. His incursions were interrupted in the autumn of 997 or the spring of 998, when his army was surprised during withdrawal from a raid on the Peloponnese. Many Bulgarians were butchered in their sleep and Samuel and his son Gabriel-Radomir were seriously wounded.

The general responsible for the victory on the Spercheios, Nikephoros Ouranos, could now undertake bolder forays into enemy territory. Basil himself moved to the eastern borders, taking advantage of the death of David of Tao. David had lent troops to the rebels in 987–9 and had subsequently been overawed into bequeathing his principality to the empire (see above, p. 358). The cavalrymen whom Basil now transplanted from Tao were very probably of assistance to him on his subsequent campaigns. Byzantine authority was reimposed on north-east Bulgaria, and around 1002 Basil exploited his new-found control of the lower Danube to advance upstream. He besieged Vidin, which capitulated after eight months; Basil strengthened the fortifications, clearly intending to establish an outpost to Samuel's north-west. He was allied with a local Hungarian magnate, Ahtum-Ajtony, who is said to have 'received power from the Greeks' and to have been baptised.<sup>82</sup> Basil then drove far to the south and received the surrender of Skopje.

Basil's spectacular circumscription of Bulgaria tipped the strategic balance in Byzantium's favour, but neither side could deliver a knock-out blow. In fact, the gains made by Basil's long march were fleeting: Skopje was back in Bulgarian hands by the time of their final surrender in 1018. Dyrrachium's leading family did transfer its loyalties back to the emperor, John Chryselios' two sons each receiving the title of *patrikios* and an imperial official being admitted to the city. But the date of Dyrrachium's return to Basil's authority is uncertain, and in any case Dyrrachium remained isolated and in 1018 was still open to Bulgarian attack. Furthermore, the ruler of Duklja, the Slav principality north of the city, was endowed by Samuel with 'all the land of the people of Dyrrachium'.<sup>83</sup> The prince, John Vladimir, had been forced to submit to Samuel; but after a spell in detention at Prespa, he had been married to the daughter of a relative of Samuel, one

<sup>82</sup> *Legenda S. Gerhardi*, ed. Szentpétery, p. 490.

<sup>83</sup> *LPD*, p. 335.

Theodorites. Thus Samuel seems to have felt sufficiently in control of Dyrrachium's hinterland to entrust it to a local prince linked to his own family.

Basil's annual *razzias* in the period following his long march were carefully organised. His insistence on tight formations, 'making his army into a kind of tower',<sup>84</sup> assured it invincibility in open countryside and enabled it to brave mountain passes. But the absence of any known victories between the opening years of the century and 1014 throws into doubt their effectiveness. Basil's adversary did not merely rely on natural defences. He was 'most expert in strategy',<sup>85</sup> and was ultimately responsible for the numerous fortifications which guarded the passes. The large earthwork at Kleidion comprised three lines of ramparts and two ditches aligned with the terrain, and it protected the local population very effectively from Basil's incursions. Until the end of his reign Samuel was able to deploy large armies, 'the numberless Bulgarian phalanx'.<sup>86</sup> There is no sign that the war effort overstrained either the Bulgarians' manpower reserves or loyalty to their new tsar. Samuel presided over various ecclesiastical building works. At Ohrid a large basilica was apparently built or refurbished, and the head of the Bulgarian church installed there. Samuel's relocation of the patriarchal see from Prespa to a place famed for its associations with Sts Clement and Naum reflected his rising confidence that Ohrid was reasonably secure, even though it lay on the Egnatian Way. He made Ohrid his own principal residence and the location of his treasury. Reportedly, 'much money' and 10,000 pounds of 'stamped gold',<sup>87</sup> as well as imperial crowns, were kept in the heavily fortified and extensive citadel. Samuel gained an aura of legitimacy, being called *rex* by a contemporary Italian chronicle,<sup>88</sup> and his descendants enjoyed imperial status in eleventh-century Byzantium.

Samuel's treasury may well have been filled with regular revenues from his southern towns, as well as spoils of war. However, the reconstituted political structure was inevitably shaken by his death on 6 October 1014. Byzantine writers maintain that he was overcome by the spectacle of 14,000 or 15,000 men marching back, most of them blinded, from Byzantine captivity.<sup>89</sup> Undoubtedly, he had suffered a humiliating defeat: an army guarding the Kleidion pass had been surprised and routed by a Byzantine unit, and Samuel himself only just escaped. But it was his demise, not the debacle at Kleidion, that tipped the scales in Byzantium's favour. Samuel's son,

<sup>84</sup> Psell., I.33, ed. and French tr. Renauld, I, p. 21; ed. and Italian tr. Impellizzeri *et al.*, I, pp. 48–9; tr. Sewter, p. 47.

<sup>85</sup> 'stratēgikōtatos', Kek., ed. and Russian tr. Litavrin, pp. 168–9.

<sup>86</sup> *Life of Nikon*, ed. and tr. Sullivan, p. 148.

<sup>87</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, pp. 358–9; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, pp. 298–300.

<sup>88</sup> Lupus Protospatharius, *Annales*, ed. Pertz, p. 57.

<sup>89</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, p. 349; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, p. 292; Kek., ed. and Russian tr. Litavrin, pp. 168–9, n. 178 on p. 368.

Gabriel-Radomir, was bellicose and forceful, but lacked his political skills. Gabriel's first cousin, John Vladislav, begrudged his succession, and on 15 September 1015 he had him assassinated. John became the new Bulgarian tsar. Basil II tried hard to exploit the rivalries of the ruling family, seizing the town of Edessa in Thessaly. He sacked several Bulgarian royal residences and the town – though not the citadel – of Ohrid. However, John Vladislav was able to renovate and strengthen the fortifications of an alternative base, Bitola, commemorating the work with an elaborate inscription (see above, fig. 20 on p. 331). Moreover, Basil's eighty-eight-day siege of Pernik ended in failure and heavy losses, while his siege of Kastoria, in late spring or summer 1017, was also unsuccessful. He seems still to have been unsure of Edessa's loyalty, seeing that he had to 'set everything in order there' on his way back to Constantinople.<sup>90</sup>

The ambivalence of the Edessans was prudent. John Vladislav was still capable of attacking even the hardest targets. After Basil's withdrawal, he resumed personal command at Dyrrachium. In February 1018 a pitched battle was fought before the city walls. John Vladislav was, 'like another Goliath', 'invincible', engaged in single combat when two footsoldiers managed to deal fatal blows to his stomach.<sup>91</sup> This changed everything, as Basil realised. He 'immediately' set forth for Adrianople,<sup>92</sup> but no forcible entry into Bulgaria was necessary. John had not designated an heir and there were tensions between his widow and Samuel's descendants. So the prospects of an agreed succession looked faint. Krakras, the magnate who had defended Pernik for eighty-eight days, now surrendered not only Pernik but also the thirty-five other forts forming an elaborate system round it. Other warlords and community leaders saw that the game was up and, as Basil advanced along the Egnatian Way, their envoys brought offers of surrender. Basil responded with honours, senior court titles and other blandishments, making Krakras, for example, a *patrikios*. Contemporary historians in Armenia and the west show awareness that Basil's triumph owed little to pitched battles.

#### BASIL VICTORIOUS – AND MAGNANIMOUS TO OUTSIDERS

Basil's settlement of Bulgaria should be viewed against this background. Ohrid and the other residences of Samuel and John Vladislav were divested of their royal trappings. John's widow, Maria, and her children were drawn into Basil's court circle, receiving titles. Several of the males eventually rose to high office in the imperial administration. Basil is credited with the

<sup>90</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, p. 356; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, pp. 297–8.

<sup>91</sup> Michael Psellos, *Scripta minora*, ed. Kurtz and Drexler, I, p. 160; Grégoire (1937), pp. 287–90.

<sup>92</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, p. 357; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, p. 298.



desire 'not to innovate at all',<sup>93</sup> letting revenues be raised in grain and wine rather than coin. It is most probable that these and other administrative duties were, in the remoter regions, left to local notables bedecked with titles and offices. Basil had never recognised the patriarchal rank of Bulgaria's head churchman, but now he reaffirmed the special status of the Bulgarian church. Basil's appointee as archbishop was a Bulgarian monk named John, a concession to his new subjects' sensibilities, and his concern for the church's well-being is expressed in three imperial charters confirming its rights. That of 1020 sternly forbids other metropolitans (subject to the Constantinopolitan patriarch) from encroaching into the Bulgarian province. Archbishop John is to have authority over the same number of sees as his precursors in the time of 'Peter the emperor and Samuel'.<sup>94</sup> Imperial officials, including tax-collectors, were forbidden to interfere in the churches' or monasteries' affairs on pain of the 'great and pitiless . . . wrath of our majesty'.<sup>95</sup>

To the north-west, Basil consolidated his possession of Vidin, and pushed further north-westwards. The recalcitrant potentate who controlled Sirmium was assassinated and the town became the headquarters of a new Byzantine theme. Even the Croats, a people hitherto only spasmodically connected with Byzantium, now came within its orbit. The ruling brothers, Gojislav and Krešimir III, formally submitted to Basil and received court titles, thus acknowledging his commanding position in the Balkans and beyond. King Stephen of Hungary was now his ally and may well have taken part in the last stages of the campaign against John Vladislav and the final occupation of Ohrid in 1018. That same year, Doge Otto Orseolo of Venice drove the Croats back from the region of Zara, and imposed tribute on some of the cities on islands off the Dalmatian coast. The Croats were hemmed in by Byzantium's possessions, allies and vassals.

Basil showed no signs of being prepared to let his 'spear lie still' after his subjugation of the Balkans. Although now well into his sixties, he embarked on a massive expedition to Caucasia in 1021 and 1022. He superintended the takeover of the administration of Vaspurakan, whose lord, Sennacherim-John Artsruni, had been induced to cede his realm to Basil (see also pp. 360, 696). He fought a series of engagements against King George I of Georgia, in order to retrieve all the forts and lands claimed as the inheritance of David of Tao. After George had renounced all title to Tao, Basil returned to Constantinople. His energies now swung towards the central Mediterranean and still more aggressive campaigning. He was about to embark with reinforcements for an invasion of Sicily when he fell ill and died, on 13 or 15 December 1025.

<sup>93</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, p. 412; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, pp. 340–1.

<sup>94</sup> Gelzer, 'Orientalischen Kirche II', p. 44; *FHGB*, VI, p. 44.

<sup>95</sup> Gelzer, 'Orientalischen Kirche II', p. 46; *FGHB*, VI, p. 47. See below, p. 671.

BASIL'S 'EXPANSIONISM': ITS POLITICAL RATIONALE  
AND ITS COSTS

Basil's dominions were half as extensive again as those of Constantine VII. Constantine seems to have had little appetite for direct territorial expansion, preferring like his father to emphasise his pre-eminent role as the wise guarantor of order and justice. Basil, by contrast, appears to have presented conquest as his prime aim, without any palpable regard for the question of who would succeed to leadership over the newly amassed territories after the deaths of himself and his younger brother, Constantine VIII (1025–8). But he had managed to maintain the army's loyalty by becoming its general and personally directing its affairs, a stance which had much in common with Nikephoros II Phokas'.

Basil was contending with the prestige which individual commanders and great military affinities still enjoyed. They were bracketed with other, less politically involved, families whose wealth and influence was liable to occlude imperial authority locally and thus lower the proceeds from taxation at the disposal of central government. Basil, like his grandfather and the soldier-emperors of the eighth century, presented the provision of justice and security of property for the lowliest of his subjects as an essential duty of the ruler (see above, pp. 275–7, 489). Just after his spectacular campaign to rebuff Fatimid attempts at seizing Aleppo while Thessaloniki's outskirts lay exposed to Bulgarian raiders, Basil issued an important *novella* on land law. This in effect abolished the statute of limitations for restitution of property acquired by 'the powerful' from 'the poor', save only for that property covered by legal documents for 934 or earlier; the legal process was, more or less, to be skewed in favour of claims by members of peasant fiscal communities against 'the powerful' who had 'wrongfully deprived and despoiled' them.<sup>96</sup>

Basil was avowedly trying to preserve tax units of property-owning country-dwellers of limited or slender means who had been the subject of imperial legislation earlier in the tenth century and who were described as vital for the empire's well-being (see above, p. 492). His rhetoric of equity was the more strident for his need to rally the war effort against the Bulgarians in hostilities that gave every sign of being protracted and very burdensome for tax-payers. The *novella* of 996 alluded to those who had used their senior positions in the establishment to amass properties and who through their wealth and influence put undue pressure on those small proprietors not yet swallowed up by their estates. One such had risen from humble beginnings to the dignity of *prōtovestiarios*, only to be abruptly divested by the emperor, who 'made him one of the villagers once more'; another

<sup>96</sup> *JG*, ed. Zepos and Zepos, I, pp. 264, 265–6; ed. Svoronos, no. 14, pp. 200, 204; tr. McGeer, pp. 116, 118.

eunuch, Basil the *parakoimōmenos*, may well have been the ultimate target of this cautionary tale.<sup>97</sup> But the Phokades and other great military families which had benefited from imperial patronage were probably the target of the *novella*'s allusion to those who, thanks to such positions as domestic of the Schools, could build up and maintain their property empires over seventy or a hundred years (see above, p. 504).

The most active admirers of such tenth-century heroes as Nikephoros II Phokas were themselves in or connected to the army, and it was from their ranks that a coup was attempted during Basil's last Caucasian campaign. A great-nephew, also called Nikephoros, was proclaimed emperor and we are told that 'many of those who were in the camp had walked with their feet behind the emperor [i.e. Basil], but in thought and words they were behind the rebels'.<sup>98</sup> According to Michael Psellos, Basil II treated his subjects as if he had subjugated them.<sup>99</sup> His ability to maintain a large standing army probably owed much to the vulnerability of the well-to-do to his arbitrary seizure of property and commandeering of resources. Such were the dividends of a soldier emperor blessed with the will-power and the energy to march his men from one end of the empire to the other until the death-knock.

Only the patriarch of Constantinople and other senior churchmen and monks seem to have presumed to object to a new measure to make large landowners responsible for the tax liabilities of missing minor landowners. Basil promised Patriarch Sergios (1001–19) that he would lift this obligation 'if he were to prevail over the Bulgarians'.<sup>100</sup> At the same time, Basil seems to have hoped for the gratitude of his non-Greek and non-Chalcedonian subjects in return for his consideration for their rites and customs. They might provide soldiers no less effective, and perhaps actually more loyal, than his Greek troops. In this way, he could turn the 'diversity' of the empire to his advantage, binding 'the elements of power in imperial harmony'.<sup>101</sup> One feature of this policy is the generous scale of the lands and forts granted to eminent Armenian expatriates in Asia Minor.

The expansion was not ruinous in itself. Bulgarians served effectively on the eastern front in the eleventh century, while Armenians fought loyally in Basil's Bulgarian wars. And, if Bulgaria lacked a monetarised economy, some of Armenia's towns and smaller settlements offered important new sources

<sup>97</sup> *JG*, ed. Zepos and Zepos, I, p. 265; ed. Svoronos, no. 14, p. 202; tr. McGeer, p. 118; Holmes (2005), pp. 468–71.

<sup>98</sup> Arist., French tr. Canard and Berbérien, p. 20.

<sup>99</sup> Psell., I.30, ed. and French tr. Renauld, I, p. 18; ed. and Italian tr. Impellizzeri *et al.*, I, pp. 42–3; tr. Sewter, p. 44.

<sup>100</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, p. 365; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, pp. 303–4.

<sup>101</sup> Psell., I.22, ed. and French tr. Renauld, I, pp. 13–14; ed. and Italian tr. Impellizzeri *et al.*, I, pp. 32–3; tr. Sewter, pp. 39–40.

of revenue. The prosperity of towns such as Ardanuji in the Armenian borderlands had already attracted the notice of Constantine VII, and they seem to have expanded in the eleventh century. In Cappadocia, a former Byzantine border zone, building work and lavish decorative programmes proliferated among the rock chapels and monasteries. The numerous churches and monasteries erected by Syriac Jacobite immigrants in the Euphrates valley south from Melitene and in parts of Cilicia attest their wealth as well as their piety in Basil's time. And Antioch, a *kouratoreia* of the emperor, seems to have prospered. Many Armenians, initially soldiers but probably subsequently craftsmen and traders too, were settled in its vicinity. The increase in population and in economic transactions involving coin in these newly won regions should have worked to the government's advantage.<sup>102</sup>

However, a major problem was posed by the very instrument of the empire's expansion, the army. Materials upon which a firm estimate of its size and cost to the state might be based are lacking, but the armed forces were certainly very substantially larger than they had been during the first half of the tenth century, and much more dependent on money for their maintenance and remuneration. More men needed to be employed full-time for Basil's ceaseless campaigning, while key points such as Dyrrachium or Sirmium needed permanent garrisoning, even if less significant strongholds were assigned skeleton crews, or provisionally decommissioned. The fiscal and administrative apparatus responsible for their upkeep was not radically different from the one which had operated the smaller theme armies of the tenth century, and many of the military units were still based on long-established themes in Asia Minor. This was an obstacle to swift, cost-effective deployment of resources to wherever they were most needed, characteristic of the era when Byzantium's armed forces had been smaller-scale and modestly equipped. The adaptability and willingness to devolve administration to local elites and apparatuses shown in the newly conquered regions of the Balkans, eastern Asia Minor and Syria made for prudent, relatively inexpensive governance.<sup>103</sup> Yet it did not resolve the fiscal problem posed by the empire's armed forces.

At the same time, the increasing security of many parts of Asia Minor, mounting prosperity and concern for property boundaries and rights called for larger numbers of non-military officials to assess and adjudicate. By the earlier eleventh century, towns in Greece such as Athens and Corinth,<sup>104</sup> and others in Asia Minor's western coastal plain were witnessing further building development and more intensive use of coin for commercial transactions. The towns' purchasing power signalled the emergence of local elites;

<sup>102</sup> Dagron (1976), pp. 186–98; Howard-Johnston (1995b).

<sup>103</sup> See Stephenson (2000), pp. 74–80; Stephenson (2003a), pp. 34–47; Stephenson (2003b), pp. 122–7, 130–1; below, pp. 665, 668–9; Holmes (2002a), pp. 91–9, 103–4; Holmes (2005), pp. 321–2, 352–91.

<sup>104</sup> Sanders (2003), pp. 386–7, 390–1, 396–7 and n. 43; Dunn (2006), pp. 38–40, 53–9.



Map 24 Administrative organisation of the empire at the end of Basil II's reign c. 1025

local landholders gained opportunities for enrichment through supplying produce to the town-dwellers. The interests of these provincial groupings were not directly opposed to those of central government; in fact their leading members looked keenly to Constantinople for status and some sort of office;<sup>105</sup> for their part the 'professional', expensively equipped soldiers relied more heavily on state pay and other subventions than their early tenth-century precursors had done.<sup>106</sup> But there were burgeoning

<sup>105</sup> Morris (1995); Neville (2004), pp. 37–47, 109–11, 166–7.

<sup>106</sup> Haldon (1999a), pp. 123–34.

‘The map which appears here in the printed edition has been removed for ease of use and now appears as an additional resource on the chapter overview page’.

conflicts of jurisdiction and fiscal rights between the military’s needs and the civilian administrative apparatus; as the eleventh century progressed, labyrinthine nexuses of tax-collectors and imposers of charges and services to the state sprawled across the empire, providing ample opportunities for lucrative careers in legal practice and stimulating legal studies (see below, p. 599).

These tendencies were not necessarily inimical to effective central government. The very care which major landowners took to gain charters exempting them from state charges suggests as much, and the state took steps to increase the number of peasants labouring on its own domain. The

overall increase in the population of the empire also potentially swelled the state's tax rolls and revenues. However, this combination of administrative problems with the need to finance and maintain recruitment to a very large standing army was primed by the political threat which the generals seemed to pose. Basil II masked the problem by marrying his army. Booty from foreign campaigning and ruthless seizure of properties brought in enough for him to keep his forces operational and, according to Psellos, to hoard 200,000 gold pieces in his palace treasury.<sup>107</sup> But Basil's strong-arm methods were no substitute for the administrative reform needed to cope with success, and his stance, like that of Nikephoros II, presupposed a situation in which only one enemy, essentially static, needed to be faced at any one time. The Bulgarians had had ample reserves of manpower but a largely agrarian economy, while the Muslims were divided among themselves and their most formidable power, Fatimid Egypt, was not disposed to devote its economic resources to sustained aggression against Byzantium; the rivalry for dominion over Aleppo and northern Syria was keen, but could be conducted as effectively by diplomatic manipulation of local elites and tribes as by outright warfare. Whether the Byzantine state would prove capable of marshalling its resources to address a plethora of enemies, fast-moving and mutating, on several fronts was, however, another question. The militaristic posture struck by Basil II provided no lasting answer.

<sup>107</sup> Psell., I, 31, ed. and French tr. Renauld, I, p. 19; ed. and Italian tr. Impellizzeri *et al.*, I, pp. 44–5; tr. Sewter, p. 45.

CHAPTER 14  
WESTERN APPROACHES (900–1025)

JONATHAN SHEPARD

BYZANTINE LINKS WITH THE WESTERN CHRISTIANS, 900–950

Byzantium's relations with the Latin west in this period have a 'Cheshire cat' character in comparison with ninth-century exchanges. Very little attention is paid to the Christian west by Byzantine writers even when Saxon potentates begin to intervene in Italy and bedeck themselves with imperial trimmings. A memorandum of diplomatic procedures, compiled partly from older materials in the mid-tenth century, lists the standard form of address for letters to various *reges*, of 'Gaul' as well as Bavaria and Saxony: each is to be addressed as 'spiritual brother', unlike the numerous other addressees. But the protocols for receptions of ambassadors make no special provision for western ones: formulaic greetings for envoys from the Bulgarians and eastern Muslims are rehearsed, presumably because their visits were more important or frequent.<sup>1</sup>

A somewhat later compilation would probably have paid western ambassadors little more attention than the *Book of ceremonies* did on the eve of the imperial coronation of Otto I (962–73). For Basil II (976–1025), as for his predecessors, the existence of a rival Bulgarian *basileus* mattered more. But if events beyond the Adriatic were generally of secondary importance to Byzantium's rulers, the very powers which troubled them in the Balkans or hindered communications with the west obliged the empire to maintain far-flung bases from which to disrupt their activities. Byzantine claims in Italy were based on quite recent military actions and not merely on the inheritance of the old Roman empire. The *De administrando imperio* recognises the territorial losses to the Lombards, but stresses the help which Basil I (867–86) had provided against the Arabs, and claims imperial authority over Capua and Benevento on the strength of 'this great benefit rendered to them' then.<sup>2</sup>

Great expectations continued to be vested in Sicily. Byzantine bases there provided platforms for speedy *démarches* towards any figure of note in Italy or even southern Francia, and a ready means of monitoring and hindering

<sup>1</sup> *DC*, II.48, 47, ed. Reiske, I, pp. 689, 681–6.

<sup>2</sup> *DAI*, ch. 29, pp. 134–5.



the passage of Arab vessels, a capability not open to Christian magnates lacking fleets. The *De thematibus*, a work commissioned by Constantine VII, claims that Sicily is 'now' under Byzantine rule 'since the emperor of Constantinople rules the sea as far as the Pillars of Hercules'.<sup>3</sup> This should be inverted: a presence in Sicily gave Byzantium disproportionate influence and status in the western Mediterranean world, and to abandon claims to it would have been demeaning. Thus *stratēgoi* residing in Calabria were officially designated governors of 'Sicily' through the first half of the tenth century (see below, p. 568). Sicily was, together with Calabria and Illyricum, under the patriarch of Constantinople, and contacts with orthodox monks and churchmen on the island persisted. Partly because of this, the Byzantine military position was not utterly hopeless: Taormina fell to the Arabs in 902, but was regained by 912–13; it was only fully taken over by the Arabs in 962.

If imperial ambitions showed great resilience, loss of control of the straits of Messina had in reality eroded Byzantium's capacity for intervention in Rome or further north. Expeditionary forces or major diplomatic *démarches* could no longer be funded from the island, and Calabria was too poor and too harassed by Sicilian Arab *razzias* to provide much in the way of resources before the end of the tenth century. Byzantium thus had greater need of allies in the west and there were indeed periodic contacts between Constantinople and several western courts. The temerity of Muslim raiders and the existence of stray Arab colonies further north could affront the Christian sensibilities and prestige of enough parties for joint action to be attempted, but actual operations were rare. Those best-placed to provide effective land forces were the very Lombard princes whose patrimonies had been most impaired by the Byzantine recovery in southern Italy. Only after skilful negotiation and manoeuvring by Nicholas Picingli, the *stratēgos* of Langobardia, and by Pope John X (914–28), could the lords of Gaeta and Naples be induced to cooperate with Capua-Benevento, Roman nobles and Picingli's fleet and army to expel the Arabs from the Garigliano valley. The coalition captured the Saracens' base in August 915, but did not long survive its victory. Soon Landulf I of Capua-Benevento (901–43) and other Lombard princes were in 'rebellion', raiding Byzantine possessions in southern Italy and regaining control of much of them (see below, p. 563).

Otherwise, few important western rulers had interests which clashed or converged with Byzantium's strongly enough for intensive relations to be maintained with them. The main fixed points on the Byzantine political map were cities. Venice's interests were aligned quite closely with the empire's and its ruling families were willing to designate themselves as *servi* (*douloi* in Greek), a vague term ranging in meaning from 'slave' to

<sup>3</sup> *DT*, II.10, ed. Pertusi, p. 94.

‘subordinate’ of the emperor. The *basileus* felt no need to show particular favour towards the managers of Venice, being well aware of the Venetians’ need of the sea for protection, sustenance and income. Reliance on the import of bulk goods made them vulnerable to famine or financial ruin since merchantmen were small, unwieldy and even in summer scarcely seaworthy. Byzantium was the obvious and most lucrative of the limited outlets available to the Venetians for their re-export of weaponry, wood and slaves, while Byzantine luxury goods were much in demand among the elites of north Italian towns. The deficiencies of navigation and the revitalised Byzantine presence along the island-studded Dalmatian coast-line thus made Venetian maritime communications highly sensitive to the actions of the imperial authorities.

Fortunately for the Venetians, it was in Byzantium’s interests to foster a self-financing and largely self-reliant naval capability on the outermost fringe of its Adriatic possessions, since this relieved it from maintaining a significant fleet of its own there. Each party stood to gain from the status quo, in which direct contacts between Constantinople and the northern Adriatic were monopolised by the Venetians, while taxed and supervised by the Byzantine government. The Venetians’ returns were substantial, and guaranteed access to secure markets in Constantinople helped to offset the delays and losses of the sea voyage. The Venetians also tended to profit from their ability, very rare among westerners, to monitor events in Constantinople, and some, at least, could speak Greek. Even Venice, however, ranked fairly low in Byzantine priorities and its rulers’ compliance was assumed. Of far greater weight was the city of Rome, with its indelible imperial connotations and especially its role as the residence of the pope.

The importance attached to the papacy is demonstrated by the protocols for the reception of envoys: those for ‘ambassadors’ from the pope feature first, and are detailed and full.<sup>4</sup> Long-standing tradition played its part here, but there was also a more dynamic reason. The pope was the sole western figure who could intervene substantively in the empire’s affairs and within its sphere of influence. Apulia’s subjection to papal jurisdiction was not formally disputed, and as the population was mostly Lombards under Latin priests and bishops it was imperative for the Byzantine government to keep in touch with its spiritual leader. In the Byzantine ‘mainland’ the papacy’s reputation had been enhanced by its stand against iconoclasm. Orthodox monks and holy men continued to make their way to venerate Rome’s churches and the tombs of Sts Peter and Paul; eastern churchmen were in contact with the Greek monasteries – still prominent, although not numerous – in Rome, and also with the curia. Papal verdicts on religious questions mattered; hence emperors, too, looked to the papacy in their

<sup>4</sup> *presbeis*, DC, II.47, ed. Reiske, I, pp. 680–1.

efforts to manage their own patriarchate. Romanos I Lekapenos (920–44) seemingly regarded papal support as pivotal to his plan to impose his son, Theophylact, as the patriarch of Constantinople (933–56), and papal legates carried out the act of enthronement on 2 February 933.

There was another equally cogent reason for the intensity of imperial relations with Rome. The papacy was slow to abandon hopes of Bulgaria. In papal eyes, Bulgaria fell within Illyricum, a province rightfully under its jurisdiction. Symeon of Bulgaria's (893–927) imperial pretensions and his later hostility towards Romanos I may have made him seem amenable to papal overtures, as Patriarch Nicholas I Mystikos (901–7, 912–25) apparently suspected when, in the early 920s, he detained two papal emissaries whose declared aim was to persuade Symeon to make peace with Byzantium. Symeon's proclamation of himself as 'emperor of the Romans' may well have been known to the papacy. The papal legates who mediated between Symeon and Tomislav of Croatia in 926–7 may have investigated a possible accommodation between pope and self-declared emperor.<sup>5</sup> The papacy had originally been responding to an approach from Tomislav, Symeon's enemy, and papal interest in south Slav affairs need not have been wholly repugnant to the imperial government at that time. Nonetheless, the papacy's title to Illyricum could have made for some sort of concordat between Rome and a Bulgarian ruler seeking recognition. All this underlay the golden bulls for, and ritual attention to, 'the spiritual father of our holy emperor'.<sup>6</sup> Formal exchanges were probably accompanied by multifarious unofficial contacts with other churchmen and notables in Rome. The pope might thus be deflected from undesirable initiatives and his undeniable authority put to the emperor's own uses; papal approval of Theophylact's appointment is said to have been bought by Romanos.

The benefits to the emperor of papal cooperation made others' interventions in Rome a matter of some concern, since they might yoke the papacy to their own ambitions, seeking the irritatingly grandiose title of emperor. Yet such interventions might also provide leverage over a recalcitrant pope. A masterful occupant of the Italian kingdom's throne like Berengar of Friuli was uncongenial, but even Berengar's imperial coronation in Rome in December 915 seems to have been received with equanimity on the Bosphorus. If Byzantium showed a penchant for closer ties with more distant potentates in southern Francia, this probably sprang from an abiding concern about Sicily as well as from fears that a Lombardy-based 'emperor' might intervene more persistently in Roman affairs. For the *basileus* nurtured a dream of his own: with the cooperation of a southern Frankish

<sup>5</sup> Shepard (1999), p. 578.

<sup>6</sup> *DC*, II.47, ed. Reiske, I, p. 680. The logothete of the Drome termed the pope thus in his greetings for envoys from Rome.

ruler, the chances of driving Arab predators from their bases and eventually isolating and subduing the occupiers of Sicily became slightly less remote. There is suggestive evidence from a mid-tenth-century diplomatic memorandum that the emperor maintained contacts with the *archōn* of Sardinia.<sup>7</sup> Greek inscriptions there suggest that court titles were still being sported by members of the ruling elite towards the end of the century.<sup>8</sup> If, as is likely, Leo VI's (886–912) infant daughter Anna was betrothed to Louis the Blind of Provence around 899–900, shortly before the fall of Taormina to the Arabs, the two episodes may be related. This commitment of the emperor's only daughter to a western spouse may not have led to actual marriage, and anyway did not yield tangible aid for the Byzantines. Relations were distant and Romanos I seems to have responded tepidly to an embassy from Hugh of Arles; upon being crowned king of Italy in Pavia in 926, Hugh 'took care to make his name known even to the Greeks placed far from us'.<sup>9</sup>

Emperor Romanos showed keen interest in the marriage of one of his sons into the leading Roman family which included Pope John XI (931–5) himself, his half-brother and enemy Alberic, and their forceful mother Marozia. An imperial letter of early February 933 offers more warships to ferry Marozia's daughter, the bride-to-be, to Constantinople and shows willingness to entertain John's request for help.<sup>10</sup> But the letter was already out-of-date by the time of writing: Marozia herself had married Hugh of Arles and he had come to Rome, only for them both to be expelled by Alberic and the citizens under his command. Alberic now sought a marriage-tie, but by then Romanos was looking for an ally against the Muslim corsairs and the Lombard princes in southern Italy. A mission acknowledging Hugh as *rhēx Italias* was despatched in 935, with money, dress tunics and *objets d'art* for him and his magnates; in return they were to attack the Lombard 'rebels'.<sup>11</sup> The subsequent operations were successful and Hugh, from his base in northern Italy, established close relations with Romanos. But the commander of the mission had received contingency instructions in case Hugh sent an army without leading it in person; he was also supplied with a reserve of costumes, presumably for others whom he might find serviceable. Such flexibility was of the essence. In late 944 or early 945 Byzantine warships attacked Fraxinetum and destroyed many Muslim boats with Greek fire, acting in response to a request from Hugh. Romanos had made his assistance conditional upon a marriage-tie: Hugh

<sup>7</sup> *DC*, II.48, ed. Reiske, I, p. 690.

<sup>8</sup> von Falkenhausen (1978), p. 44 and n. 135; Boscolo (1978), pp. 111–15; Cosentino (2005), pp. 71–3, 75–6.

<sup>9</sup> Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, III.22, ed. Chiesa, p. 76; tr. Wright, p. 119.

<sup>10</sup> Theodore Daphnopates, *Correspondance*, ed. and French tr. Darrouzès and Westerink, p. 14 (introduction); pp. 38–41 (text).

<sup>11</sup> *DC*, II.44, ed. Reiske, I, pp. 661–2.

was to give one of his daughters in marriage to the infant son of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, also called Romanos, the future Romanos II (959–63). Liudprand of Cremona regarded the threat to the Byzantine south from the Lombard princes as underlying Romanos' request.<sup>12</sup> Hugh, lacking a legitimate daughter, sent Bertha, his child by a concubine. She was brought to Constantinople in the late summer of 944 and the two children were married; Bertha was given the new eastern Christian name of Eudocia.

There is a tone of family feeling and pride in the sketch of Bertha-Eudocia's lineage provided in the *De administrando imperio*, a work commissioned and partly written by her father-in-law, Constantine VII.<sup>13</sup> In 948, after the death of Hugh, Constantine wrote to Berengar of Ivrea, urging him to act as faithful guardian of the late king's son, Lothar. But at the same time he wrote another letter, urging Berengar to send an ambassador who would return with proof of Constantine's love for Berengar.<sup>14</sup> Constantine was discreetly shifting towards the more important figure in Italy: Berengar was already sidelining Lothar. Even the injunctions to protect Lothar – who might, at around twenty years of age, have been expected to fend for himself – were somewhat double-edged. The emperor had to preserve decorum but also to do business with whoever prevailed in northern Italy or Rome, so long as they did not persistently offend against his interests. His main concern at that time was the reconquest of Crete; elsewhere in the Mediterranean he sought tranquillity. Liudprand, who had travelled with an envoy of Otto I, reached Constantinople during or just after the expedition, and the diplomatic activity he records turned essentially on Crete. Constantine's sense of kinship with Hugh's family could not outweigh the requirements of Crete. Any possible tensions between sentiment and strategy were relieved by the timely deaths of Bertha-Eudocia in 949 and Lothar in 950.

#### BYZANTIUM AND OTTO I

Although Byzantium's most active concerns lay in the Balkan and Mediterranean worlds, the empire also maintained some contacts with potentates based north of the Alps. The Greek embassies which visited Otto I in 945 and 949 may be the tip of an otherwise unrecorded iceberg of diplomacy, and the 'pallia graeca' presented by King Edmund of Wessex to the shrine of St Cuthbert in 944 could have been brought directly by emissaries of the *basileus*; indeed, West Saxon kings from Æthelstan (925–39) onwards sometimes bore the title *basileus* in their charters. Increased Byzantine attention to Otto during the late 940s may have been induced by recent Bavarian victories over the Hungarians. Constantine VII, was interested too, in this still

<sup>12</sup> *Leg.*, ch. 7, ed. Chiesa, p. 190; tr. Scott, p. 30.

<sup>13</sup> *DAI*, ch. 26, pp. 108–9, 112–13.

<sup>14</sup> Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, VI.2, ed. Chiesa, p. 146; tr. Wright, p. 206.



Figure 39 Ivory of Romanos II and Bertha-Eudocia being crowned by Christ (mid-tenth century)

semi-nomadic people; he devoted three chapters of the *De administrando* almost exclusively to the Hungarians' history, and saw to the baptism and investiture with the title of *patrikios* of at least two of their chieftains.<sup>15</sup>

In September 951 Otto I led an army across the Alps. Probably in the same year Constantine requested the hand of his niece Hadwig, daughter of Duke Henry of Bavaria (947–55), for his widowed son Romanos. He may have reckoned that Hadwig's uncle would one day reign as *imperator*: and Otto did, while in Italy, sound out the pope about a possible imperial coronation, albeit to no effect. But Constantine may also have envisaged Henry as a prospective in-law because of his occupation of Aquileia, which bridged Byzantine interests in Venice and the Dalmatian coast. Around this time Henry went on the offensive against the Hungarians and captured 'much booty' from them,<sup>16</sup> which cannot have escaped Byzantine notice. Allegedly, however, Hadwig herself refused the match and Byzantine bids lapsed. Instead, Constantine intervened directly in the central Mediterranean. In 956 he sent a large expeditionary force to overawe rebels in Calabria and Apulia, reduce Naples to submission and attack the Saracen raiders in their Sicilian base (see below, p. 564). This was for the most part accomplished, but the underlying purpose was apparently the defensive one of relieving southern Italy of Muslim pressure.

Substantive change in the tempo and tenor of east–west relations was, however, imminent. Other westerners were trying to correspond with Byzantium, judging by a decree issued by Doge Peter IV Candiano in June 960. This implies that the Venetians' carriage of letters from northern Italians, Bavarians, Saxons and others to the emperor was increasing and bans the delivery of letters other than those customarily passing 'from our palace'.<sup>17</sup> Byzantium soon began to deploy its newly enlarged armed forces in theatres other than those for which they had originally been mobilised, notably in Sicily. Taormina fell to the Muslims for a second time in 962. A huge Byzantine force including heavy cavalry landed on Sicily in the autumn of 964, but was soon crushed at Rametta; the fleet was destroyed in a subsequent action. An attempt to assemble another, more modest, task force in Calabria in 965 was abortive. Byzantium was nevertheless better placed and disposed to flex muscles in the west than it had been since the seventh century, and the later 960s saw some administrative reorganisation (see below, pp. 567–8); the newly instituted *katepanō Italias* was of high rank and may have had some supervisory duties over all Byzantium's possessions on the peninsula. It was more coincidence than cause and effect that the two leading Christian powers simultaneously turned their attention towards

<sup>15</sup> *DAI*, chs. 38–40, pp. 170–9; Skyl., ed. Thurn, p. 239; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, pp. 201–2.

<sup>16</sup> Widukind, *Res gestae Saxonicae*, II.36, ed. Hirsch and Lohmann, p. 95; ed. and German tr. Bauer and Rau, pp. 118–19.

<sup>17</sup> *TT*, I, p. 21.

parts of Italy. Already in the late 950s some Byzantines had envisaged the reconquest of Crete as the prelude to victory in Sicily, while Otto I's intervention in Italy came in response to appeals from nearly every prominent figure, including Pope John XII (955–64). Although it is difficult to assess Otto's understanding of his title of *imperator*, his crowning by the pope in 962 or the relevance to this rite of the city of Rome, these steps gave him good reason to care about the pope's future allegiance. John XII soon tried to make contact with Constantinople and so did Berengar of Ivrea's son, Adalbert. Otto was well aware of John's appeals for Byzantine assistance, judging by the allegations which Liudprand puts into his mouth.<sup>18</sup>

Several other issues troubled relations between the new *imperator* and his eastern counterpart. These were probably not all clearly understood at the time, and this and the delays caused by distance made the course of events still more tortuous. Firstly, there was the question of the interrelationship between two empires, each of which had some call on the imperial Roman past. One of the foundation stones of Byzantine imperialism was that Constantine the Great had by God's will moved legitimate leadership from 'old Rome' to 'the reigning city' on the Bosphorus. The *De thematibus* – not a work of propaganda – states flatly that the city of Rome has 'put aside' imperial power and is mainly controlled by the pope;<sup>19</sup> and the mid-tenth-century Arabic scholar, al-Mas'udi, noted that the city's ruler had neither worn a diadem nor called himself emperor until shortly before the time of writing.<sup>20</sup> The Byzantine government can hardly have been unaware that Louis the Blind and Berengar of Friuli had both called themselves *imperator* following a papal coronation, and Berengar's realm is even termed a *basileia* by Constantine Porphyrogenitus himself.<sup>21</sup> But if Byzantium did not actively oppose the western warlords' pretensions, neither did it actively encourage them. Hugh of Arles adapted various Byzantinising modes of depicting his majesty, such as gold bulls and documents written in gold on purple parchment, and his daughter married a *porphyrogenitus*. This rendered Hugh's status comparable to that of the *basileus*, and Bertha's large dowry was probably meant to indicate parity. It was perhaps in deference to Byzantine sensitivities that Hugh abstained from the imperial title itself. That these could be awakened is shown by Leo Phokas' qualification of Liudprand's master in 968: Otto was not an *imperator*, but a *rex*.<sup>22</sup> Nikephoros II Phokas (963–9), like most tenth-century *basileis*, had personal grounds to be vigilant about unauthorised use of the imperial title; he was himself an intruder in the palace, while even Constantine VII deemed

<sup>18</sup> Liudprand, *Liber de rebus gestis Ottonis*, ch. 6, ed. Chiesa, p. 172; tr. Wright, pp. 219–20; Hiestand (1964), p. 219 and n. 129.

<sup>19</sup> *DT*, II.10, ed. Pertusi, p. 94.

<sup>20</sup> al-Mas'udi, *al-Tanbih*, French tr. Carra de Vaux, p. 246; Vasil., p. 404.

<sup>21</sup> *DAL*, ch. 26, p. 110, line 37. <sup>22</sup> *Leg.*, ch. 2, ed. Chiesa, pp. 188; tr. Scott, p. 28.



it necessary to flaunt his purple birth. Moreover, the Saxon *arriviste* Otto was a different class of *imperator* from his earlier tenth-century predecessors. He showed himself both more blind to the Greeks' concerns and less pressed to gain their recognition of his title than Charlemagne had been in 800 (see above, p. 417).

A second potential source of tension was the developing Christianisation of eastern Europe. In 961, on the point of departure for Italy, Otto I sent a religious mission to Princess Olga of Kiev. A few years earlier she had been baptised in Constantinople and had taken the Christian name of Helena, after the emperor's wife, and a significant proportion of the Rus elite were beginning to show interest in Byzantine Christianity. The German mission folded almost immediately and does not feature in Byzantine sources, but it displayed a certain readiness to intervene in the Byzantines' patch. Not that Byzantium was wholly inert: a Bishop Hierotheos had been sent to Tourkia (Hungary) with the chieftain Gyula *c.* 948, and ecclesiastical ties were subsequently put on a permanent footing (see above, p. 322). A metropolitan of Tourkia was in office in 1028 and the see remained in existence throughout the eleventh century. The papacy was also interested in Hungary, and in 965 John XII was accused of trying to send two emissaries there among the envoys destined for Byzantium. More alarmingly for Byzantium, the appearance of Bulgarian envoys at Otto's court in 961 or 965/6 and in 973 suggested that the Hungarians were ceasing to act as a barrier between the east Franks and the Balkans.

Otto's actions in Italy touched on some of these sore points. In December 967 he came to terms with Venice, largely renewing earlier *pacta* between rulers of the Italian realm and Venice (see above, p. 456). Doge Peter IV (959–76) was married to a niece of the emperor. Otto had already gained the fealty of Pandulf I Ironhead (961–81) of Capua-Benevento, the leading power in south-central Italy. At the same time, the Greeks' very ability to make trouble in Rome confronted Otto with their continuing presence in the peninsula. There were also some more positive reasons for an accommodation with the *basileus*. A Greek marriage alliance would not merely demonstrate that Otto's predominance in the west was acknowledged by the other outstanding Christian ruler; it would also transfuse purple-born blood into his own descendants' line, enhancing their imperial status. Moreover, the connection would open up the *basileus*' store of portrayals, emblems of authority and valuables. After Otto's imperial coronation in 962, his seals began to show him frontally, wearing a cross-topped crown and holding an orb and a sceptre, echoing although not slavishly copying contemporary Byzantine coins and imperial seals.

There were thus strong reasons for Otto to regularise his relations with the eastern emperor. The build-up of Byzantine armed forces in the central Mediterranean need not preclude an accommodation. Judging by one

interpretation of a prophecy then current in Constantinople, some Byzantines viewed Otto as a promising future junior partner in the coming fight-to-the-death with the Saracen 'wild ass'.<sup>23</sup> Yet the negotiations reached an impasse with the visit of Liudprand to Constantinople in 968. It seems clear that Otto I, after Otto II's coronation as co-emperor, was impatient for a number of objectives: a fittingly purple-born bride for Otto II (973–83); the destruction of the Muslims' notorious lair in Fraxinetum as a demonstration of his God-given invincibility; and his own return to his northern power base. Most of these aims are enumerated, and the impatience evinced, in a letter dated 18 January 968. Time spent away from Saxony probably seemed time wasted, and this, rather than any positive desire to conquer the Byzantine south, probably made for Otto's threatening tone towards the eastern empire. In the letter, Otto asserts that the Greeks 'will [be forced to] give up Calabria and Apulia . . . unless we consent' [to their remaining];<sup>24</sup> he had already given a hostage to fortune by publicising his bid for a purple-born bride for his son, 'the step-daughter of Nikephoros himself, namely the daughter of Emperor Romanos [II]'.<sup>25</sup> Otto's close counsellor Adalbert, archbishop of Magdeburg, penned these words in, most probably, early 968, when Otto still publicly aspired to a top-ranking bride for his son. Otto II's coronation on 25 December 967 may well have originally been planned as a preliminary to the wedding. Otto I's exasperation is understandable if, as is likely, his envoy Dominicus had returned with the news that Nikephoros was favourably disposed; for the Byzantine embassy which arrived on Dominicus' heels brought words of peace, but no *porphyrogenita*. Otto miscalculated badly in supposing that he could jolt the Greeks into compliance by launching an assault on Bari. Soon afterwards, Liudprand was despatched at his own suggestion to finalise a marriage agreement and, seemingly, to fetch the bride. Otto probably planned to use Bari as a bargaining chip, while demonstrating to regional magnates such as Pandulf Ironhead, whom he had recently invested with the duchy of Spoleto, his ability to better the *basileus*.

Liudprand's mission was no more effective than Otto I's assault on Bari had been. The venomous *apologia* for failure which he wrote soon afterwards, the *Legatio*, registers a certain pattern of development. Dominicus had sworn that Otto would never invade imperial territory and according to Nikephoros II Phokas he had given a written oath that Otto would never cause any 'scandal' (*scandalizare*) to the eastern empire.<sup>26</sup> This sweeping undertaking had been flagrantly violated by Otto's simultaneous attack and

<sup>23</sup> *Leg.*, ch. 40, ed. Chiesa, p. 204; tr. Scott, p. 43.

<sup>24</sup> Widukind, *Res gestae Saxonicae*, III.70, ed. Hirsch and Lohmann, pp. 146–7; ed. and German tr. Bauer and Rau, pp. 174–5.

<sup>25</sup> Adalbert, *Reginonis continuatio*, p. 178.

<sup>26</sup> *Leg.*, ch. 25, ed. Chiesa, p. 198; tr. Scott, p. 37; see also ch. 31, ed. Chiesa, p. 200–1; tr. Scott, p. 40.

styling of himself as emperor. Then Nikephoros proceeded to demand that Otto relinquish his bonds of fealty with the princes of Capua-Benevento, Pandulf and his brother Landulf. Nikephoros reiterated that they were rightfully his *douloi* and demanded that Otto 'hand them over',<sup>27</sup> but he may essentially merely have been seeking a disclaimer to these borderlands. That these were Nikephoros' top priority is shown by a subsequent proposal: even if a 'perpetual friendship' was no longer in play,<sup>28</sup> Liudprand could at least ensure that Otto would not aid the princes, whom Nikephoros said he was planning to attack. At the eleventh hour the prospect of a 'marriage treaty' to confirm 'friendship' was dangled before Liudprand;<sup>29</sup> the price would presumably have been an undertaking on Otto's behalf concerning the Lombard princes. Thus Liudprand's fulminations do not quite conceal the Byzantines' continued willingness to negotiate, and indeed he returned with official letters for emperor and pope. Otto's was sealed with a gold bull whereas the pope was only accorded silver, against custom. It may be that one, perhaps the principal, purpose of the *Legatio* was to counteract such emollient effects as the letter might have on Otto.

In the short term Liudprand's militancy was in key with Otto I's. Otto invaded southern Italy again and in an Italian charter of 2 November 968 was represented as seeking the reconquest of all Apulia.<sup>30</sup> Otto's advance was, however, hindered by the numerous *kastra* whose construction Nikephoros and earlier emperors had encouraged. In 969 Byzantine forces went on the offensive. Pandulf Ironhead was captured while besieging Bovino and shipped to Constantinople. In 970 Otto sent another mission to the new *basileus*, John I Tzimiskes (969–76); one of the envoys may have been none other than Liudprand. The eventual outcome was a marriage agreement. Princess Theophano was sent to Italy, and married to Otto II on 14 April 972. Soon afterwards, Otto and his father returned to Germany. Otto I had stayed on in the south four years longer than his letter of January 968 intimated. If the main reason for the delay was his quest for an imperial bride for his son, it is at first sight surprising that Theophano was not in fact a *porphyrogenita* but 'the most splendid niece' of Tzimiskes, as Otto II's dowry charter terms her.<sup>31</sup> More than forty years later a chronicler could comment openly that she was *non virginem desideratam*; all the Italian and German magnates mocked at the match, while some urged that she be sent home.<sup>32</sup> There was an authentic *porphyrogenita* available, but Tzimiskes apparently

<sup>27</sup> *Leg.*, ch. 27, ed. Chiesa, pp. 198–9; tr. Scott, p. 38. Pressing geopolitical concerns underlie the prominence of these princes in Liudprand's account of his exchanges with Nikephoros. That they were the primary audience intended for Liudprand's tract was advocated by Mayr-Harting (2001).

<sup>28</sup> *Leg.*, ch. 36, ed. Chiesa, p. 202; tr. Scott, p. 41.

<sup>29</sup> *Leg.*, ch. 53, ed. Chiesa, pp. 210; tr. Scott, p. 49.

<sup>30</sup> Otto I, *Diplomata*, no. 367, p. 504. <sup>31</sup> Otto II, *Diplomata*, no. 21, p. 29.

<sup>32</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, II.15, ed. Holtzmann, p. 56; tr. Warner, p. 103.

did not feel sufficiently threatened or tempted by Otto to offer her up, and many years later Princess Anna would be wedded to the Rus prince, Vladimir (see above, p. 525). Otto, for his part, could see that the Greeks' presence in the south was ineradicable. Moreover, his former adjutant, Pandulf Ironhead, now urged peace, and although he remained Otto's vassal, he could no longer be counted on in future hostilities. Otto probably concluded that some sort of 'royal' 'from the palace of the Augustus' was better than none.<sup>33</sup> The other issues do not seem to have carried the same weight with him. His very insistence on retaining Pandulf as his vassal suggests this; he was essentially trying to provide for his own inevitably prolonged absences from Rome, by forging close personal bonds with the leading potentate to the south. These alarmed the *basileus*, but really they signalled the marginal role which the city of Rome and central Italy played among Otto's concerns. Once Pandulf had been neutralised, Otto let other Mediterranean matters rest and returned to his Saxon grassroots.

#### OTTO III, ROME AND BYZANTIUM

The nature and extent of the impact of Theophano on Ottonian court culture is controversial and ambivalent.<sup>34</sup> The many Byzantine *objets d'art* datable to the late tenth or early eleventh century still extant in German cathedral treasuries and museums probably arrived by a variety of routes, not merely from Theophano's sumptuous dowry. The emperor, however, remained the principal distributor. Some of the works had important symbolic functions beyond conspicuous display. Otto II is shown on an ivory – most probably Italian-carved and now in the Musée de Cluny – wearing an imperial *loros* (a richly embroidered pendant sash) and other ornamented vestments. Theophano also wears Byzantine imperial vestments and the couple are being crowned with *stemmata* by Christ (fig. 40). Such depictions were in use in contemporary Byzantium; in Germany they counterbalanced the fact that Theophano had needed to be crowned by the pope before her wedding to Otto. The Byzantine origins of this visual statement – diffused among the Saxons' Nordic neighbours through crude lead medallions<sup>35</sup> – may have been lost on most of Otto's subjects. But one should not underestimate the comprehension of the political elite; in 984 Gerbert of Aurillac could assume that Archbishop Egbert of Trier would be familiar with the Greeks' custom of associating 'a new man' on the throne as 'co-emperor'.<sup>36</sup> It was probably in such matters that Byzantium had most

<sup>33</sup> *Life of Mathilda*, ch. 15, ed. Schütte, p. 141; tr. Gilsdorf, p. 87. See also Leyser (1995), p. 19.

<sup>34</sup> See Wentzel (1971); Leyser (1995), pp. 19–27; Westermann-Angerhausen (1995); Erkens (2000).

<sup>35</sup> Schramm and Mutherich (1962), p. 144 and plate 74.

<sup>36</sup> Gerbert of Aurillac, *Letters*, no. 26, ed. and French tr. Riché and Callu, I, pp. 52–3. Theophano's own uncle, Tzimiskes, was one such 'new man'.

to offer the Ottonians. Its arsenal of symbols could help each ruler pass on the imperial crown – itself partly of Byzantine inspiration – to his chosen son. For a family with pretensions to being the *beata stirps* ('blessed family'), readily recognisable emblems of long-established authority were of inestimable value.

Otto II, for his part, seems to have been more positively interested than his father in the imperial Roman past and its Italian foundation stones; the use by his Italian chancery of the title of *imperator Romanorum augustus* from March 982 signalled a much keener commitment to Italian affairs. He tried to subjugate Venice, attacked Byzantine Taranto and aspired to the extra moral authority and power which expulsion of the Saracens from southern Italy would bring. In the 980s and 990s their depredations surpassed those of Fraxinetum's Muslims, whom local lords had managed to extirpate c. 972. A victorious Otto could have complemented his Roman title through reclamation of Apulia and Calabria, while eclipsing the *basileus* as *pallida Saracenorum mors* ('white death of the Saracens').<sup>37</sup> However, Otto's army was outmanoeuvred by the Saracens near Reggio di Calabria and he himself escaped only by swimming out to a Byzantine warship anchored offshore that was following events. He died fifteen months later, on 7 December 983, and was laid in an antique sarcophagus beneath a porphyry lid in St Peter's, Rome; here too, Byzantine imperial symbolism was echoed.

Considering Otto II's misadventures, his son might be expected to have emerged from his long minority with the limited goal of tightening control over his Teutonic subjects and rebellious Slavs. In fact Otto III showed unprecedentedly fervent attachment to both the city and the imperial mystique of Rome from quite soon after his coronation as emperor in 996 until his death in 1002. He also came to envisage his hegemony as extending spiritually and ecclesiastically as far east as Poland and Hungary. Yet these tendencies did not manifest themselves all at once, and they were neither wholly consistent nor the product of Otto's whims alone. It was most probably his advisers who were responsible for the decision to seek a marriage-tie with Byzantium, only four or five years after Theophano's death in 991. Her presence was evidently remembered as benign; it had presumably inspired the king of France, Hugh Capet (987–96) to seek a Byzantine princess for his son and heir, Robert II (996–1031), already in 988. Gerbert of Aurillac, who had a hand in this démarche, was esteemed by Otto both as counsellor and polymath and brought into his circle of courtly correspondents; Otto expressed the desire that Gerbert would bring out his 'Greek exactitude' while banishing 'Saxon rusticity'.<sup>38</sup> But this serious-minded, highly strung adolescent was also strongly drawn to holy men whose vision was focused

<sup>37</sup> *Leg.*, ch. 10, ed. Chiesa, p. 191; tr. Scott, p. 31; Ohnsorge (1983), pp. 199–200, 203–4; Kresten (1975).

<sup>38</sup> Gerbert of Aurillac, *Letters*, no. 186, ed. and French tr. Riché and Callu, II, pp. 482–3.

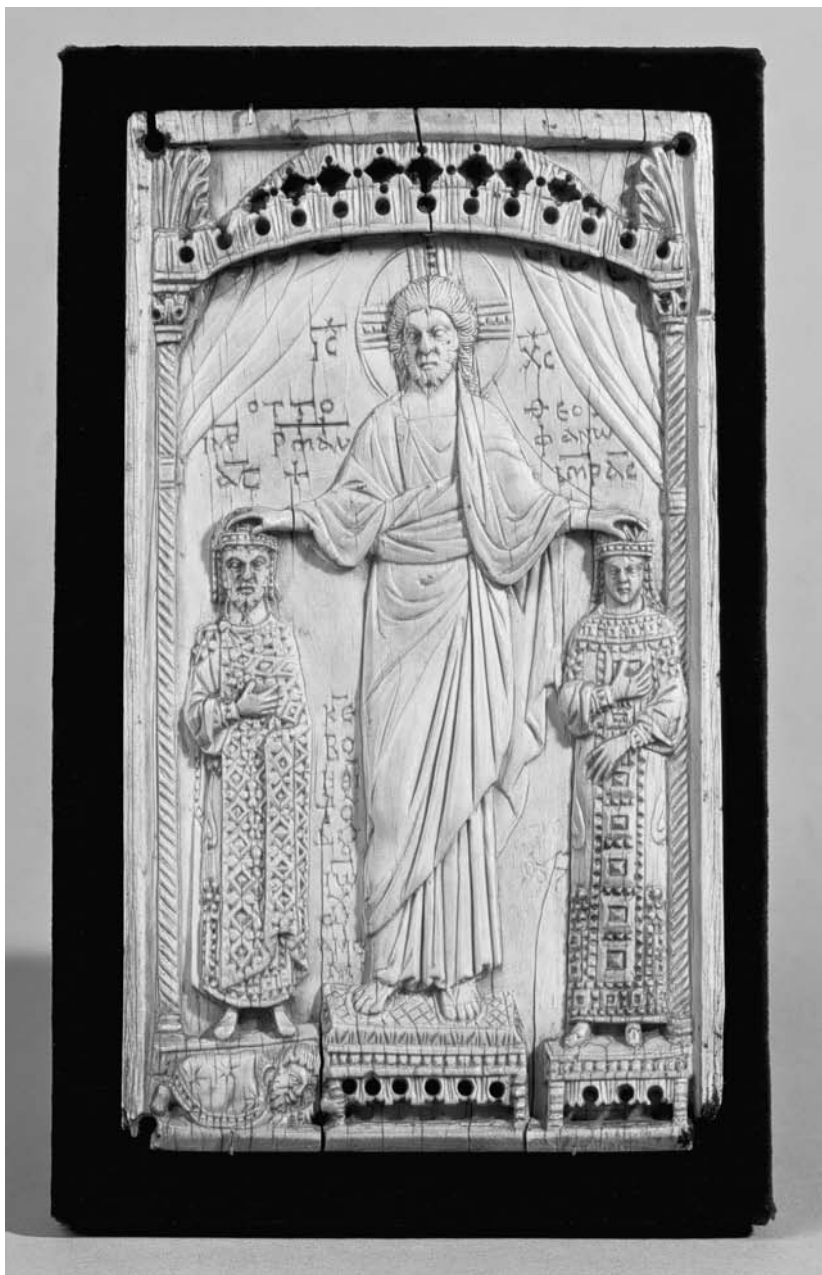


Figure 40 Ivory of Otto II of Germany and Theophano being crowned by Christ

on God's kingdom or on spreading the Gospel on earth. First among these was Adalbert of Prague, who became Otto's spiritual father in 996. He seems to have aroused in Otto a longing for spiritual regeneration that intensified after Adalbert's martyrdom by the Prussians in the following year. Otto's yearning for personal salvation fused with a general sense of mission to save others, itself a facet of his desire to resurrect the empire. Thus he joined with the ruler of the Poles, Boleslaw I Chobry (992–1025) in venerating Adalbert, personally laying the relics on the altar of Gniezno's cathedral in 1000. Otto came under the influence of other fathers, such as the group of hermits around Romuald whom he met in Rome in 1000; and Nilus of Rossano, the Calabrian Greek holy man who had moved to a monastery near Gaeta and was urged by Otto to come and take charge of any monastery he might wish in Rome. Nilus was later visited by Otto, who is said to have wept and placed his crown in the old man's hands upon departing.<sup>39</sup>

Otto seems to have been able to converse freely with Nilus, and he had a reading knowledge of Greek. Thus one of the most formidable barriers to intercourse between Greek and western courts was, temporarily, lowered. But Theophano's 'splendid retinue'<sup>40</sup> from Constantinople had included no one who emerged as a dominant figure in the Ottonian court or as a special adviser to the young Otto. The one Greek to rise high in Theophano's favour came not from Constantinople but from southern Italy. John Philagathos instructed Otto, his godson, in Greek for several years. In 989 or 990 he was put in charge of the administration at Pavia, overriding entrenched customs and interests there. Subsequently John was sent to Constantinople to negotiate a marriage alliance for his young master. He returned in late 996 without a *porphyrogenita*, but with a Greek envoy, Leo of Synada. Soon, against all Ottonian expectations, he had been acclaimed pope in lieu of Otto III's appointee Gregory V (996–9); but before long John's chief patron, Crescentius, had been beheaded and he himself was blinded, deposed and paraded around Rome by supporters of Otto III, seated back to front on a donkey, in the spring of 998. Leo of Synada claimed a hand in John's elevation, but this cannot have formed part of his original brief, and the key axis was that between John Philagathos and the Crescentii.<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, Byzantine support for John was probably suspected by contemporaries, as it certainly was by later writers, and the episode can scarcely have encouraged Otto to employ other Italo-Greeks.

<sup>39</sup> *Life of Nilus the Younger*, chs. 92–3, cols. 153–4. On Otto's regard for Italo-Greek holy men, which seems to represent personal predilection rather than later hagiographical confection, see Seibert (2000), pp. 216–20, 223, 242–5.

<sup>40</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, II.15, ed. Holtzmann, p. 56; tr. Warner, p. 103.

<sup>41</sup> Leo of Synada, *Correspondence*, ed. and tr. Vinson, nos. 6, 11, 12, pp. 8–9, 16–17, 20–1; Kolditz (2002), pp. 562–6, 583.

In 1000, after his visit to Adalbert's shrine, Otto had Charlemagne's remains at Aachen exhumed and the body laid on Byzantine silks, evidently acting here as heir. He contemplated making Aachen his most favoured residence, but then chose another city, like Aachen on the periphery of his lands but still more deeply imbued with historical legitimacy. Otto determined in effect to abandon the essentially absentee lordship of Rome practised by his father and grandfather. He would make Rome a 'royal city' as a conscious riposte to the papacy's self-proclaimed 'apostolic' status and to self-willed local nobles.<sup>42</sup> The phrase was most probably also a conscious evocation of the Byzantines' term for their own 'reigning city'. Otto's choice of site for his residence there is highly significant: the Palatine Hill, where the caesars' palaces had stood from the reign of the emperor Octavian Augustus onwards. The outpourings of Otto's clerical staff reflect his residence there: some sixty-five diplomata were issued in or near Rome between May 996 and February 1001, two of them expressly stating that they were issued *in palatio monasterio*, probably an allusion to the adjoining monastery of San Cesario on the Palatine.<sup>43</sup> Otto's installation of his court there for quite lengthy stretches from 998 onwards blatantly flouted the idea that the area within the city walls had been made over to the papacy by the *Donation of Constantine*.<sup>44</sup> There was no recent precedent for a large-scale secular court in Rome, but a fair proportion of the citizens were acquainted with the luxury products and authority symbols of the Byzantine emperor. Otto's predecessors had used Byzantine-style media, such as the flamboyantly *de luxe* copy of Otto II's dowry charter for Theophano. If Otto III borrowed more extensively, this was because he was trying to root his court in a city where such things clearly appealed to some of the leading families and where at the same time elaborate ceremonial trappings and liturgies daily glorified St Peter and his heir. The Byzantine extravaganza of palace ceremonies and street parades could bring to life the idea that the emperors conferred pre-eminence on the City by residing there and ensured divine favour for it through prayer. The new establishment on the Palatine was intended to be the node of a fresh network of bonds with laymen and clerics.

A farrago of terms for officials emerges from Otto's diplomata. Two are of unmistakably Byzantine stripe, *logothete* and *protospatharius*. Otto

<sup>42</sup> Schramm (1957), pp. 30–1, 168–9; Brühl (1968), p. 503.

<sup>43</sup> Otto III, *Diplomata*, nos. 383, 384, pp. 812, 814. The term '*urbs regia*' occurs (like '*caput mundi*' – 'head of the world') in the introductory sentences of only one of Otto's diplomata: Otto III, *Diplomata*, no. 389, pp. 819–20; Görich (1993), p. 196. But miscellaneous evidence, notably the building works on the Palatine, signals Otto's expectation that Rome would be conspicuously his residence, in the manner of the ancient caesars. To a youthful seeker after legitimate ascendancy there, the eastern empire offered useful additional stocks of impeccably Christian symbolism and clear-cut notions of imperially driven 'renewal' (see above, p. 497). For western medievalists' views on Otto's conception of his empire and Rome's role in it, see Althoff (2003), pp. 81–9.

<sup>44</sup> Tellenbach (1982), pp. 243–4, 250; Brühl (1989–97), I, pp. 4–6, 19 with n. 82, 24–9. For a different approach, see Görich (1993), pp. 263–7.



began in 998 to call his chancellor for Italy, Heribert, *cancellarius et logotheta* (or *archilogotheta*). The title *protospatharius* is consistently borne by only one individual but he too is associated with the palace, as *comes palatii* in Italy. Most of the other terms come from the contemporary civilian administration of Rome or, as in the case of *imperialis palatii magister*, were Otto's own coinings. They feature principally in his documents issued in or after 998, and exemplify Otto's efforts to represent himself as the legitimate, palace-based master of the city.<sup>45</sup> From 1000 Otto also experimented with his own title, varying it in accordance with his location north or south of the Alps. Very little is known about the ceremonial envisaged for his palace. The descriptions in the *Libellus de cerimoniis aulae imperatoris* are mainly due to Peter the Deacon's mid-twelfth-century fascination with classical Rome, but three protocols most probably date from Otto's time. One of these prescribes how a *protospatharius* should present to the emperor a prospective *patricius*; the emperor will then invest him with a cloak and place a golden 'crown' (*circulus*) on his head.<sup>46</sup> A conspicuous feature of court life was that Otto would sometimes sit at a separate table, elevated above his fellow diners. To dine apart, or with a few guests at a separate, raised, table was also the practice of the *basileus* at certain banquets, and this was probably the chosen model of Otto's dining ritual.

Otto also tried to earn the appreciation of Rome's citizens through his promotion of the cult of the Virgin as protectress of Rome. He even commissioned a hymn in her honour which included the lines: 'Holy mother of God, look after the Roman people and look kindly on Otto!' The Virgin, rather than Sts Peter and Paul, is associated with the City, and Otto is acclaimed by name, a combination also to be found in contemporary Constantinople. The hymn was chanted through Rome's streets by the 'Greek School' on the Vigil of the Assumption in 1000.<sup>47</sup> The impact of such rites was all the greater at a time when there were still a significant number of Greek-speakers in Rome; there were fresh arrivals of monks from the south at that time, refugees from Muslim raiding. Rome was both central to Otto's designs and the haunt of influential persons conversant with Byzantine ways, including Byzantine forms of punishment and degradation for rebels, such as those inflicted on Philagathos.

North of the Alps Otto's experiment with a new political culture could expect fewer sympathisers. The fairly plentiful finds in northern Germany

<sup>45</sup> See Schramm (1968–71), I, pp. 288–97, who emphasises the un-Byzantine uses to which the terms *logotheta* and *protospatharius* were put. But that Byzantium's court culture was deliberately evoked is in itself suggestive of its connotations of solemnity and functioning power, and of its uses for Otto's experiments. See also Leyser (1995), p. 27; Kolditz (2002), pp. 533–5, 549–50, 572–4; and below, n. 49.

<sup>46</sup> *Libellus de cerimoniis aulae imperatoris*, ch. 20, ed. in Schramm (1968–71), III, p. 352; Bloch (1984), pp. 87–9, 90–105, 119–27, 141–2; Bloch (1988), pp. 799–800, 823–6.

<sup>47</sup> *Poetae Latini*, ed. Dümmler et al., V, p. 468, line 59; Berschin (1988), p. 185.

of *objets d'art* and silks showing distinctively Byzantine traits or workmanship do nevertheless show that some members of the north German elite had an appetite for eastern luxuries, and there is evidence that they adapted motifs like the symmetrical double portrait and *proskynēsis* to their own family needs. Authority symbols such as the *loros* were assimilated by the reigning family. *Stemmata* of Byzantine design retained a place among the insignia of Emperor Henry II (1002–24), while other items, such as the orb, seem to have belonged to an easily comprehensible vocabulary of directly God-given power common to eastern and western courts. In 1000 Otto III's newly mounted political culture travelled on show to the Slav north-east, to Gniezno. Otto is said to have removed a crown from his own head and placed it on Boleslaw's, rendering him 'brother and partner of the empire'. Otto also declared him 'friend and ally of the Roman people'.<sup>48</sup> A comparable crown-transfer is attested only once in Byzantine chronicles, but the emperor was accustomed to crowning junior emperors and caesars personally. Otto seems to have been consciously drawing on Byzantine rites and terminology to convey his own notion of his relationship with Boleslaw as a kind of *primus inter pares*. He presented him with a gilded lance; for Otto and his forebears a 'Holy Lance' – perhaps inspired by Byzantium and its cult of Constantine the Great – had long been a symbol of imperial authority. Nonetheless, Otto's new political order required frequent displays of military *virtus* and ample bounty, as well as ceremonial, and time would have been needed to instil it.<sup>49</sup> Thietmar of Merseburg voices the incomprehension and dissatisfaction of some northerners in describing Otto's aim as being to revive 'the ancient customs of the Romans, now largely destroyed'.<sup>50</sup>

The reaction of the Byzantine government to Otto's experiment was as mixed as that of the Saxon nobility. Otto's initial attempts to tighten his hold on Rome are unlikely to have been welcome, but Leo of Synada's embassy implies at least a willingness to sound out the young ruler; negotiations were still in progress, and Leo still in the west, in September 998. His observations of the turmoil in Rome could have persuaded the government that Otto was too weak to warrant a *porphyrogenita*. Yet only a few years later, in response to another request or proposal from Otto, Byzantium acceded and a daughter of Constantine VIII (1025–8) landed at Bari, probably in February or March 1002, too late to find Otto alive; he had died near Rome on 23/24 January. Why was the eastern empire now so much more forthcoming, subjecting a *porphyrogenita* to a winter sea voyage? Otto's

<sup>48</sup> Gallus Anonymus, *Chronicae*, I.6, ed. Maleczyński, pp. 19–20; tr. Knoll and Schaer, p. 37.

<sup>49</sup> Intimations of that order, and of the uses of Byzantine authority symbols and iconography in expressing it, come from the texts and illuminations in Otto's personal prayer book: Hamilton (2001); Saurma-Jeltsch (2004), pp. 71–4, 82–5.

<sup>50</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, IV.47, ed. Holtzmann, p. 184; tr. Warner, p. 185.

pretensions and claims had grown more sweeping in the meantime, and Gerbert of Aurillac's assumption of the name Sylvester upon becoming pope in 999 signalled that Otto himself was to rank as a new Constantine: the pope in the era of Constantine the Great's adoption of Christianity had been called Sylvester. The signal was aimed mainly at Otto's heterogeneous subjects and the newly Christianised peoples of eastern Europe. But a poem composed soon after Gregory V's return to Rome in 998 claims that 'golden Greece' and the Muslims fear Otto and 'serve [him] with necks bowed'.<sup>51</sup> The poem, probably chanted at a festival in Rome, challenged Byzantine claims to be sole continuators of the *imperium Romanum* and thus the crucible of legitimate earthly authority. Yet these various manifestations of Otto's God-given majesty did not win round all the leading families or the mob in Rome, and his experiment with an *urbs regia* (reigning city) could therefore have been dismissed by the Byzantines as tawdry and ill-starred; Otto had to abandon his residence on the Palatine in 1001. Such things probably did not go unnoticed by easterners passing through Rome. Otto's one foray into southern Italy, in 999, took him only to Benevento and Capua, and was not notably effective, nor is there evidence that he claimed all southern Italy (see below, p. 581).

Otto III did, however, show a pronounced interest in Venice, and visited Doge Peter II Orseolo (991–1009) in April 1001. Already the godfather of a son of Peter named after him, Otto now became godfather to the doge's daughter. His visit may have been viewed with unease from Byzantium; the empire's position in the Adriatic was hard pressed after the loss of Dyrrachium to Samuel of Bulgaria (987/8–1014). Samuel lacked a fleet to reduce Byzantium's subject cities on the Dalmatian coast and his incursions probably ranged no further north than Ragusa. But they may well have occasioned Doge Peter's show of force down the coast in 999, when he received oaths of *fidelitas* from the notables of Zara, Split and most of the other Dalmatian towns.

Whether this operation was undertaken with prior Byzantine approval is uncertain, but Venice's fleet had proved its efficacy in an area where Byzantine possessions were beleaguered. This alone could account for Byzantium's close attention to Venice and to any other power exercising leverage over it. Another, related reason may lie behind Byzantium's readiness to oblige Otto III between 1000 and 1002. Basil II was about to lead his army up the Danube against Samuel. As Samuel was probably linked to Stephen I of Hungary (1000–38) through a marriage alliance, Basil was liable to be attacked by Stephen, and he most probably joined forces with a Hungarian chieftain in the region of Vidin, Ahtum-Ajtony (see above, p. 527). Otto

<sup>51</sup> *Poetae Latini*, ed. Dümmler *et al.*, V, p. 479, verse 8 and apparatus criticus. See also Gerbert, *Lettres*, ed. Havet, p. 237.

may have appeared a useful potential restraint on Stephen, for Stephen's wife was sister of Duke Henry of Bavaria, the future emperor Henry II; and through 'the grace and urging' of Otto, Stephen founded cathedral churches and duly received a crown and, most probably, a gilded lance in late 1000:<sup>52</sup> such links gave Otto a certain moral leadership. If word of Otto's *démarches* towards Hungary reached Byzantium in 1001, while preparations for the daring venture up the Danube were afoot, this could have tipped the balance in favour of Otto's repeated requests for a marriage-tie.

This explanation, though hypothetical, fits the pattern of east–west relations throughout the tenth century. The Balkans, especially Bulgaria, loomed large among the concerns of the Byzantine government; matters further afield were mostly of secondary importance. A well-disposed Otto might do little more than discourage Stephen I of Hungary from attacking Basil's far-reaching Danubian expedition, but Otto will have seemed likely to be a force in east-central Europe for many years to come, and for his good offices a *porphyrogenita* probably seemed a price worth paying.

Otto III's unexpected death and his successor's preoccupation with matters north of the Alps loosened Byzantino-German relations for almost two decades. Basil II for his part was embroiled in the Bulgarian war. It was the Venetians who came to the relief of Bari when it was in danger of falling to the Saracens in 1003, and the Sicilians and North Africans continued to pillage the south Italian coastline through the opening decades of the eleventh century. Imperial authority suffered another blow when an Apulian notable, Melo, instigated a revolt *c.* 1009. This was far from being the first local insurrection (see below p. 570), but it was serious, involving Ascoli as well as Bari. The imperial authorities took several years to suppress it and Melo then fled to the courts of Lombard princes. Subsequently, in 1017, he mounted another challenge to imperial power, relying heavily on a band of Normans, at first exiguous but later reinforced. This is the first occasion when the Normans' armed presence in the south is incontrovertible, although a few Normans had probably found employment at Lombard courts from the opening years of the century onwards. Melo now ventured to fight pitched battles and several important towns such as Trani renounced imperial authority. However, in October 1018 Melo and his Normans were defeated at Cannae by Basil Boioannes, the *katepanō* of *Italia*.

Boioannes was assisted by the fact that Bulgaria was being pacified and manpower and money were now available for operations in Italy. The forces which he led onto the battlefield were like 'bees issuing forth from

<sup>52</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, IV.59, ed. Holtzmann, p. 198; tr. Warner, p. 193.

a full hive'.<sup>53</sup> But he showed great organisational talent, building numerous strongholds in northern Apulia. Several towns were founded in what amounted to a system on the Byzantine side of the River Fortore, including Civitate and Fiorentino. Others were founded in Calabria. Boioannes expressly claimed to be restoring at Troia a town long abandoned; the name and site of Civitate likewise evoked classical antiquity. Troia – 'Troy' – lay only 215 kilometres from Rome.

Boioannes' prime objective was to consolidate Apulia's northern defences and overawe the borderland princelings. But the effect was to provoke the German emperor and aggravate the hostility which Pope Benedict VIII (1012–24) had already shown in granting a fortress on the Garigliano to Melo's brother-in-law, Datto. In 1017 Benedict had probably played a part in encouraging Norman fortune-seekers to join up with Melo and the rulers of Capua-Benevento and Naples. Benedict also looked to the German emperor as a patron of church reform and counterweight to the Crescentii, and it was to Henry II's court that Melo fled after Cannae. In 1020 Benedict himself accepted Henry's invitation and crossed the Alps to Bamberg, where he exchanged the kiss of peace with Henry and celebrated the liturgy using the *filioque* clause in the creed, a heretical interpolation in Byzantine eyes. Henry made his claim to overlordship in the south explicit by conferring on Melo the title of *dux Apuliae*. However, on 23 April 1020 Melo died. The following spring Boioannes suddenly attacked Melo's brother-in-law on the Garigliano. The fortress was handed over to Pandulf IV of Capua, now a Byzantine vassal; Datto himself was paraded through Bari's streets on a donkey, then thrown in the sea. Henry II marshalled a large army and reached Ravenna at the end of December 1021. A detachment was sent to deal with Pandulf and his cousin Atenulf, abbot of Monte Cassino. Henry led the main force towards the base which had assisted Boioannes to operate so effectively on the Garigliano, an area where Picingli had required allies a hundred years earlier (see above, p. 538). Henry besieged Troia for about three months, until his army succumbed to dysentery, the *basileus*' abiding ally against intruders from the north. Henry eventually managed to extract token submission from Troia, but soon after his withdrawal the inhabitants opened the gates to Boioannes. So long as Henry stayed in the south, he could overawe the Lombard princes. Pandulf IV, besieged in Capua, sued for terms and was stripped of his principality; the prince of Salerno, Guaimar III (999–1027), surrendered; and a new abbot was installed at Monte Cassino in lieu of Atenulf. But Boioannes' barrier fortress stood undemolished; Henry's southern foray had made no more impact on Byzantine Apulia than Otto I's or Otto II's expeditions had done.

<sup>53</sup> Amatus of Monte Cassino, *Storia de' Normanni*, I.22, ed. de Bartholomaeis, p. 29; tr. Dunbar and Loud, p. 51.

In 1025 the eastern empire appeared on course towards reconquering Sicily and dominating commercial traffic in the central Mediterranean when Basil II died and his expeditionary force dispersed. But Byzantine Italy was becoming more prosperous and populous than it had been for centuries. Many of its inhabitants seem to have preferred the distant, undemanding *basileus* as the safeguard of their interests, while Byzantine emperors contemplated yet another Sicilian expedition. Byzantium's build-up of power in southern Italy antagonised the papacy and the western emperor, but their retaliatory capability was very limited. It was small groups of alien predators whose energies, greed and organisational skills wore down the Byzantine authorities in the mid-eleventh century. The spoils of the burgeoning towns and, eventually, power over them would go to these self-reliant freebooters, hailing from the shores of a northern sea.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> For the Normans' arrival in southern Italy and struggles for mastery there, see Loud (2000a), pp. 67–130.

CHAPTER 15  
BYZANTIUM AND SOUTHERN ITALY  
(876–1000)

G. A. LOUD

INTRODUCTION: MUSLIMS, BYZANTINES AND LOMBARDS

The last seventy years of the ninth century were an era of disorder and continued crisis in southern Italy. The government of the principality of Benevento, which ruled over most of the south of the peninsula, was riven by succession disputes which led to the formal partition of the principality in 849. But far from ending the contention, this division gave only a brief pause in the internecine strife. Muslim attacks from Sicily and North Africa threatened to swamp a feeble and divided Christian defence, and the local rulers were far more intent on their internal power struggles than on making any coherent and effective stand against the invader. However, the years round about 900 marked a very significant change, with regard both to the internal stability of southern Italy and also to its relative freedom from external threat – or at least from the threat of conquest rather than sporadic raiding. For much of the tenth century the land was not exactly peaceful, but freed at least from the dreary litany of civil war and the establishment of territorial footholds for further Muslim advance that had made the previous period a troubled one, the impact of which had been reflected in the pessimism of contemporary chroniclers such as Erchempert, and in the number of charters mentioning relatives or fellow monks captured by the Saracens.

This change was marked by three factors. First, there was the revival of Byzantine power in the late ninth century. Under the governorship of Nikephoros Phokas in the 880s the Byzantines had recovered much of northern Calabria and consolidated their hold in southern Apulia (see above, p. 460). The creation of the new theme of Langobardia in this period was part of the process of consolidation, as was the creation of new dioceses in Calabria after 886. Visits by local rulers to Constantinople, such as those of Guaimar I of Salerno (880–900) in 887 and Landulf I of Benevento in 910, as well as the use once again of the regnal years of the Byzantine emperor in the dating clauses of documents from both the cities of the west coast and in the Lombard principalities, demonstrate the restored



Map 25 Southern Italy in the tenth century



prestige of the empire.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, there was much greater internal stability in those parts of southern Italy not ruled by Byzantium. In 900 a bloodless coup had installed Atenulf I of Capua (900–10) as ruler of Benevento, and a few months later another coup displaced Guaimar I of Salerno, who was despatched to end his days as a monk. But while these events might seem to have been merely a continuation of the ninth-century chaos in the Lombard principalities, in fact they marked its end. The union of the two principalities of Capua and Benevento was to last for eighty-one years, and Guaimar I was merely replaced by his son, who remained as prince, apparently unchallenged, until his death in old age in 946. Thirdly, there was the threat from Islam. The conquest of Taormina, the last major Byzantine bastion in Sicily, early in 902, was indeed the prelude to a renewed invasion of the Calabrian mainland in the late summer of that year. But the death of its leader, Ibrahim 'Abd-Allah, at Cosenza in October marked not just the end of that invasion, but also the end of serious threat for many years; internal instability proved as much of a problem in Islamic Sicily in the tenth century as it had in Lombard southern Italy in the ninth.

Thus from around 900 onwards the political structures of southern Italy remained, at least outwardly, more or less in equilibrium. Apulia and Calabria were ruled by the Byzantine empire, each with its own provincial government, based respectively at Bari and (probably) at Reggio. Southern Campania and the Cilento region formed the Lombard principality of Salerno, which had been created by the division of 849. The central mountain region and the bulk of the Terra di Lavoro – the two principalities of Capua and Benevento<sup>2</sup> – were ruled by the descendants of Atenulf I of Capua, to judge by their surviving diplomata largely from Capua. Three coastal duchies, Gaeta, Naples and Amalfi, retained their independence from the Lombard principalities, as they had always jealously done, but each was really just one city with a very small dependent territory. Given how limited were their hinterlands, their economies were largely dependent on overseas trade.

The effective cessation of Muslim attempts at conquest after 902 still left one very serious problem for the security of the principalities of the west coast unresolved, namely the Saracen colony at the mouth of the Garigliano river, established around 881. From here the north of the principality of Capua and the Abruzzi region lay at the invaders' mercy. Indeed in 881–3 raiders from the Garigliano had destroyed the famous and prosperous

<sup>1</sup> Imperial regnal years were used in Gaeta up to 934 and in Naples throughout this period. In Capua and Benevento usage was more sporadic, but the princes referred to their title of *patrikios* up to 920: von Falkenhausen (1967), pp. 32, 37.

<sup>2</sup> Cilento (1966), pp. 149–50 argues that the use of terms like 'the principality of Capua' is anachronistic since the early tenth-century rulers described themselves as prince without any territorial designation; see, however, CS, ch. 159, pp. 166–7: 'Atenulfus Beneventanus princeps'; ch. 172, pp. 174–5, 'Beneventi fines'.

inland monasteries of Monte Cassino and San Vincenzo al Volturno, whose surviving monks had had to take refuge in Capua for a generation or more. A first attack on the Garigliano base, launched by Atenulf I of Capua in 903, failed, not least because of support lent to the Saracens by the forces of the duke of Gaeta.<sup>3</sup> Under papal auspices a second, successful attack was made in 915. A prolonged diplomatic campaign by the papacy and the Byzantine government deprived the Muslims of their Christian allies – the coastal cities of Amalfi and Gaeta, whose trading interests had led them to seek accommodation with the Arabs. It also secured the reinforcement of the local armies of Capua and the duchy of Naples by troops from central Italy and from Byzantine Apulia, under the personal command of the *stratēgos* of Langobardia.<sup>4</sup> The destruction of the Garigliano colony ensured that southern Italy was in future free from serious Muslim threat; raids on Calabria continued intermittently for much of the century, but were often bought off by the payment of tribute. Occasionally such attacks also menaced southern Apulia; for example, Oria was sacked in 925 and Taranto a few years later. But these were essentially plundering expeditions, not attempts to establish bridgeheads for further conquest. As such, they were of only very limited significance.

#### THE BYZANTINE HOLD ON CALABRIA AND APULIA

After 915 the main problem for the Byzantine government was disaffection among their provinces' inhabitants, combined with the ambitions of the princes of Capua to extend their rule towards the Adriatic coast. The *stratēgos* of Calabria, John Muzalon, was assassinated in an uprising near Reggio in 921, and soon afterwards the *stratēgos* of Langobardia, Ursoleon, was killed at Ascoli fighting against the forces of Capua-Benevento, which went on to occupy much of northern Apulia, apparently with the support of the local inhabitants. The fiscal pressure of Byzantine rule was undoubtedly one cause of disaffection, and this was, as the Calabrian revolt shows, by no means confined to the Latin areas under Byzantine dominion.<sup>5</sup> But the desire of the princes of Capua to recover those parts of Apulia which had been under the rule of their predecessors at Benevento until the mid-ninth century, and to secure control of coastal towns like Siponto and Bari which benefited from trade in the Adriatic, should not be underestimated. That this was a very real ambition is clear from the attempt of Landulf I (910–43) after his victory at Ascoli to persuade the Byzantine government

<sup>3</sup> CMC, I.50, pp. 130–1.      <sup>4</sup> Vehse (1927) remains the best discussion.

<sup>5</sup> Gay (1904), pp. 202–4 shows that the two revolts were separate, despite some confusion in the sources. For a later revolt in Greek Calabria, protesting against exactions for military service, see the *Life of Nilus the Younger*, chs. 60–2, cols. 103–10.

to appoint him as *stratēgos* of Langobardia.<sup>6</sup> Although details are obscure, it seems that the Byzantine position in Apulia was restored for a time after 921, but a second Beneventan invasion in 926, this time with the support of the prince of Salerno – who were apparently not involved in 921 – proved more serious. For some seven years substantial parts of Apulia were in the hands of the princes of Capua-Benevento, and parts of Lucania and northern Calabria were under the rule of the prince of Salerno. The status quo was only restored when the Byzantine government secured an alliance with Hugh of Arles, king of Italy (926–47); combined with substantial military reinforcement from Constantinople, this achieved the withdrawal of the Lombard princes.<sup>7</sup> For more than thirty years from c. 934 onwards, the frontier between the principality of Benevento and the Byzantine province of Langobardia remained relatively secure, if not entirely uncontested, especially in the late 940s.

Despite problems on the province's northern border, Byzantine rule in Calabria was largely unaffected by the tense relations with the Lombard principalities. Indeed for some considerable period Calabria was also free from Arab raids. Tribute money paid to Sicily from Calabria apparently ceased after 934, and in the latter part of this decade the island's Muslims were in the grip of civil war. It was only after internal peace was restored in Sicily in 947 that Calabria was once again threatened. Reggio fell in 950 and a further attack took place in 952, but once again the payment of protection money secured a period of truce.

The Byzantines were therefore able to maintain, albeit with some difficulty, their dominions in Italy more or less as they had been secured by the reconquests of the 880s (see above, p. 298). What they were not able to do, more than very sporadically, was to enforce any recognition of their rule in the petty duchies of the west coast, still less so in the Lombard principalities. Only in Naples did documents continue to be dated by the regnal years of the Byzantine emperors, and such links were of far more cultural than political significance. Indeed in 956, when the government in Constantinople was able to release sufficient troops for a major expedition to Italy, the first target of that offensive was apparently Naples; however, their aim may quite possibly have been to secure Neapolitan naval assistance against renewed Arab attacks on Calabria. Furthermore, it would seem that during this period there was once again disaffection in those areas under direct Byzantine rule.<sup>8</sup> Byzantium was a 'superpower', unlike the independent south Italian states. But for its government southern Italy was of far

<sup>6</sup> NM, no. 82, pp. 338–42.

<sup>7</sup> The period of seven years is given by *Leg.*, ch. 7, ed. Chiesa, p. 190; tr. Scott, p. 30. From 935 the regnal years of the emperors appeared occasionally in Beneventan charters: Mor (1952–3), I, p. 263. Details of the troops sent to Italy are given in *DC*, II.44, ed. Reiske, I, pp. 660–4.

<sup>8</sup> TC, pp. 453–4.

less moment than either the frontier in Asia Minor or the defence of its European provinces against the Bulgarians. For the most part the defence of its Italian dominions was left to local efforts, and only very occasionally could imperial troops or ships be spared in any numbers. Even in 956 the policy was essentially defensive: to secure a commitment by the Lombard princes not to attack Byzantine territory, to enforce effective government in that territory, and to prevent further raids on Calabria. The one exception to this limited policy came with the launching of a large-scale expedition to Sicily by Nikephoros II Phokas (963–9) in 964, but the disastrous defeat which resulted cannot have encouraged further such ambitious enterprises, and renewed military operations in other theatres anyway prevented a fresh attempt.

Moreover, in 966 the balance of power in southern Italy was to be, for a time, seriously affected by a new player on the stage, the German ruler Otto I (962–73), who in reviving Charlemagne's western Roman empire also revived Carolingian imperial claims to overlordship over southern Italy. The means whereby Otto sought to vindicate his claims were both direct military action and an alliance with the strongest of the local rulers in the south, the prince of Capua and Benevento, Pandulf I Ironhead (961–81). What this meant in practice was that the Capuan pressure on the Byzantine frontier in northern Apulia of the 920s and 930s was once again revived, but with the formidable military assistance of the German emperor.

The alliance with Pandulf Ironhead served a further purpose for the German emperor. By conceding the margravate of Camerino and the duchy of Spoleto to the prince of Capua, Otto secured a vital ally and recognition of his overlordship in the south; he also created a viceregal power in central Italy through which he could the more effectively control the Roman nobility, understandably restive at the prospect of a series of Ottonian clients being placed on the papal throne. The alliance enabled Pandulf to revive his ancestors' ambitions to encroach on Byzantine territory in Apulia, while also protecting his dominions from incursions from the north, such as had apparently occurred in the early 960s.<sup>9</sup> Otto himself paid a brief visit to Benevento in February 967, and in the spring of 968 a full-scale attack was made on Byzantine Apulia which reached as far as Bari before the allies withdrew. A further attack occurred in the winter of that year which took the German imperial army as far south as the Calabrian border. But in the end very little was accomplished. After Otto I had returned to northern Italy, Pandulf was captured while besieging Bovino on the Apulian frontier and sent as a prisoner to Constantinople. It was in good measure due to his intercession, after a further year's inconclusive warfare, that a peace between the two empires was eventually patched up, sealed by the marriage of the

<sup>9</sup> *CS*, ch. 166, p. 170.

young Otto II (973–83) to a Byzantine princess, Theophano (see above, p. 548).

The overwhelming impression given by this period of conflict, as indeed by the sporadic border warfare of the earlier part of the century, is of its essential sterility. Each side was capable of deep penetrations into the other's territory – Byzantine troops briefly got as far as Capua in the summer of 969 – but neither was strong enough to make any permanent impression. While the Byzantines held on to key border fortresses like Ascoli and Bovino the province of Langobardia was essentially safe. Furthermore the enhancement of the prince of Capua's authority was hardly in the interests of the other local rulers; while they had no wish to be Byzantine clients, they were equally unwilling to be clients of Capua and the German emperor. The duke of Naples supported the Byzantine invasion of Capuan territory in 969. Although the prince of Salerno did not, and in fact sent a relieving force to Capua, he seems to have otherwise tried to keep on good terms with the Greeks. Significantly the late tenth-century *Chronicon Salernitanum* took a favourable view of Nikephoros II Phokas, very different from the infamous portrayal of the emperor by Otto's envoy to his court, Liudprand of Cremona.<sup>10</sup> And around 966 the duke of Amalfi was once again, after a long interval, using a Byzantine title, a sign of renewed contact with the government at Constantinople.<sup>11</sup>

#### CHURCHES AND MONASTERIES IN CALABRIA AND APULIA, AND BYZANTINE ADMINISTRATION

The conflict between the two empires in the 960s had a further aspect, however, and one which was of very considerable significance for southern Italy. In 966, while taking refuge with Prince Pandulf from the hostile nobility of Rome, Otto's client Pope John XIII (965–972) raised the see of Capua to be a metropolitan archbishopric. Three years later, at the height of the military conflict in Apulia, he did the same for that of Benevento. The creation of the archbishopric of Capua should almost certainly be seen as a recognition of Capua's status as Pandulf's *de facto* capital and as an attempt to boost princely authority over the rest of the principality; the first archbishop was Pandulf's younger brother John. However, the creation of the new ecclesiastical province of Benevento was overtly anti-Byzantine and the authority granted to the archbishop stretched deep into Byzantine territory. Among the new suffragan sees to be subject to it were Ascoli and Bovino, the two key border fortresses under siege from Otto's and Pandulf's forces. Since the bulk of the population of Byzantine Apulia were

<sup>10</sup> 'Vir bonus et iustus': CS, ch. 173, pp. 175–6.

<sup>11</sup> For the dating, see Schwarz (1978), pp. 37, 243, *contra* Gay (1904), p. 321.

Latins, the loyalties of their churchmen were clearly of crucial importance to the Byzantine government; the creation of the new archbishopric of Benevento, which was intended to destabilise northern Apulia, was to have wide-ranging repercussions.

The Byzantines' reaction was to reorganise the church in Apulia, to create new archiepiscopal sees rivalling Benevento, and to ensure that the Apulian church remained loyal to Constantinople. In the 980s, when Otto II tried once again to invade Byzantine territory, the creation of the archbishopric of Salerno by Pope Benedict VII (974–83) was a further anti-Byzantine ecclesiastical measure. The sees of Cosenza and Bisignano in Calabria, previously suffragans of the Greek archbishop of Reggio and in areas clearly under Byzantine jurisdiction, were subordinated to Salerno; but unlike most of Calabria, they almost certainly contained a substantial Latin population.<sup>12</sup> Here too, the Byzantine authorities reacted with ecclesiastical changes of their own, including the creation of an archbishopric at Cosenza in defiance of papal authority.

The ecclesiastical changes after 970 were one aspect of a more general overhaul of the administrative structure of Byzantine Italy. In part a reaction to the renewed threat to its borders, this overhaul also reflected changes in the distribution of the region's population, although quite how extensive these were has been a matter of debate among historians.<sup>13</sup> But it seems clear that Arab raids on Calabria – by no means continuous, but alarming and destructive – encouraged the population both to retreat from coastal settlements to more defensible hill sites inland and, in some cases, to move northwards towards the borderlands with the principality of Salerno. Some Greeks living in Sicily under Arab rule may also have crossed the straits of Messina and moved north, although the evidence for this is almost entirely derived from contemporary saints' *Lives*, and we cannot be certain that the movement of these holy men was accompanied by any substantial numbers of laymen. Christian monks may well have been more obviously at risk in periods of disorder in Sicily, as in the 940s, than the laity who were less of a provocation to the Muslim devout.<sup>14</sup> In any case, nearly all the saints' *Lives* from tenth-century Calabria show their protagonists settling around the northern frontiers of the province, in the regions of Mercourion and, further north still, Latinianon; in the ninth century Latinianon had been a gastaldate of the principality of Salerno. The saints' *Lives* imply that their

<sup>12</sup> The earliest evidence for Salerno as an archbishopric comes in a papal bull of 989, which is clearly retrospective. Gay (1904), p. 358 argued convincingly for dating the promotion to the summer of 983 and this has been generally accepted, e.g. by von Falkenhausen (1967), p. 148; Taviani-Carozzi (1991b), p. 673.

<sup>13</sup> Notably between Ménager (1958–9), I, and Guillou (1963).

<sup>14</sup> For example Elias the Speleote (c. 865–c. 960) left Sicily after his companion at his hermitage was killed by the Arabs: *Life of Elias the Speleote*, I.8, pp. 850–1; Ménager (1958–9), I, p. 763.

heroes were not the only Greeks present in these regions. Luke of Armento, for example, spent some seven years in the Val di Sinni in Latinianon before fleeing to escape a crowd of would-be disciples.<sup>15</sup> Some Greeks, both monks and laymen, crossed into Lombard territory. The most famous example was Nilus of Rossano, who towards the end of the century spent some fifteen years at Valletta, near Monte Cassino (see above, p. 552). But his was not the only case. In the eleventh century there were at least four Greek monasteries in the vicinity of Salerno, and one as far away as Pontecorvo, near the northern border of the principality of Capua.<sup>16</sup>

The expansion of the Greek population of Calabria into the heel of Italy led to administrative changes both lay and ecclesiastical. From the 880s onwards there had been two separate and apparently independent provinces of Byzantine Italy: Langobardia (that is Apulia) and Calabria (up to the 940s still officially and anachronistically known as the theme of Sicily, although the Byzantines only retained a few isolated strongholds in the north-east of the island). In the reign of Nikephoros II Phokas there came a change. The theme of Langobardia, strategically the more significant of the two since through its ports the mouth of the Adriatic was in Byzantine hands and easy access was possible to the European mainland of the empire, was placed under an official known as the *katepanō*, who was of more senior rank and status than previous governors. It is probable that the new *katepanō* was placed in overall authority over Byzantine Italy, and it is also likely that a new province of Lucania was created at this time, although the dating is far from certain. Lucania incorporated Latinianon, Lagonegro and Mercourion, regions to the north of Calabria into which there had recently been an influx of Greeks, and a new diocese, Tursi, was set up as the bishopric for Lucania.<sup>17</sup> Tursi was made part of a new metropolitan province, subject to the previously autocephalous archbishopric of Otranto. Both these sees had Greek clergy, but four Latin sees in southern Apulia – Tricarico, Acerenza, Matera and Gravina – were also subjected to the archbishop of Otranto. In the next few years two further Apulian sees were raised to the status of archbishoprics: Taranto in 978, and Trani in 987.

The process was continued in the early eleventh century when archbishoprics were created at Lucera, Brindisi and Siponto. The intention here was to bind the Latin clergy of these sees firmly to the Byzantine government, and to combat the claims of the archbishop of Benevento. The policy was not anti-Latin. Given that the majority of the population in all but

<sup>15</sup> *Life of Luke of Armento*, ch. 6, p. 338; Ménager (1958–9), I, pp. 767–8.

<sup>16</sup> Borsari (1950–1); Borsari (1963), pp. 58–60, 71–5; Loud (1994a), pp. 38–41. For examples of Greek laymen in the principality of Salerno see CDC, II, no. 384 (986), pp. 235–6; III, no. 521 (999), p. 88.

<sup>17</sup> von Falkenhausen (1967), pp. 46–7, 65–8, 104 argues that the theme of Lucania was created in the eleventh century and had only an ephemeral existence, and that Calabria was not subject to the *katepanō*'s authority. Guillou (1965) makes a very convincing case to the contrary.

the extreme south of Apulia was Latin, it could not be, and Liudprand of Cremona's claim that Nikephoros Phokas and Patriarch Polyeuct (956–70) wanted to forbid the Latin rite in southern Italy is clearly ludicrous.<sup>18</sup> Sees with Latin bishops and clergy remained Latin, even in towns like Taranto where most of the population were Greek. But these ecclesiastical changes were clearly political, designed to exclude the influence both of the papacy – which was under Ottonian control – and of the archbishopric of Benevento. The latter was an instrument of Pandulf Ironhead's ambitions and possibly those of his successors, in so far as they had any power. The policy seems to have worked. In 983 the *katepanō* granted a privilege to the bishop of Trani in reward for his support during the recent siege of the town.<sup>19</sup> But no chances were taken. Latin churches in Apulia remained under very tight supervision. Sees were often merged and then split up once again. Officials of the government acted as the advocates (i.e. legal representatives) of churches. Occasional exemptions from taxation given to Latin clergy were specific and highly restricted,<sup>20</sup> although this was part of a more general desire by the Byzantine authorities to preserve the fiscal base of the state.

Despite the continued hazard of Muslim raids on Calabria – a problem which, after a pause, became serious again from the mid-970s – the Byzantine provinces retained their cohesion and even flourished in a modest way. Not only did Greek influence increase and push the border northwards in Lucania – the creation of the theme was a recognition of this; in the last years of the century, after Ottonian policy in southern Italy had collapsed and Pandulf Ironhead's dominions divided, the Apulian frontier also shifted northwards from the River Ofanto to the River Fortore. The area of northern Apulia thus incorporated into the theme of Langobardia became known, significantly, as the *Capitanata*, i.e. the land of the *katepanō* (or 'captain') – reflecting its incorporation under Byzantine rule after this new title for the governor had been introduced. At the end of the century the Byzantine administration can be seen in full operation as far inland as Tricarico on the Apulia–Lucania border, redefining boundaries and setting up new *chōria* (taxable units).<sup>21</sup> Monasteries were often the focus for the clearance of land and new settlement, particularly in the hitherto under-exploited Lucanian region, and the villages which developed around them were then officially incorporated as *chōria*. The population, it would seem, was expanding, although in Lucania migration can explain new settlement

<sup>18</sup> *Leg.*, ch. 62, ed. Chiesa, p. 215; tr. Scott, p. 54. For the ecclesiastical changes generally, see von Falkenhausen (1967), pp. 147–57; Martin (1993), pp. 563–72.

<sup>19</sup> *Carte di Trani*, ed. Prologo, no. 7, pp. 32–5.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, *Carte di Trani*, ed. Prologo, no. 8, pp. 35–8 to the archbishop of Trani (999), discussed by Borsari (1959), pp. 128–34.

<sup>21</sup> Holtzmann and Guillou (1961).



(see above, p. 567). In a few cases population transfers may have been deliberate, although the evidence for this relates mainly to the reign of Leo VI (886–912), who is known to have sent settlers from the Peloponnese to southern Italy. By the end of the tenth century agriculture was apparently flourishing in at least some parts of Calabria, with extensive vineyards and the beginnings of silk production which had, by the mid-eleventh century, reached a considerable scale. Evidence for the Byzantine provinces' external trade is extremely scanty, but it would appear that in the tenth century Otranto and Brindisi were probably the most important ports, with Bari becoming more important in the eleventh.

While Calabria and Lucania, with a largely, if not exclusively, Greek population, might seem very much like other Byzantine provinces, Apulia was different. The presence of a substantially Latin populace meant that the Byzantine government had to concede a degree of local autonomy, or at least variation, which was inconceivable in entirely Greek parts of the empire. While the provincial governors and some of their more senior officials were Greeks sent out from Constantinople – in the case of the *stratēgoi* and *katepanoi* generally holding office for fairly brief periods, about three years on average – many of the more junior officials were Latins. At Bari in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries eight out of eleven recorded turmarshs were Latins, and only three Greeks; in Taranto, by contrast, all but one of the known turmarshs were Greeks.<sup>22</sup> Such use of locally born Latin officers was probably even more prevalent in inland Apulia, where on occasion they might use titles derived from the Lombard principalities, such as *gastald*, and in one case at least, from Lucera at the end of the century, model their documents on Beneventan princely charters.<sup>23</sup> Most significant was the widespread sanction given to the use of Lombard law. The growth of a fairly prosperous class of small-scale landed proprietors in Apulia, judged by their own law and with their own Latin churches, approved of but closely supervised by the provincial government, was probably the best guarantee for the stability of Byzantine government in Apulia. But it was by no means infallible. Revolts in the coastal towns occurred a number of times in the tenth century,<sup>24</sup> and intensified after 1000, although contributory factors such as the abnormally harsh winter of 1007–8 should not be underestimated. Nor should the burden of taxation, which in Italy as in the rest of the Byzantine empire probably increased with the ambitious military policy of the late tenth-century emperors. While the Latin chroniclers tend to ascribe instances of disaffection in the Byzantine

<sup>22</sup> Probably by this time, turmarshs were town judges or governors, rather than the immediate deputies of the provincial governor.

<sup>23</sup> von Falkenhausen (1973).

<sup>24</sup> For example at Conversano in 947, Trani in 982/3 and Bari in 986: Lupus Protospatharius, *Annales*, pp. 54–6; *Carte di Trani*, ed. Prologo, no. 7, pp. 32–5.

provinces to the cruelty or demands of particular governors, one might well conclude that it was rather the reaction of the populace to a governmental system which was far more efficient – and thus more oppressive in locals' eyes – than that in the Lombard principalities.

#### THE PRINCIPALITIES OF CAPUA-BENEVENTO AND SALERNO

These Lombard states, if one can use such a term for markedly inchoate organisations, presented a great contrast to Byzantine Italy. They were undoubtedly much more stable in the first three-quarters of the tenth century than they had been before 900, and whereas in the earlier period the princely office had at times seemed little more than a football to be kicked back and forth among local gastalds and other members of the office-holding aristocracy, by the tenth century hereditary succession was the norm. This was made more certain by the nomination of sons as co-rulers in their father's lifetime, which was also the practice in the duchies of Naples and Amalfi.

In the principality of Capua-Benevento family stability was ensured by joint rule between brothers, as well as between father and son. For one very brief period in 939–40 no fewer than four individuals were using the princely title: Landulf I, two of his sons and his younger brother, Atenulf II (910–40). But generally no more than two princes held office at any one time, and the younger of two co-ruling brothers could not expect to pass the title down to his children. There were never more than two brothers holding the princely title at the same time. Pandulf Ironhead associated only his eldest son with him as co-prince, although he had several younger ones as well, and he did that only after his younger brother's death in the winter of 968–9. It may sometimes have been the case that one, probably the senior, prince held Capua, while the other was associated with Benevento. This seems at first sight to be implied by the *Chronicon Salernitanum's* account of Pandulf Ironhead abandoning Otto I's army on the Calabrian border upon hearing the news of his brother Landulf's death, and hastening to Benevento to secure his son's enthronement as prince. However, the same chronicle also shows the two brothers acting together at Capua a few months earlier, escorting the prince of Salerno to meet their overlord Otto. The significance of the incident may simply be that the palace church of St Sophia at Benevento remained the traditional place for a new prince to be enthroned, as it had been back in the eighth century.<sup>25</sup> Charters generally show princes acting together, as Pandulf I and Landulf III (961–8/9) invariably did in the 960s. In 943 Atenulf III (933–43), acting

<sup>25</sup> CS, chs. 169–70, pp. 171–3. It is, however, noteworthy that the Beneventans installed Landulf's son as their chosen prince in 982.

by himself from Benevento, issued a group of charters for Monte Cassino. Although he did this in the name of his absent father and younger brother as well as on his own behalf, his action was almost certainly a symptom of a political crisis; soon afterwards he was expelled from Benevento, according to the *Chronicon Salernitanum* for his 'sins and cruelty', and took refuge with his son-in-law, Guaimar II of Salerno (900–46).<sup>26</sup> It looks as though the attempt to associate several members of the princely family together as co-rulers in the late 930s had not been a success, or perhaps Atenulf was simply displaced by his younger brother, to whose sons the princely title was eventually to pass. But the episode suggests that a division of Capua or Benevento between individual princes was neither normal nor wise.

The association of a son with his father was clearly important in ensuring a smooth succession. Gisulf I of Salerno (946–77) was made co-prince when only three years old.<sup>27</sup> From the few chronicle accounts we have it would seem, however, that whatever the importance of such designation and of the appearance of the co-prince in diplomata, in practice the senior ruler was the effective one who was considered to dictate policy. Only in exceptional circumstances would matters be different, and the most obvious would be when the inheriting prince was still a minor. This was the case with Prince Landulf of Capua, who succeeded in 982 and was for some years under the tutelage of his mother, Aloara. Similar examples occurred in the duchy of Amalfi in the 950s and at Gaeta in the early eleventh century. But minorities could be very dangerous: the minor duke of Amalfi in the 950s, Mastalus II, was murdered in 958, and his family replaced by a new dynasty.

Yet for the most part princely rule, and that of the dukes in the coastal cities, seems to have been stable in the tenth century – at least up to the 970s in Salerno and the 980s in Capua and Benevento – and certainly when compared with the chaos of the preceding century. But, paradoxically, the foundations of princely authority were being eroded. In the ninth century, the embattled princes of Benevento were careful not to alienate parts of their fisc and regalian rights; they preferred to give out property which had reverted to them either judicially or essentially by accident – for example, from men lacking heirs. Their tenth-century successors were less cautious, particularly after 950. It was under Pandulf Ironhead, when the prince was at least nominally at his most powerful, that the most extensive concessions were made. For example, in 964 Pandulf and his brother conceded the county of Isernia to their cousin Landulf, with an extensive immunity which effectively withdrew the county from their jurisdiction. A similar abdication of public power can be seen in the concessions which Pandulf II (982–1014) of Benevento made to a certain Count Poto in 988 of Greci and regalian

<sup>26</sup> Poupardin (1907), nos. 89–91, pp. 97–8; *CS*, ch. 159, pp. 166–7.

<sup>27</sup> *CS*, ch. 159, pp. 166–7.

rights over its inhabitants, and of Trivento on very similar terms to Count Randisius in 992.<sup>28</sup> It may be that Pandulf Ironhead's ambitious policy made him more reckless than his predecessors in securing support from his nobles, many of whom were relatives, and from churchmen. Certainly more of his diplomata – nearly all embodying grants – survive from the twenty years of his rule as senior prince than for the preceding sixty years, since the union of Capua and Benevento. But it may also be that Pandulf's policy was pragmatic, and that such grants as that to the count of Isernia were not really giving much away, but recognising alienations already made. There could also have been sound reasons for such concessions as that to Count Poto in 988. Greci was on the frontier with Apulia, and the grant of the right of fortification was an obvious security measure, while the generous judicial and financial concessions may have been necessary to persuade an aristocrat to settle an apparently deserted, quite possibly dangerous site.

There was, however, a longer-term process at work in this privatisation of authority. By around 900, gastaldates were in effect probably hereditary, and already in the ninth century the authority of the prince was very obviously ineffectual in the remoter areas of his principality. Furthermore, to judge by the *Chronicon Salernitanum*, by far the lengthiest and most circumstantial historical work of the time, concepts of princely authority were still very personal, rooted in a traditional framework of fraternity, mutual obligation, gift-exchange and condominium of prince and aristocracy. Vassalic links were not so much weak (as for example in tenth-century Francia) as non-existent. *Fidelitas* in Lombard southern Italy implied a contractual relationship, not one of dependence.<sup>29</sup> In Benevento the role of the princely palace as an effective institution of government had probably already begun to diminish c. 850; after that date its officials ceased to appear in princely diplomata. By making grants to nobles, the princes were at least making a statement that authority still ultimately came from them, however remotely. They were also creating some sort of short-term link and mutual goodwill, particularly when most of those receiving such concessions were kinsmen, who doubtless came to expect these marks of favour. In the long term, though, such hereditary grants – and there is very little evidence for temporary and revocable concessions – led to a haemorrhage of central authority outside the immediate vicinity of the princely residences.

The symptom, and also one of the causes, of this privatisation of authority was *incastellamento*. The development of private fortifications (in southern Italy fortified villages rather than castles pure and simple) had several functions. It was partly defensive; even after the cessation of the Saracen

<sup>28</sup> Poupardin (1907), nos. 112, 144–5, pp. 105–6, 117–18; Wickham (1981), p. 162 has a useful discussion of the first of these grants.

<sup>29</sup> Delogu (1977), pp. 70–111; Taviani-Carozzi (1980); Taviani-Carozzi (1991b), pp. 686–702.

threat there was still external danger. Hungarian raiders penetrated deep into the principality of Capua in 937, and as far as Apulia in 922 and again in 947. The *castello* was in addition a means of protection against greedy neighbours, especially when central authority was weak or distant. But it was also a means for effective exploitation by patrimonial landowners, attracting new settlers, imposing common rents and services, and providing a centre for collection of such rents and for local judicial authority. The creation of *castelli* and the attraction of immigrants could repopulate areas abandoned or under-exploited, although we should be cautious about taking at face value the claims in monastic chronicles as to the extent of such desertion before the age of *incastellamento*. Concessions by the princes of the regalian right of fortification, largely from the second half of the tenth century, were a symptom of central authority in decline. They were not necessarily the mark of a society in decline. Indeed, the tenth century was an age of growing population and increasing agricultural prosperity, though in southern Italy more than in most areas of Europe there could be striking regional variations. What might hold good for such fertile areas as the Capuan plain or the broad and flat Liri valley in the north of the principality of Capua was not necessarily the case for more mountainous areas like Molise.

There were also contrasts between the different principalities. In Salerno the capital city and the princely court continued to act as a magnet for the nobility in a way that no longer applied in the more decentralised principalities of Capua and Benevento. This was probably a function of the greater size of the city of Salerno, and its correspondingly greater influence, economic and social, within the principality. A mark of the city's development is that in the period 980–1000 twenty-nine notaries, all of them laymen, can be found operating there.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the other main centres of habitation within the principality lay relatively close to the city. The prince's kinsmen continued, for the most part, to reside at Salerno, whereas in the other two principalities they lived in their *castelli* and established their territorially based dynasties.

The title of count, which had begun as a personal distinction signifying relationship to the princely family, evolved in Capua and Benevento into a territorial designation. The counts replaced the gastalds as the chief local princely officials. (The gastalds in the ninth century had fulfilled a role which was analogous to that of the counts in the *regnum Italiae*.) But the emergence of the territorial counts in southern Italy signified not merely a change in title, but also one of function, a step along the way to the privatisation of authority. There were far more counts in the principality of Capua in the later tenth century than there had been gastalds in the

<sup>30</sup> Taviani-Carozzi (1991b), pp. 541–2.

ninth, as local authority not only became more entrenched but also more fragmented. The process spread eastwards into Molise and the principality of Benevento, although with less density in these more mountainous and sparsely settled regions.<sup>31</sup> The role of princely cadets in this process is clear. Two of Landulf III's sons became counts at Sant'Agata and Larino. Two of Pandulf Ironhead's younger sons in turn became count of Teano, replacing an existing line of counts descended from Atenulf I. In the eleventh century the descendants of one of them were counts at Venafrò and Presenzano. This fragmentation of local authority was encouraged by the partible inheritance of Lombard law. The change in usage seems to have occurred particularly in the 950s and 960s, in the years of Pandulf Ironhead's co-rulership with his father and in the early years of his own rule; in one case, that of the creation of the county of Isernia in 964, he can be seen expressly sanctioning this development. Perhaps significantly, the gastalds of Aquino, who were not descended from the Capuan princely dynasty, did not use the title of count until some twenty years later.

In the principality of Salerno the process was much slower and less complete, for the reasons outlined above. It has been suggested that a count had been established by 947 in a territorial lordship at Nocera on the border with the principality of Capua, at a period when relations between the two princes were hostile. But the evidence for such a supposition is at best inconclusive, and it is more probable that the count was simply a princely relative who held property at Nocera. A son of either Atenulf II or the exiled Atenulf III of Benevento was established in a lordship at Conza on the southern border of the principality, facing Byzantine territory; however, he does not appear to have held the title of count, and his relationship with Prince Gisulf later deteriorated to the point that he was once again driven into exile, at Naples.<sup>32</sup> Hence in Salerno the title of count remained a mark of personal status, not of institutional function. Furthermore, the princes retained their control over the church and their monopoly over public justice until well into the eleventh century. Legal cases first heard under local officials in outlying parts of the principality were often concluded at Salerno itself.

The princes of Capua-Benevento sought to bolster their authority in the north of their principality by allying with and favouring the two great monasteries of the region, Monte Cassino and San Vincenzo al Volturno. Both of these were not just major landowners; they also possessed coherent

<sup>31</sup> Martin (1980), pp. 573–5 provides a most valuable discussion, on which I have drawn heavily. For Salerno, see Taviani-Carozzi (1991b), especially pp. 449–51, 573–4, 725–7, 769–70.

<sup>32</sup> CS, chs. 161, 175, pp. 168, 177–9; *CDC*, II, no. 260 (969), pp. 62–3; Mor (1952–3), II, pp. 139–40. The chronicle is infuriatingly vague as to which Atenulf he was son of, and the genealogical charts in Mor (1952–3), I, pp. 294–5, Cilento (1971), table 2, and Taviani-Carozzi (1991b), p. 397, do not agree either. For Nocera, see Taviani-Carozzi (1991b), pp. 492–6; *CDC*, I, no. 174, pp. 224–5.

blocks of territory, and could serve as counterweights to the local nobility in localities some distance away and geographically separate from the centres of princely authority. Both monasteries had been destroyed by the Arabs – Volturmo in 881 and Monte Cassino two years later – and in the early years of the tenth century both communities were still in exile. The monks of Volturmo returned to their mother house in 914, but those of Monte Cassino remained in exile, first at Teano and later at Capua, until 949. This long residence at Capua was, to judge both from a contemporary papal letter and from later Cassinese tradition, the result of direct pressure from Landulf I in his greed to exploit the monastery's property.<sup>33</sup> If so, this policy was short-sighted, for the chief profiteers were not the princes but the nobles of the Liri valley, who alienated much of the abbey's land.

Under Landulf II (943–61) and Pandulf I the policy changed. The monks returned to Monte Cassino, and the princes actively supported them, forcing the local nobles to disgorge their stolen property and respect the abbey's lands in future. The gastalds of Aquino were brought to heel by direct military action, and a series of land pleas in the early 960s consolidated this process. Landulf II similarly took action to protect Volturmo's territory from the incursions of the counts of Venafro.<sup>34</sup> In the 960s Pandulf Ironhead conceded both fiscal immunities and, in 967, the right to erect fortifications to the monasteries.<sup>35</sup> Admittedly one must not overestimate the extent of the *incastellamento* on the lands of either monastery. Pandulf's charter to Monte Cassino mentioned only two *castelli* by name, and a tower at a third site, and the development of fortified sites on the abbey's lands was gradual. By around 1000 there were no more than half a dozen *castelli* there. The fortification of settlements was largely confined to the central portion of San Vincenzo al Volturmo's lands in the immediate neighbourhood of the mother house, and to some eastern parts about which the abbey was in dispute with the counts of Isernia.<sup>36</sup> The beginning of *incastellamento* on these abbeys' lands was more a matter of the reorganisation of their system of land exploitation, rather than being intended for directly military purposes, although those *castelli* founded in the San Vincenzo lands to which the counts of Isernia laid claim were set up primarily to symbolise the abbey's claims to this territory.

The abbeys could, however, rely on princely support, and indeed that of the emperors Otto I and II, in case of difficulty. The princes could use their

<sup>33</sup> Agapetus II (*Regesta pontificum romanorum*, I, no. 3664); *Papsturkunden*, ed. Zimmermann, I, no. 109, pp. 191–3; *CMC*, I.59, pp. 147–8, which clearly used this letter.

<sup>34</sup> *CMC*, II.1–3, pp. 166–71; *Placiti cassinesi*, ed. Inguauez; *Chronicon vulturnense*, ed. Federici, II, pp. 64–8.

<sup>35</sup> The latter are edited in *Storia della badia di Monte-Cassino*, ed. Tosti, I, pp. 226–8 and *Chronicon vulturnense*, ed. Federici, II, pp. 162–4; Italian tr. de Benedittis, pp. 364–7.

<sup>36</sup> Wickham (1985), pp. 250–1; Loud (1994b), pp. 54–6. For the social and economic consequences of *incastellamento*, see Del Treppo (1956), pp. 74–100; Toubert (1976).

relationship with these abbeys to validate their rule in the north of their dominions, and to limit the building of local power bases by nobles whose activities they might otherwise find hard to check. After the two principalities of Capua and Benevento separated in 981 the relationship between the prince of Capua and Monte Cassino became closer; Prince Landulf (982–93) appointed a kinsman, Manso, as abbot of Monte Cassino, and in 1011, while the two principalities were briefly reunited, Pandulf II installed one of his sons as abbot. But by that stage San Vincenzo al Volturno was no longer playing any part in this policy. After 981 there were no further princely diplomata for the monastery, and by the eleventh century Molise had slipped entirely from princely control.

#### AMALFI, NAPLES, GAETA: MATTERS OF TRADE

The coastal duchies of Amalfi, Naples and Gaeta were very different from the Lombard principalities. For one thing, the small size of their territories meant that they did not face the problems of distance and control which undermined effective government in the principalities. In Naples and Gaeta hereditary dynasties were already established by 900, and in Amalfi a ruling family was in the process of consolidating itself by that date when the city's governor, Manso, associated his son with him in its rule. By 907 the Byzantine government had recognised his position by granting him the rank of *spatharokandidatos*, although the comparatively lowly status of the *parvenu* Amalfitan dynasty is suggested by the fact that at the time of the Garigliano expedition the rulers of Naples and Gaeta were granted the much higher rank of *patrikios*.<sup>37</sup> Manso's family was displaced by a coup in 958, but otherwise the ruling dynasties in the coastal duchies were stable enough to persist unchallenged throughout this period, and indeed well into the eleventh century. The new Amalfitan ruling family lasted until the time of Robert Guiscard in the late eleventh century, and that of Naples until the death of the last duke in 1139.

The economy of all three duchies was based on trade, but not to the same extent. Amalfi, with the smallest and most mountainous territory, was the most active in such trade; Naples, with the largest hinterland, the least. According to Ibn Hawqal, an Arab traveller writing c. 975, Amalfi was 'the richest city of southern Italy, the most noble and most illustrious by its condition, the most affluent and the most opulent'.<sup>38</sup> By the 940s Amalfitan merchants were present in some numbers at Constantinople, and by the end of the century in Egypt. But the primary trading destinations were

<sup>37</sup> Schwarz (1978), pp. 31–2. See also above, p. 563.

<sup>38</sup> Ibn Hawqal, *Surat*, ed. Kramers, I, p. 202; French tr. Kramers and Wiet, I, p. 197; *Medieval trade*, ed. Lopez and Raymond, p. 54.





Figure 41 View of Amalfi's hinterland

North Africa and Sicily, to which timber, grain, linen and other agricultural products from southern Italy were transported. Naples was a centre for linen production, which was praised for its quality by Ibn Hawqal. Such trade required good relations with Islam, and this explains the reluctance of Amalfi and Gaeta to participate in military operations against the Arabs in the ninth and early tenth centuries; indeed, at times they provided actual assistance to the invaders. That the duchy of Naples played a more active role in combatting the Arabs of the Garigliano suggests that the city's trade was less significant to its well-being than to the other two duchies. But the fact that grain was certainly imported from the interior of southern Italy to Amalfi, and probably also to Gaeta, shows that the economy of the Campanian ports required links with the Lombard principalities as well. Furthermore, the role of Salerno in such trade cannot be entirely excluded. It was Islamic gold that was used to mint imitation quarter-dinar coins called *tari*, the principal money of southern Italy outside the Byzantine provinces, and from c. 1000 these were minted at Salerno as well as Amalfi.

Profits from such trade helped particular families to establish their rule at Gaeta in the mid-ninth century and at Amalfi in the 890s, and to consolidate their regimes thereafter. The surviving wills of two rulers of Gaeta, Docibilis I in 906 and Docibilis II in 954, show the very considerable movable wealth that these men had at their disposal, for which trading profits are the most obvious source.<sup>39</sup> The possession of mills was also an important facet of their power. The duke of Gaeta had a monopoly over mills, which he granted out to others only in exceptional circumstances. In Amalfi the number of mills attested in surviving documents far exceeds what the relatively

<sup>39</sup> *Codex diplomaticus cajetanus*, I, nos. 19, 52, pp. 30, 87. For Gaeta, see Skinner (1995), esp. pp. 57–102.

small population of the duchy can have needed for its domestic supply, and yet their value was high. While not possessing a monopoly like their Gaetan counterparts, the Amalfitan rulers held quite a number of mills and could thus benefit from the income that they generated. In these, as in other ways, rule in the coastal duchies was very different from that in the Lombard principalities.

Unlike the Lombard princes, the dukes of Amalfi, Naples and Gaeta could not look to a tradition of rule hallowed by time, nor did they assert the ultimately divinely sanctioned nature of their rule; the exception found in Amalfi from the 950s, the *dei gratia/providentia* style, may well have been an attempt to legitimise the new and usurping dynasty. Rather, their position rested on their wealth, both from the remains of the public fisc and from their private family property, on their role as lawgivers and military leaders, and on their control of the local church, in which their relatives were frequently given high office. In the early part of the century the rulers of Amalfi were often content to refer to themselves as 'judges', while the adoption in the early eleventh century of the title *magister militum* by the rulers of Naples reflects their military role as defenders of their people. Byzantine titles were an important element of legitimisation for the newer dynasties of Gaeta and Amalfi, although their use of such titles might vary depending on how far they felt in need of Byzantine support and alliance. With the coming of the Ottonians in the 960s and their support for Pandulf Ironhead of Capua, the dukes of Naples and Amalfi gravitated once more towards friendship with the eastern empire, and their documents once again made reference to their Byzantine ranks. The duke of Naples actively supported the Byzantine invasion of Campania in 969.

#### THE BREAK-UP OF CAPUA-BENEVENTO AND THE GENERAL FRAGMENTATION OF AUTHORITY IN THE SOUTH

In the 970s the growing power of the prince of Capua-Benevento was threatening to take over those parts of southern Italy not under Byzantine rule. In 973 there was an abortive coup in Salerno in which the childless Prince Gisulf was packed off to Amalfi as a prisoner. The ringleader of this coup was the former lord of Conza (the son of either Atenulf II or Atenulf III of Benevento) whom Gisulf had expelled many years earlier, but then allowed to return. Swift and decisive action by Pandulf Ironhead restored Gisulf to his throne. However, the price of his restoration was that Pandulf's son be associated with him as co-ruler, and when Gisulf died in 977 that son (also called Pandulf) was his successor. Thus in theory at least the unity of the old principality of Benevento, as it had existed before the division of 849, was restored (see above, p. 560). But such unity proved illusory, for the death of Pandulf Ironhead in 981 was the precursor to the

break-up of his empire. Despite the presence of an imperial army under Otto II both Salerno and Benevento revolted. The Beneventans installed as their prince Pandulf's nephew, the son of his brother and co-ruler Landulf III, who had died in 968/9. The Salernitans turned first to Duke Manso of Amalfi, and then in December 983 to a palace official, John of Spoleto (983–99), who succeeded in holding on to the principality and founding a new ruling dynasty.<sup>40</sup> Thus from 982 on Lombard southern Italy was once again divided into three separate principalities.

The year 982 also saw the eclipse of Ottonian influence in the south. Otto II had decided to abandon the peace of 969, and launched a fresh invasion of the Byzantine provinces. His army marched first into southern Apulia where it besieged, but failed to take, Matera and Taranto. Then he marched south into Calabria, which was once again menaced by Arab incursions from Sicily. Otto's army was defeated in a pitched battle with the Arab invaders near Reggio and the emperor himself only narrowly escaped.<sup>41</sup> Landulf IV of Capua (981–2) and his brother Pandulf, the deposed prince of Salerno, were among the dead.

The defeat in Calabria, followed by Otto II's death little more than a year later and the resultant minority, meant that there was no further German intervention in southern Italy for some sixteen years. It also ensured that there would remain three separate Lombard principalities and that no ruler would dominate the non-Byzantine south with imperial assistance, as Pandulf Ironhead had done. His rule over Spoleto and Camerino was granted to others. The principality of Capua was left in the hands of a minor, under the tutelage of his mother. And in both Capua and Benevento the forces of decentralisation, of which *incastellamento* was a symptom, reduced princely authority little by little. In the principality of Benevento the development of *castelli* accelerated from around 1000, and the rule of the prince became limited to little more than the immediate vicinity of Benevento itself.

The maintenance of central authority was certainly not helped by a fragmentation of interests within the ruling families. For a time in 985 Duke Manso of Amalfi was displaced by his brother Adelferius. More seriously, in 993 Prince Landenulf of Capua was murdered in an uprising in Capua, and there are some indications that this was with the connivance of his brother Laidulf (993–9), who succeeded him as prince.<sup>42</sup> Soon afterwards

<sup>40</sup> For the dating, see Schwarz (1978), pp. 39–41. The number of Amalfitans living within Salerno undoubtedly facilitated Manso's takeover.

<sup>41</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, III.20–2, ed. Holtzmann, pp. 122–6; tr. Warner, pp. 143–5. See also above, p. 550; for the location of the battle, Alvermann (1995).

<sup>42</sup> Otto III justified his deposition of Laidulf in 999 because of his alleged involvement: *CMC*, II.24, pp. 208–10. A more contemporary Capuan chronicle does not go this far, but describes Laidulf as 'coming joyfully' to Capua after his brother's murder: Cilento (1971), pp. 308–9. Most damning is the *Life of Nilus the Younger*, ch. 79, cols. 133–4.

Archbishop Aion of Capua was also murdered, and in 996 Abbot Manso of Cassino – who was, it will be remembered, a princely kinsman – was captured while on a visit to Capua and blinded; this came after a period of virtually open warfare in the north of the principality between the abbey of Monte Cassino and the neighbouring counts of Aquino. Authority within the principality of Capua was seemingly near collapse in the 990s.<sup>43</sup> The intervention of Emperor Otto III (983–1002) in 999 did nothing to cure this. He deposed Laidulf and installed his own nominee as prince. But as soon as Otto's army withdrew his protégé was expelled, and replaced by a brother of the prince of Benevento (whose capital Otto had besieged but failed to capture).

While we have no such spectacular manifestations for other areas as we have for Capua, dissipation of authority would appear to have been a fairly general phenomenon. Even in the minuscule duchy of Gaeta the same fissiparous tendencies as in the Lombard principalities manifested themselves, with cadet branches of the ducal house setting up their own, almost independent, counties in outlying parts of the duchy, at Fondi, Traetto and Suio. The Byzantine dominions in contrast had a strong central administration. But the recurrence of Arab attacks in the 980s and 990s posed serious problems, not least because imperial attention was devoted almost exclusively to more pressing matters elsewhere: revolts in Asia Minor and then war with Bulgaria (see above, pp. 522–7). These Muslim raids penetrated not merely into Calabria, but also deep into Apulia. The outskirts of Bari were ravaged in 988, Taranto attacked in 991, Matera captured after a long siege in 994, and Bari itself besieged for nearly five months in 1003 and rescued only by a Venetian fleet. In northern Calabria, Cosenza was sacked in 1009. If a note of pessimism creeps into contemporary documents this is hardly surprising; Peter, an inhabitant of Conversano, lamented in 992 that he had made suitable provision for his elder sons in a time of peace; but now in 'a time of barbarism' he could not do the same for his younger son.<sup>44</sup>

Nor indeed was the west coast exempt from attack. The duchy of Amalfi, whose trading links had hitherto protected it, was raided in 991. And in 999 the outskirts of Salerno were the victim of a further piratical raid. According to the chronicle of Amatus of Monte Cassino (written some eighty years later) there was general panic before a group of forty pilgrims from Normandy, returning from a visit to Jerusalem, volunteered to combat the invaders, caught them unawares and routed them. Impressed with their prowess, Prince Guaimar III (999–1027) invited them or their relatives to

<sup>43</sup> See also Prince Laidulf's unprecedented oath to respect the possessions of Monte Cassino, c. 993: *Accessiones ad historiam abbatiae Cassinensis*, ed. Gattula, pp. 90–1.

<sup>44</sup> *Pergamene di Conversano*, ed. Coniglio, no. 26, p. 55.

enter his service as mercenaries. So at least ran the legend, and perhaps even the sober fact, of the arrival of the Normans in southern Italy.<sup>45</sup> For some years to come they were only minor players in the region's history. But, as the eleventh century wore on, the Normans would change its course for ever.

<sup>45</sup> Amatus of Monte Cassino, *Storia de' Normanni*, I.17–19, ed. de Bartholomaeis, pp. 21–4; tr. Dunbar and Loud, pp. 49–50. For the date: Hoffmann (1969); Loud (2000a), pp. 60–6.

## CHAPTER 16

### BELLE ÉPOQUE OR CRISIS? (1025–1118)

MICHAEL ANGOLD

#### THE ELEVENTH-CENTURY QUESTION

Basil II died in December 1025 after a reign of almost fifty years. He left Byzantium the dominant power of the Balkans and Middle East, with apparently secure frontiers along the Danube, in the Armenian highlands and beyond the Euphrates. Fifty years later Byzantium was struggling for its existence. All its frontiers were breached. Its Anatolian heartland was being settled by Turkish nomads; its Danubian provinces were occupied by another nomad people, the Pechenegs; while its southern Italian bridgehead was swept away by Norman adventurers. It was an astonishing reversal of fortunes. Almost as astonishing was the recovery that the Byzantine empire then made under Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118). These were years of political turmoil, financial crisis and social upheaval, but it was also a time of cultural and intellectual innovation and achievement. The monastery churches of Nea Moni, on the island of Chios, of Hosios Loukas, near Delphi, and of Daphni, on the outskirts of Athens, were built and decorated in this period. They provide a glimmer of grander monuments built in Constantinople in the eleventh century, which have not survived: such as the Peribleptos and St George of the Mangana. The miniatures of the Theodore Psalter of 1066 are not only beautifully executed but are also a reminder that eleventh-century Constantinople saw a powerful movement for monastic renewal. This counterbalanced but did not necessarily contradict a growing interest in classical education. The leading figure was Michael Psellos. He injected new life into the practice of rhetoric and in his hands the writing of history took on a new shape and purpose; he claimed with some exaggeration to have revived the study of philosophy single-handed. However, his interest in philosophy was mainly rhetorical and it was left to his pupil John Italos to apply philosophy to theology and to reopen debate on some of the fundamentals of Christian dogma.

Modern historiography has singled out the period from 1025 to 1118 as the watershed of Byzantine history. George Ostrogorsky provided the classic interpretation.<sup>1</sup> He saw the eleventh century as the beginning of

<sup>1</sup> Ostrogorsky (1968), pp. 316–75.



Figure 42 This fine miniature exemplifies those in the Theodore Psalter, copied at the Stoudios Monastery in Constantinople in 1066; in the scene below, Asaph teaches from the book of the law

Byzantium's inexorable decline, which he attributed to the triumph of feudalism. Private interest gained at the expense of the state. Without effective central institutions it was impossible to mobilise the resources of the empire or provide any clear direction. Symptomatic of the decline of central authority was the struggle for power between the civil and military aristocracies. The latter emerged victorious with the accession to the throne of Alexios I Komnenos. But his success was limited and his restoration

of the empire superficial, because 'the empire was internally played out'. Ostrogorsky meant by this that the peasantry and their property were coming increasingly under the control of great landowners. He believed that this compromised the economic and demographic potential of the empire.

Ostrogorsky's presentation of the history of the Byzantine empire in the eleventh century has been attacked from two main directions. Paul Lemerle doubted that the eleventh century was a period of absolute decline at Byzantium.<sup>2</sup> There is too much evidence of economic growth and cultural vitality, which he connects with 'le gouvernement des philosophes'. The tragedy was Alexios I Komnenos' seizure of power, which substituted family rule for the state. Robert Browning would add that Alexios damped down the intellectual and religious ferment of the eleventh century through deliberate use of heresy trials.<sup>3</sup>

Alexander Kazhdan takes a rather different view.<sup>4</sup> He agrees that in the eleventh century Byzantium prospered. He attributes the political weakness of the empire to reactionary elements holding back the process of 'feudalisation'. Alan Harvey presses this approach to extremes.<sup>5</sup> He insists that the advance of the great estate was essential for economic and demographic growth. Kazhdan is also struck by the buoyancy and innovation of Byzantine culture. He connects this with a growth of individualism and personal relations. It was a victory for progressive elements, which were promoted rather than hindered by the Komnenian regime.<sup>6</sup>

Such a bald presentation does not do justice to the subtleties and hesitations displayed by the different historians nor to their skilful deployment of the evidence. It makes their views far more schematic than they are, but it highlights differences of approach and isolates the major problems. They hinge on the effectiveness of the state. Was this being undermined by social, economic and political developments? Though their chronology is different Ostrogorsky and Lemerle are both agreed that it was. They assume that the health of Byzantium depended on the centralisation of power. By way of contrast Kazhdan believes that imperial authority could be rebuilt on a different basis and this is what Alexios Komnenos was able to do. The nature of Alexios' achievement becomes the key issue.

A weakness of all these readings of Byzantium's 'eleventh-century crisis'<sup>7</sup> is a willingness to take Basil II's (976–1025) achievement at face value; to see his reign as representing an ideal state of affairs. They forget that his iron rule represents an aberration in the exercise of imperial authority at Byzantium. His complete ascendancy was without precedent. In a series of

<sup>2</sup> Lemerle (1977), pp. 249–312.

<sup>3</sup> Browning (1975a).

<sup>4</sup> Kazhdan and Epstein (1985), pp. 24–73.

<sup>5</sup> Harvey (1989), pp. 35–79.

<sup>6</sup> Kazhdan and Franklin (1984), pp. 242–55.

<sup>7</sup> See Angold (1991); contributions to Vlysidou (ed.) (2003); Holmes (2005), pp. 16–35.



civil wars in the early part of his reign he destroyed the power of the great Anatolian families, such as Phokas and Skleros, but only thanks to foreign aid. He used his power to straitjacket Byzantine society and subordinate it to his authority. To this end he reissued and extended the agrarian legislation of his forebears. Its purpose was ostensibly to protect peasant property from the 'powerful' as they were called. It was, in practice, less a matter of the imperial government's professed concern for the well-being of the peasantry, more a way of assuring its tax revenues. These depended on the integrity of the village community which was the basic tax unit. This was threatened as more and more peasant property passed into the hands of the 'powerful'. Basil II followed up this measure by making the latter responsible for any arrears of taxation which had till then been borne largely by the peasantry.

Control of the peasantry was vital if Basil II was to keep the empire on a war footing, while keeping the empire on a war footing was a justification for autocracy. The long war he waged against the Bulgarians only finally came to an end in 1018 (see above, pp. 526–9). It exploited the energies of the military families of Anatolia and cowed the aristocracy of the Greek lands. They were terrified that they would be accused of cooperating with the Bulgarians. The war with the Bulgarians was bloody and exhausting, but it was a matter of recovering lost ground, not of gaining new territory. The Bulgarian lands had been annexed by John I Tzimiskēs (969–76) in the aftermath of his victory over the Rus in 971. It was only the civil wars at the beginning of Basil II's reign and the emperor's own ineptitude that allowed the Bulgarians to recover their independence. Basil II's triumph over the Bulgarians gave a false impression of the strength of the empire.

In part, it depended on an absence of external enemies. Islam was for the time being a spent force; thanks to Byzantium's clients, the Pechenegs, conditions on the steppes were stable; the Armenians were divided; and western Christendom was still bedazzled by Byzantium. The Rus officially converted to orthodoxy *c.* 988. This confirmed their passage into the Byzantine orbit. The Rus were essential to Byzantine greatness under Basil II. They provided Byzantium with soldiers and sailors, and their merchants made Constantinople the entrepot for the products of the Russian steppes and forests and stimulated its commercial role.<sup>8</sup> This was complemented by the growing presence of Venetian merchants at Constantinople. In 992 Basil II encouraged their activities by reducing the tolls on their ships paid for passage through the Hellespont to Constantinople. The effect was to favour Constantinople's role as the clearing house of Mediterranean trade and to underline her position as the cross-roads of the medieval world. Constantinople was, however, disproportionately large and gave a false impression of Byzantine strength. It drew its wealth and population from

<sup>8</sup> Franklin and Shepard (1996), pp. 161–5, 178.

well beyond the political frontiers of the Byzantine empire. Under different circumstances this might leave it vulnerable.

If forced to rely entirely on its own demographic and economic resources, Byzantium would have been condemned to the role of a regional power, at best. But it did not have to do so. The Armenian highlands were always an important recruiting ground for the Byzantine armies, but it went further than this. The Byzantine conquests in the east were followed under Byzantine auspices by Armenian colonisation of Cilicia, the Euphrates provinces and northern Syria. The Rus provided another recruiting ground. Basil II relied heavily on the Varangian guard, which not only formed an elite corps but was also an instrument of his political ascendancy. Reliance on foreigners was a double-edged sword. In the course of the eleventh century relations with the Armenians deteriorated, while those with the Rus began to cool. In 1043 for reasons that remain obscure Iaroslav the Wise, prince of Kiev, sent an expedition against Constantinople. It was easily defeated, but thereafter the Rus played a less prominent role in the affairs of the Byzantine empire. In due course, the Varangian guard would be recruited not from the Rus and Scandinavians but from exiled Anglo-Saxons.

When pondering the collapse of the Byzantine empire in the eleventh century, it must be remembered that Basil II left his successors a poisoned legacy. The empire's apparent strength depended on circumstances beyond its control. Conditions along its frontiers might change radically. Basil II's policy of annexing Bulgaria and Armenia suited his own time, but would produce real difficulties for his successors. His greatest failure, however, lay elsewhere: he neglected to make adequate provision for his succession, and there would be no settled succession to the Byzantine throne for some seventy years until Alexios I Komnenos was securely in control.

#### POLITICAL INSTABILITY AFTER BASIL II'S REIGN

Basil II never married. The understanding was that the succession would pass to his younger brother Constantine VIII, but he never produced a male heir, only daughters – of whom Zoe was Basil II's favourite. It was clear for many years before his death that succession to the throne would go with the hand of Zoe. Basil considered various matches, but all were rejected, and when he died Zoe was in her early forties, still a spinster and unlikely to bear children. Why Basil II was so negligent about the succession is hard to fathom. It may be that the short-term advantages of leaving the succession in doubt were too tempting. Constantine VIII (1025–8) seemed in no more of a hurry than his brother to marry Zoe off, and it was only on Constantine's deathbed that Zoe was married to Romanos Argyros (1028–34), who then succeeded in the right of his new wife. However, Argyros was already somewhat elderly and unlikely to satisfy Zoe's hopes for children;

increasingly frustrated, Zoe took a young lover, Michael the Paphlagonian, who happened to be the brother of John the Orphanotrophos, one of Basil II's eunuch ministers. When Romanos died in his bath in suspicious circumstances, Michael married Zoe and duly succeeded to the throne. Michael IV (1034–41) was remembered as an effective emperor, but he soon fell sick and his brother John sought to keep the throne within the family by persuading Zoe to adopt one of his nephews, also called Michael, as her son. Michael V came to power in 1041 with no intention of being beholden to his uncle; rather, he wished to rule as an autocrat in the style of Basil II. He drove out John the Orphanotrophos and other members of his family, before packing Zoe off to a convent. This produced a spontaneous uprising on the part of the people of Constantinople, who did not want to be deprived of their 'Mother', as they called Zoe; the emperor was cornered and blinded, and Zoe brought back in triumph to the capital. For a few months in 1042 she ruled jointly with her younger sister Theodora, who had been at the centre of opposition to Michael V's coup. Zoe then married again, this time to Constantine Monomachos, who as Constantine IX (1042–55) became the new emperor. Zoe died around 1050, so Theodora succeeded on Constantine IX Monomachos' death in 1055. Upon Theodora's death in the following year the Macedonian line came to an end, complicating the succession still further.

There is no *prima facie* reason for supposing that a troubled succession would necessarily weaken the fabric of the Byzantine state. After all, the succession was in doubt on many occasions in the tenth century, but this did not prevent Byzantium from going from strength to strength. It might be argued that frequent change of the imperial regime was a positive benefit because it made for a greater flexibility and ability to meet critical situations. The rise to power of Romanos I Lekapenos (920–44) against a background of the threat from the Bulgarian tsar Symeon or the spectacle of Nikephoros II Phokas (963–9) and of John I Tzimiskes (969–76) holding the throne in trust for the young Basil II are cases in point. They gave clear direction to imperial government, as did Basil (see above, pp. 520–2).

Basil II's death, however, was followed by a spate of conspiracies. The uncertainty of the succession provides only a partial answer. The conspiracies had more to do with a rapidly changing elite, and the tensions created found some release in plots against the throne. In the early tenth century the Byzantine elite was a less complicated social group than it was to become. It was divided into a military and a civilian establishment. The former was dominated by the great military families of Anatolia, while the latter could boast a handful of civil service families whose members had held office for generations. The great military families went into decline from the end of the tenth century. The Phokas family, for example, virtually disappears, but others were more fortunate; the Skleroi kept estates in Anatolia,

but transferred their centre of operations to Constantinople and gradually abandoned their military traditions. Basil II relied on other families for his commanders, such as the Diogenes, Dalassenoï and Komnenoi. The fortunes of these families were made under him. The military aristocracy was becoming wider and more diffuse. The same could be said of the civilian elite. Alongside the old civil service families, there were others which had made their fortunes in trade, but had converted their wealth into status through education and the purchase of honours. There were many interests to be satisfied. Conspiracy and revolt might become necessary to satisfy supporters and clients or might simply be a gesture of political credibility.<sup>9</sup>

Thus instability came to be built into the political structure. Some modern historians would like to see this as a struggle between the military and civilian elites. There is some contemporary support for this interpretation, but it was a matter of continuing to apply the political divisions of a previous age, which had largely disappeared. The politics of the eleventh century were instead dominated by families that transcended these divisions. They drew their support from the whole spectrum of political society. They were often old military families that had transferred their centre of operation to Constantinople. It comes as no surprise that Romanos Argyros emerged as the successful claimant for Zoe's hand and the imperial throne. His age apart, he was eminently well qualified. He came from one of the most ancient of the Anatolian military families, but one which had long been resident in Constantinople. Romanos Argyros made a career and a name for himself within the capital, becoming the City prefect. He was also related to many of the great families of the capital, including the Monomachoi. Constantine IX Monomachos came from a very similar background to Romanos Argyros and was an obvious candidate for the hand of Zoe and the imperial office. He had already plotted to seize the throne from Michael IV, who was regarded as an upstart, being one of those newcomers who had recently risen to prominence. One of Michael's brothers had been a trusted agent of Basil II and a sister married into the new wealth of Constantinople, her husband having made a fortune out of shipbuilding. It was their son who succeeded as Michael V: indeed, he was known contemptuously as the 'Caulker' in reference to his father's activities.

The snobbery of the Constantinopolitan crowd told against Michael V. The citizens of Constantinople brought about his downfall and, although their rising may have been spontaneous, it showed how powerful a force they were. Thereafter emperors had to placate Constantinopolitan opinion. This was another factor making for political instability in the eleventh century. In the tenth century internal tensions could be absorbed through a policy of conquest and expansion. This became less easy after Basil's death.

<sup>9</sup> Cheynet (1990), pp. 157–98.

## GOVERNMENT FINANCES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Basil II's immediate successors attempted to pursue his policy of expansion and annexation, but with little success. Large and expensive expeditions were mounted against Sicily, Syria and even Egypt. All there was to show for this costly effort was the annexation of Edessa in 1032 by the military commander George Maniakes. Against this, there was a serious revolt by the Bulgarians in 1040. Although it was suppressed, it suggested that Basil II's conquest was not that securely based. It was a watershed; the period of expansion was over. The empire was beginning to turn in on itself and in these circumstances internal divisions would only be magnified.

Keeping the empire on a war footing may explain why the imperial government was faced with increasing financial difficulties after Basil II's death. Tax revolts were a feature of this phase of Byzantine history.<sup>10</sup> Basil must bear some of the blame; at the end of his life, as an act of charity, he remitted two whole years' taxation and his generosity was more than his brother could afford. The new emperor had to rescind the measure and collected five years' taxation within the space of three years. This caused hardship and sparked off at least one tax revolt. The next emperor Romanos Argyros instituted a laxer and more humane fiscal regime. The opening years of his reign coincided with drought and a plague of locusts in Anatolia, forcing the peasants off their land and towards Constantinople. To get them to return to their native villages Romanos Argyros provided each with a donative of three *nomismata*, the rough equivalent of the tax on a substantial peasant holding. He also abandoned Basil II's practice of forcing the 'powerful' landowners to pay any arrears of taxation. Instead he farmed these out, which hints at financial difficulties. His successor Michael IV seemed equally in need of ready cash: he forced the Bulgarians to pay their taxes in coin, despite Basil II's promise that they would be taxed in kind, and this action sparked off the Bulgarian revolt (see below, p. 670). Michael IV was also accused of tampering with the currency, while his brother John the Orphanotrophos exploited the state's right of monopoly over the corn trade.

Modern numismatists have reluctantly exonerated Michael IV from the charge of debasement. It was left to Constantine IX Monomachos to carry out a controlled debasement of the Byzantine gold coinage. It was done quite openly and deliberately. The fineness of the gold coinage was lowered by stages from twenty-four carats to eighteen. Each stage of the debasement was clearly signposted by the issue of different types of coin. This debasement of the coinage is a feature of the history of eleventh-century

<sup>10</sup> They are attested at Naupaktos, Nikopolis and Antioch. The Bulgarian uprising of 1040 began as a tax revolt.

Byzantium which has attracted a great deal of attention from modern historians, because it seems to provide a key to the economic developments of the time. There are two major interpretations. The first is straightforward: debasement was a solution to a budget deficit and was a way out of the long-standing financial difficulties of the Byzantine state. The other interpretation is more sophisticated; it sees debasement as a reaction to the problems of rapid economic growth which the Byzantine empire was supposed to be experiencing in the early eleventh century.<sup>11</sup> The argument goes that the Byzantine economy was consequently facing a liquidity crisis: not enough coinage was in circulation to meet demand. Given the inelasticity of the supply of precious metals, the only solution was to debase.

The second of these interpretation has its merits, and indeed some Byzantine civil servants did show a surprisingly advanced grasp of economics. However, even if they had an inkling that an inelastic money supply was a barrier to economic growth, they were not likely to consider this sufficient justification for debasing a coinage that had remained more or less unchanged since the days of Constantine the Great. Budgetary difficulties are surely the only explanation for the debasement carried out by Constantine IX Monomachos. The emperor could cite as a precedent the temporary debasement carried out by Nikephoros Phokas in the tenth century. However unpopular at the time, it had eased a period of financial embarrassment.

Even if budgetary difficulties are the explanation, debasement may still have helped to ease a liquidity problem. But was there economic growth in the early eleventh century on a scale sufficient to create a liquidity problem? There are certainly signs of economic growth, but they mostly relate to the Greek lands, where towns were prospering and becoming centres of trade and manufactures. Thebes, for example, became a major producer of silk, which in the tenth century had been a monopoly of the capital. There are indications that coastal trade round the Aegean was prospering and that the population of the region was growing. But this scarcely represents growth of such an order that it would have induced the imperial government to debase the gold coinage in order to increase the circulation of coinage.

In any case, it would be hard to square the financial difficulties that the imperial government faced from the death of Basil II onwards with rapid economic growth. Would the state not have been the chief beneficiary, given that it imposed a value-added tax of 10 per cent on every commercial transaction? This ought to have gone some way towards balancing the budget. Admittedly, the continuing growth of population was not matched by a corresponding increase in the basic tax yield. The agrarian legislation of the tenth century was applied less stringently. As significant was the extension of tax exemptions for the great estates. Blanket immunities were probably

<sup>11</sup> Morrisson (1976).

less important than preferential rates of taxation, such as those enjoyed in the eleventh century by the Athonite monasteries for their estates. This was all part of the creation of a dependent peasantry, which paid taxes and owed labour services to a lord. Ostrogorsky connected this manorialisation of rural society with economic decline. He was certainly wrong, but he was correct to see it as a drain on imperial revenues (see also above, pp. 488–91).

It seems safe to assume that there was economic and demographic growth in the early eleventh century, but scarcely on a scale to create liquidity problems. Debasement was a response to the government's financial problems. Tax exemptions were partly to blame, but these were symptomatic of financial mismanagement on the part of the imperial government. Michael Psellos blamed the government's financial difficulties on the extravagance of Zoe and her consorts. This may have been a little unfair on Zoe. Dabbling in perfumes and alchemy may have been unnecessary, but was unlikely to bankrupt the state. It was at best a reflection of lax government. Zoe was not a great builder, unlike her husbands who expended colossal sums on their building activities. Romanos Argyros erected the monastery of the Peribleptos to serve as his last resting place and a memorial of his reign. Michael IV was a patron of the monastery of Sts Cosmas and Damian at Kosmidion, outside the walls of Constantinople, which he rebuilt on a lavish scale. Constantine IX Monomachos added the church of St George and other buildings to the Mangana complex. Accounts by later travellers provide an impression of the magnificence and scale of these churches, but none of them survives. Only St George of the Mangana has been partially excavated: its dimensions were imposing, with a dome of approximately ten metres in diameter, thus rivalling some of the Justinianic foundations in size.<sup>12</sup> One of Constantine Monomachos' foundations does survive, however: the monastery of Nea Moni on the island of Chios. Its intricate planning and rich mosaics give some idea of the care and money lavished on these imperial foundations. But the costs did not end with construction and Nea Moni, like St George of the Mangana, was generously endowed by the emperor.

There had not been building on this scale in the Byzantine empire since the sixth century. Emperors had mostly been content to restore the public monuments and churches inherited from the fifth and sixth centuries and to add to the Great Palace of the emperors. Basil II's main contribution had been the repair of St Sophia in 989 after it had suffered damage in an earthquake. The emperors of the eleventh century in good aristocratic fashion wanted to leave their mark on the capital through their monuments and used state revenues to this end. Again building even on this grand scale was unlikely by itself to bankrupt the state, but taken in conjunction with an extravagant court life it placed a substantial extra burden on the state's

<sup>12</sup> Mango (1976).

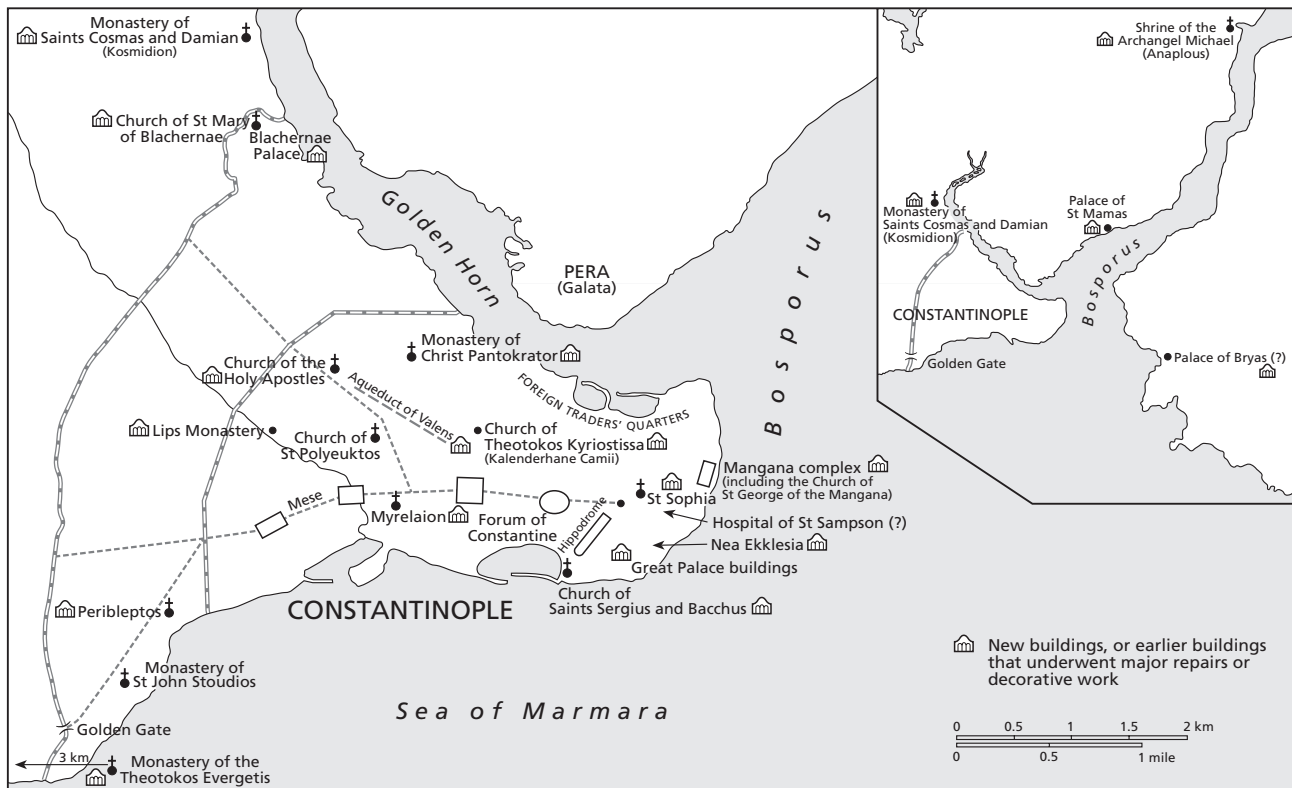


Figure 43a General view of the eleventh-century monastery of Nea Moni on Chios



Figure 43b The mosaics of Nea Moni on Chios: Christ raising the dead





Map 27 Constantinople in the middle Byzantine period: new building-work, major repairs and embellishments

revenues. They were in any case likely to be declining because of Romanos Argyros' decision to abandon Basil II's strict control over the arrears of taxation.

Government expenditure was rising for quite another reason: the civil list was increasing dramatically as more and more honours were granted out. Michael Psellos was of the opinion that the honours system had been one of Byzantium's strengths, but was now being abused. This he singled out as one of the fundamental causes of the decline of the Byzantine state. Byzantium had developed a complicated system of honours with a double hierarchy of office and dignity. Both brought with them pensions and salaries. While sale of office was rare, sale of dignities was an accepted part of the system. If a dignity was purchased, then the holder received a pension at a standard rate. It has been calculated that this brought a return of around 3 per cent, but it was also possible to purchase at an augmented rate which brought a rather higher rate of up to 6 per cent. The state was creating a system of annuities. It almost certainly worked very well while it was properly supervised. The potential cost to the state was also limited by the relatively restricted number of dignities on offer. But this changed rapidly in the eleventh century as new orders of dignities were created to meet a growing demand. It was also the case that they might pass under the control of individuals who could distribute them as they saw fit. They were regarded as an investment which a father might make for his sons. Imperial largesse to monasteries sometimes took the form of a grant in perpetuity of the pensions attached to dignities. It is tempting to connect the debasement of the coinage with the inflation of honours, all the more so because of contemporary criticism of Nikephoros Phokas' earlier debasement of the coinage. One of his purposes was apparently to pay salaries and pensions in debased currency and to collect taxation in the old coinage. The temptation to debase would be all the stronger in the eleventh century as the honours system got out of hand.

However, it is difficult, if not impossible, to establish such a connection on a valid statistical basis. Our evidence is anecdotal. Jean-Claude Cheynet discounts such evidence as unreliable.<sup>13</sup> He contends that the rate of pension for each dignity is a better guide to the costs of the honours system. The very highest dignities were always granted out sparingly. The inflation of honours affected the lesser dignities from *spatharokandidatos* to *vestarchēs*, their pensions ranging from 36 *nomismata* to 1,008 *nomismata* or 14 pounds of gold in weight, which was a considerable sum. But here the argument breaks down; there is simply no way of computing the numbers of office holders. All that remains is the anecdotal evidence. Contemporaries were adamant that by the reign of Nikephoros III Botaneiates (1078–81) the

<sup>13</sup> Cheynet (1983).

honours system had broken down, because the state was unable to meet the cost of the pensions involved. The honours system had bankrupted the state. Alexios I Komnenos' reform of the honours system was equally seen as an essential step towards restoring soundness to the body politic. It has to be admitted, however, that complaints about the failure of the honours system coincide with, rather than antedate, the debasement of the coinage. The two worked together to undermine the fabric of the state: the inflation of honours combined with other items of unnecessary expenditure and with various fiscal measures to cause budgetary difficulties, leading to debasement under Constantine Monomachos. Thereafter the combination of debasement and a galloping inflation of honours ensured that the financial position would continue to deteriorate and well-conceived measures of reform had little chance of success.

#### THE REIGN OF CONSTANTINE IX MONOMACHOS

In the twenty-five years following Basil II's death the Byzantine empire had lost direction and momentum. The policy of military expansionism inherited from Basil II had little to commend it. Keeping the empire on a war footing was expensive. Cutting back on the armed forces was the simplest way of reducing expenditure. The Bulgarian rebellion, followed almost immediately by the 1042 uprising of the citizens of Constantinople against Michael V, was an urgent reminder that a new approach to government was needed. The new emperor, Constantine IX Monomachos, had an agenda: military expansionism seemed out of place at a time when the empire appeared to have secure frontiers, and Monomachos wished to cut back on the military establishment. To carry out his programme of reconstruction he turned to Constantine Leichoudes and the team of clever young men he had assembled about him. These included Michael Psellos, the future Patriarch John Xiphilinos and their teacher John Mauroπους. The thrust of their reforms was to strengthen the civil administration of the empire and to simplify its military organisation.<sup>14</sup> In frontier regions the local levies were stood down and defence was left to professional troops stationed at key points. The armies of the themes continued to exist but largely on paper. Provincial administration passed increasingly from the *stratēgos* to a civilian official known as the judge or the *praitōr*. This had been an *ad hoc* development over the preceding fifty-odd years. Monomachos regularised it by creating a new ministry at Constantinople under the *epi tōn kriseōn*, to which the civilian administrators were now responsible. It completed a process of demilitarising provincial government.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Lefort (1976).

<sup>15</sup> Oikonomides (1976a).

Constantine IX Monomachos' propagandists presented his reforms in the guise of a *renovatio* of the empire. Imperial revivals punctuated Byzantine history. Normally, they centred on a new codification of the law. The Isaurians issued the *Ecloga* (see above, pp. 275–6), the Macedonians the *Basilika* (see above, pp. 301–2). Monomachos judged the *Basilika* to be more than adequate. What was lacking was an effective legal education. This was either picked up informally or was in the hands of the guild of notaries. Monomachos therefore instituted as the centrepiece of his reforms an imperial law school, placing it under the direction of a new official called the *nomophylax* and appointing John Xiphilinos as the first holder of the office. It was opened in 1047 and attached to the Mangana complex. Monomachos also created the post of consul of the philosophers for Michael Psellos. His duties included supervision of the schools of Constantinople. This measure was designed to bring educational establishments in the capital under more effective government control. Education was at the heart of Monomachos' reforms.<sup>16</sup>

However admirable, Monomachos' reform programme was not carried out in full, for it offended too many existing interests. John Xiphilinos found himself under pressure from the legal establishment and preferred to retire to monastic seclusion on Bithynian Olympus. John Mauroπους, appointed bishop of Euchaita in deepest Anatolia, treated this as a form of exile, which indeed it was. At the same time, conditions along Byzantium's borders were changing rapidly. The Pechenegs were dislodged from the Black Sea steppes by the Uzes, nomads from further east. In the winter of 1046–7 the main body of Pechenegs crossed the Danube, seeking refuge on Byzantine soil, somewhat as the Goths had done seven centuries earlier. The settlement of the Pechenegs was equally mishandled. Constantine IX Monomachos was forced to send out a series of expeditions to pacify them. They had little success. The upshot was that the Pechenegs were left in possession of large tracts of the Balkans. Around the same time the Seljuq Turks began to make their presence felt along the eastern frontier. In 1048 they laid siege to Ani, the Armenian capital, which had recently been annexed by the Byzantines. The Turks might have been thwarted on this occasion, but it was a taste of things to come. The tide was also turning against Byzantium in southern Italy, as Norman freebooters harried Byzantine territories from their base at Melfi where they had established themselves in 1041.

The rapidly changing conditions in the empire's frontier provinces meant that Constantine IX Monomachos had to improvise. Experience had taught him that they were danger zones. They had been the launching pad for the two most serious revolts he had to face. The first came early in his reign and was the work of George Maniakes who had been sent as supreme

<sup>16</sup> Wolska-Conus (1976).

military commander to Byzantine Italy by Michael V. He was suspicious of the new regime, if only because his great enemy Romanos Skleros was close to Monomachos. He crossed over to Albania in 1043 and advanced on Thessaloniki down the Egnatian Way. His troops brushed aside the imperial armies sent to oppose him, but in the hour of victory he was mysteriously killed and the revolt fizzled out. The centre of the other revolt was the major military base of the southern Balkans, Adrianople. Its leader was Leo Tornikios, a nephew of the emperor. In the autumn of 1047 he advanced on Constantinople and only the emperor's coolness saved the day. There are good reasons to suppose that underlying this revolt was dissatisfaction on the part of the military families of Adrianople with Monomachos' policies. The emperor was cutting back on military expenditure while recruiting detachments of Pechenegs to serve on the eastern frontier.

Constantine IX Monomachos had to devise some way of neutralising the danger from discontented generals. In southern Italy he turned to a local leader called Argyros, who despite his Greek name was a Lombard. He had seized the city of Bari in 1040 and proclaimed himself 'prince and duke of Italy', but he had opposed Maniakes' rebellion. Monomachos was grateful and brought him and his family to Constantinople. Argyros again proved his loyalty to the emperor in 1047 when he helped defend Constantinople against Leo Tornikios. In 1051 Monomachos sent Argyros to Italy as supreme commander, an appointment which showed that Monomachos was willing to work through the local elites, rather than relying on Byzantine governors. Such a policy seemed to offer two advantages: it should have reconciled local opinion to rule from Constantinople, as well as leading to some relaxation of the grip exerted by the imperial administration. This may have been deliberate. The changing political conditions along the Byzantine frontiers would have alerted the imperial government to one of the disadvantages of the military expansionism espoused by Basil II. Byzantium was left exposed to new forces gathering strength beyond its frontiers. Byzantium had been more secure when protected by independent territories in Bulgaria and Armenia, however irksome they could seem at times. By working through Argyros, Monomachos seems to have been trying to shed some of the responsibilities for frontier defence which now burdened his government at Constantinople. He seems to have been trying to do something of the same kind in the Balkans and Anatolia with his attempts at settling Pechenegs and Armenians. But these efforts were mismanaged and only produced friction with the local population. Disengagement is always one of the most difficult political feats to carry off.

Constantine IX Monomachos' reign was pivotal. It is scarcely any wonder that later contemporaries unanimously blamed him for the disasters suffered by the empire later on in the eleventh century. He had a programme for the restoration of the empire and it failed. The programme was well

conceived, but was not able to survive a combination of internal opposition and changes occurring along the empire's frontiers, and its failure left the empire adrift. Around 1050 Monomachos dismissed Leichoudes, the architect of his reforms. His last years were characterised by an oppressive fiscal regime in a vain effort to restore the empire's finances.

#### THE SCHISM WITH ROME

In modern historical writing the schism of 1054 dominates the end of Monomachos' reign. It had little impact at the time, but it was important for the future, because it underlined the unbridgeable gulf that was developing between Byzantium and the west. The background to the schism was paradoxically an alliance between the Byzantine emperor and Pope Leo IX (1049–54). It was directed against the Normans and had been engineered by Argyros. There was an assumption on the part of the papacy that this alliance would promote its claims to jurisdiction over the church in Byzantine Italy. In 1053 the papal forces made contact with the Normans near Civitate. They were expecting to link up with a Byzantine army under Argyros, but it failed to appear. The Normans trounced the papal army and captured Leo IX. This did not prevent him from despatching a delegation to Constantinople in the autumn of 1053 to renew the Byzantine alliance. It was headed by Humbert, cardinal priest of *Silva Candida*, chief ideologue of the papal reform movement and Leo IX's trusted adviser. By the time the papal legation reached Constantinople the pope was dead, but its members carried on regardless, acting as though their commissions were still valid.

Constantine IX Monomachos gave them much encouragement; the alliance with the papacy remained vital for his Italian policy. Cardinal Humbert followed the instructions he had received from Leo IX. The alliance was to be cemented by a regularisation of relations between the two churches, which had not been in communion for nearly half a century. The discussion revolved around the Latin use of unleavened bread – *azymes* – in the communion service. The patriarch of the day, Michael I Keroularios (1043–58), had earlier condemned it as a Jewish practice and argued that the Byzantine use of leavened bread had the support of the gospels. Leo IX had taken exception to this and wanted the question resolved. Cardinal Humbert tried to carry out his wishes, but it was difficult because Keroularios refused to acknowledge his presence. Humbert treated this as contumacy. On 16 July 1054 he entered St Sophia with the other papal legates and put on the altar a bull of excommunication directed at Michael Keroularios. The patriarch in his turn placed Humbert and the rest of the papal delegation under anathema. It confirmed an already existing state of schism between the two churches.

What stance did Constantine IX Monomachos adopt? From the outset he worked for an accord between the two churches. The papal legates came under his protection. He organised two debates between Humbert and a representative of the orthodox church, designed to clarify all the issues separating the two churches. They were conducted in an irenic fashion. Monomachos was as frustrated as the papal legates by Keroularios' lack of cooperation. This does not mean that he would have encouraged Humbert to excommunicate the patriarch. The legates' hasty departure from the City suggests that Monomachos had not approved their action. Michael Keroularios insisted that the papal legates should be brought back to Constantinople. The emperor demurred, but the patriarch used popular indignation to get his way. The legates were reprimanded, but punishment was reserved for the interpreters and members of Argyros' immediate family, who happened to be resident in the capital. Michael Keroularios blamed the incident on Argyros, who was a personal enemy. He accused him of deliberately misinforming the papacy. By singling out Argyros as the main culprit, Keroularios played down the religious issues. There were still hopes that the differences between the two churches might be resolved, or so it seemed to one of the legates, Frederick of Lorraine, who in 1057 became Pope Stephen IX. He almost immediately despatched a delegation to Constantinople to repair the damage, but it never reached its destination because he died soon after it set out. Other counsels prevailed at Rome. In 1059 the new pope Nicholas II (1058–61) turned to the Normans for support. By this time the events of 1054 had forced a reassessment of papal interests. These were now seen to be better served by an alliance with the Normans rather than with the Byzantines. It was a momentous change which profoundly affected western relations with Byzantium.

#### THE PATRIARCH AND THE PHILOSOPHER: ELEVENTH-CENTURY CULTURAL VITALITY

At Byzantium the events of 1054 gave Patriarch Michael I Keroularios a prominence which he had neither enjoyed nor sought before. His understanding with the people of Constantinople gave him immense power. He was on bad terms with Empress Theodora, openly objecting to a woman ruling the empire. On her deathbed she nominated Michael Stratiotikos to succeed her, as Michael VI (1056–7). He came from the distinguished civil service family of Bringas. He was old and was intended as a figure-head for a faction among the bureaucracy which had come to power with Theodora. The new government dealt generously with potential supporters in the capital, but pleaded poverty when the generals Isaac Komnenos and Katakalon Kekaumenos came seeking promotion and donatives. They were sent packing to their estates in Anatolia. They raised the standard of

rebellion and defeated the imperial forces sent against them in a particularly bloody encounter not far from the city of Nicaea. The rebels advanced on Constantinople. Within the capital there was a struggle for power between various factions. Michael VI Stratiotikos hoped to keep the throne by using the good offices of Constantine Leichoudes and Michael Psellos, who had been absent from the political scene and had not crossed the generals. The emperor sent them to the rebels' camp to offer Isaac Komnenos the rank of caesar and eventual succession to the throne. But Michael Keroularios had already taken things into his own hands by having Isaac Komnenos proclaimed emperor in St Sophia. Michael VI backed down; he was not willing to turn Constantinople into a bloodbath by opposing the entry of Komnenos' troops. Isaac I Komnenos (1057–9) owed the throne to Michael Keroularios. The patriarch's reward was the right to appoint to the two most senior posts of the patriarchal administration: those of the *oikonomos* and the *skeuophylax*, appointments which in the past had been in the imperial gift. It marked an important stage in the emancipation of the patriarchal administration from imperial control.

Isaac I Komnenos did not wish to be beholden to the patriarch. He had been impressed by the way Michael Psellos had conducted negotiations, even if they lacked concrete result. Psellos struck him as a man he could trust. Isaac needed an experienced minister to supervise his plans for financial retrenchment. Arrears of taxation were chased up; pensions paid to officials were reduced; grants of property made from the imperial demesne were revoked; and there were restrictions on grants to monasteries in line with the anti-monastic legislation of Nikephoros Phokas. Isaac's intentions were made plain by the iconography of his coinage. It showed the emperor holding an unsheathed sword (fig. 44). He had come to restore the military might of the empire. The essential first step was to impose order on the state's finances. In theory, Michael Psellos approved, but he thought that Isaac acted too abruptly, alienating too many vested interests by his harshness.

Isaac I Komnenos' conduct aroused Patriarch Michael Keroularios' opposition, which Isaac took as a challenge to his imperial authority. Michael Psellos accused the patriarch of 'daring to usurp imperial authority'.<sup>17</sup> The clash of Michael Keroularios and Isaac Komnenos was a *cause célèbre* of the eleventh century, raising real constitutional issues. Keroularios assumed the role of moral arbiter, entitled to discipline emperors if they failed to protect orthodoxy or to decide the succession when this was in doubt. He had popular support which he exploited; but this laid Keroularios open to the charge that he was flirting with democracy. This accusation reflected the uncertainties created by the end of the Macedonian line and for the time being of dynastic succession, provoking a debate on the

<sup>17</sup> Michael Psellos, *Orationes forenses*, ed. Dennis, p. 61.





Figure 44 *Nomisma* (*histamenon*) of Isaac I Komnenos, showing him standing, brandishing his sword (reverse); Christ is enthroned on the obverse

constitutional niceties of selecting an emperor. Michael Psellos looked back to the Augustan settlement for guidance. He recognised that imperial authority rested on three factors: the people, the senate and the army. He objected to Michael VI's accession on the grounds that he only obtained the consent of the people and the senate, but not that of the army. His charge against Michael Keroularios was that he was using the voice of the people to transfer power from one emperor to another. The constitutional role of the people of Constantinople – the New Rome – was never very clear. Their acclamation of a new emperor was one – some would claim, in accordance with Roman practice, the most important – of the constitutive acts in the making of an emperor. The people might on occasion rise up against an emperor, as happened with Michael V. This could be construed as a right to remove tyrants. Another constitutive act was the coronation, which in times of great political confusion gave the patriarch considerable leverage. Keroularios exploited the constitutional difficulties produced by the end of the Macedonian dynasty, seeking to turn the patriarch into the arbiter of the constitution.<sup>18</sup> This was seen by Psellos as a threat to imperial authority. Under his prompting Isaac I Komnenos exiled Keroularios from

<sup>18</sup> On the ambivalence and diversity of inauguration rituals and on Keroularios' ambitions, see Dagron (2003), pp. 54–83, 235–8.

Constantinople. Psellos was put in charge of the prosecution, but his speech against the patriarch was never delivered. Keroularios died on 21 January 1059, before he could be brought to trial.

Michael Psellos' evident dislike of the patriarch was something more than a clash of personalities. The two men stood for very different ways of life. Psellos accused the patriarch of being an exponent of the mysticism which was then fashionable in some Constantinopolitan circles. It centred on the cult of Symeon the New Theologian, who died in March 1022. The cult was promoted by Niketas Stethatos, a future abbot of the monastery of St John Stoudios, and Keroularios supported his campaign for Symeon's canonisation. His teachings provided some of the inspiration behind the monastic revival, now associated with the monastery of the Theotokos Evergetis, which was gathering strength at Constantinople.<sup>19</sup>

Psellos spelt out the dangers of mysticism. It exalted ignorance and denied human reason. It was divorced from everyday life. Psellos, for his part, gloried in his own humanity: 'I am an earthly being', he told the patriarch, 'made of flesh and blood, so that my illnesses seem to me to be illnesses, blows blows, joy joy.'<sup>20</sup> Psellos came close to admitting that he believed that 'man was the measure of all things'. He certainly emphasised the primacy of human experience. He saw no contradiction between Christianity and life in society; had not Christ often frequented the market places and much less frequently the mountains? Psellos was preaching a Christian humanism. Society was held together by the bonds of a Christian faith, friendship and reason. It possessed its own logic and justification. However, it was shaped and guided by the 'philosopher', and Psellos set his authority as 'philosopher' on the same level as that of the patriarch. If he did not challenge imperial authority quite so directly, his *Chronographia* dwells on the human frailties of individual emperors. Its message is that without the wisdom of a 'philosopher' to guide him an emperor was incapable of living up to the responsibilities of his office.<sup>21</sup> Niketas Stethatos was less circumspect in his promotion of the mystic. He exalted the primacy of the mystic over 'emperor, patriarch, bishop or priest'.<sup>22</sup>

The emphasis on the role of the mystic and the 'philosopher' devalued traditional authority at Byzantium. They had access to 'knowledge' that was of immediate benefit to a Christian society. Mystical experience opened up direct access to the Godhead. Symeon the New Theologian saw this as a guarantee that Christ's ministry was ever present and not set in some distant past. Psellos had the harder task of explaining the relevance of classical learning in a Christian society. He was not simply content with

<sup>19</sup> On this monastery, see Mullett and Kirby (eds.) (1994); Mullett and Kirby (eds.) (1997).

<sup>20</sup> *MB*, V, p. 232.

<sup>21</sup> On the difficulty of unpicking the strands of Psellos' themes and practical objectives in the *Chronographia*, see Kaldellis (1999).

<sup>22</sup> *Life of Symeon the New Theologian*, ed. and French tr. Hausherr, p. lxxvi (cited in introduction).



Figure 45 A Byzantine view of the world: the notion that the world was encircled by the ocean, with antipodes above and below, derived from classical antiquity, but was acceptable to the Byzantines; the Theodore Psalter was copied at the Stoudios Monastery in Constantinople in 1066

the traditional justification that it was an educational tool, a means of cultivating human reason. Learning made possible an understanding of the natural world, which offered clues to God's existence and purpose. Psellos sought to build on the classical heritage and bring it up to date. His letters and rhetorical works are not redolent of the drab encyclopaedism of the previous century, but are full of emotion and concrete detail. Unlike earlier Byzantine histories, his *Chronographia* is not dominated by the workings of Divine Providence, but emphasises instead the human element as a decisive historical factor. Psellos did not see any contradiction between Christianity and the classical tradition; to his way of thinking the former fulfilled the latter. He liked to think of himself as in the tradition of the Cappadocian fathers who used their profound knowledge of Greek philosophy to deepen understanding of their Christian faith. Psellos never grappled with theology in any systematic way. This task was left to his pupil John Italos, who reopened many of the basic questions of Christian dogma.

The work of John Italos was just one more sign of the cultural vitality of the eleventh century. The decline of imperial prestige raised basic questions about the ordering of a Christian society. The rivalry of mystic and humanist will sometimes have sharpened the edge of debate, but not all agreed with Michael Psellos that they were diametrically opposed. Most saw their approaches as complementary.<sup>23</sup> They gave a new breadth to Byzantine culture. Equally, the claims of mystic and humanist were subversive of traditional authority at Byzantium. Some of the strongest social ties were those that formed around them among their followers. In this way, they gave a Christian society a degree of independence of the

<sup>23</sup> Hussey (1960).

hierarchical authority exercised by emperor and patriarch. The exchanges between Psellos and Keroularios show how traditional assumptions about the ordering of Byzantine life were being reassessed in the mid-eleventh century. Cultural flux mirrored political uncertainties.

#### CONSTANTINE X, ROMANOS IV AND THE TURKISH CHALLENGE

The attack on Patriarch Michael I Keroularios cost Isaac I Komnenos a good deal of support. Michael Psellos saw which way the wind was blowing. He persuaded the emperor to resign at a time when a bout of illness had left him in a state of depression. The new emperor was Constantine X Doukas (1059–67) who happened to be married to a niece of the patriarch. It was an admission among other things that the reforms initiated by Isaac Komnenos and supervised by Michael Psellos were not working. Constantine X immediately repealed them and restored honours to those who had been deprived of them. Setting out his programme in a speech delivered before the guilds of Constantinople, Constantine X emphasised that truth and justice, and not the sword, were to be the keynotes of his reign. It was a return to the policies that had been tried at the beginning of Constantine IX Monomachos' reign. Constantine X was sensible enough to dispense with Michael Psellos' political services. Less wise was his decision to appoint Psellos tutor to his son and heir Michael Doukas. Contemporaries were unanimous that this rendered the latter unfit to rule.

Constantine X had to all appearances a remarkably successful reign. He was well fitted to be emperor, having good connections with both the military families of Anatolia and the great families of Constantinople. He also anticipated the future in the way he associated his family in government. He relied heavily on the support of his brother John, whom he raised to the rank of caesar. He was later criticised for his overgenerous distribution of honours and pensions to the people of Constantinople and for the way he allowed the military establishment to run down. There was increasing pressure on the frontiers of the empire. The Normans made significant advances in the south of Italy in the wake of their alliance with the papacy in 1059, but Constantine X reacted energetically, despatching a number of expeditions to secure the main Byzantine bases along the Adriatic coast. He himself led the army that mopped up an Uze invasion of the Balkans. Less was done on the eastern frontier. The defences of Melitene were rebuilt in 1063, but Ani – the Armenian capital – was lost to the Seljuqs the next year. Constantine will not have heard of the sack of Cappadocian Caesarea and the desecration of the cathedral of St Basil which occurred around the time of his death in May 1067. Only an emperor as securely in control as Constantine was could adopt such a strategy in the east: a war of attrition. He aimed to hold the key positions and allow the eastern

provinces to absorb Turkish pressure. There was increasing agitation for a more aggressive policy (see below, pp. 699, 701).

In the normal course of events Constantine X would have been succeeded by his son Michael, who was aged about sixteen, but he was already seen as something of a liability. Constantine therefore left the regency to his empress Eudocia Makrembolitissa, but she was forced to swear on oath never again to marry.<sup>24</sup> She also undertook to rule with the aid of the caesar John Doukas, until Michael Doukas was capable of carrying out the duties of an emperor. In good dynastic fashion Constantine X Doukas was trying to safeguard the succession for his family. The oath was administered by Patriarch John Xiphilinos (1064–75), who was soon persuaded that the common interest required that Eudocia should be released from her oath. This allowed her to marry Romanos Diogenes, the head of a powerful Anatolian family. He came to the throne on the understanding that he would respect the eventual succession of Michael Doukas.

The chances of this happening soon became remote as Eudocia bore her new husband two sons in quick succession. Romanos IV (1068–71) needed a decisive victory in order to establish himself and his line in power. His efforts to search out and destroy the Turkish bands of marauders left him open to ridicule. The Turks were far too nimble for the lumbering and badly trained troops at his disposal. Romanos changed his strategy. Instead of waiting for the Turks to invade the Byzantine provinces, he decided to engage them at their major point of entry into Byzantine territory. This was the bottleneck to the north of Lake Van, which was commanded by the fortress of Manzikert. In the summer of 1071 Romanos led all the troops he could muster to Lake Van and recovered possession of Manzikert and other strategic points which had been lost to the Turks. The emperor appears not to have known that the Seljuq sultan Alp Arslan (1063–73) was also operating in the area. Once he learned of the sultan's presence he seized on the opportunity to engage him in battle. The combat lasted two days, the Byzantines fighting with surprising tenacity and discipline. They had the better of the battle until towards evening on the second day, when a rumour started to spread that Romanos had fallen. This was the work of Andronikos Doukas, a son of the caesar John Doukas. His motives were political. If Romanos emerged from the battle with credit, the Doukas cause was doomed. Andronikos Doukas was in command of the rearguard and in a position to do maximum damage. He abandoned the field leaving Romanos and his elite troops unprotected. They had fought bravely, but they were now quickly surrounded by the Turks and the emperor was captured.

<sup>24</sup> Oikonomides (1963).

In military terms Manzikert was not a disaster; the Byzantine casualties were relatively slight.<sup>25</sup> It should only have confirmed Turkish domination of the Armenian highlands, not that almost the whole of Anatolia would be overrun by the Turks within ten years. Early Turkish settlement was concentrated a thousand miles west of Manzikert along the northern and western rims of the Anatolian plateau. Why should a defeat at the extreme limit of Byzantium's eastern frontiers have opened up Anatolia to Turkish settlement? Part of the answer is weight of numbers. The Turks were a people on the move seeking new pastures. But their penetration of the Byzantine empire was facilitated by the civil wars sparked off by the defeat at Manzikert. Partisans of the Doukas cause at Constantinople, including Michael Psellos, seized control of the government for Michael VII Doukas (1071–78). Romanos IV had not, however, been killed in the battle, as rumour suggested. He was soon released by the sultan and rallied his supporters to his base in Amaseia. Defeated by an army despatched from Constantinople, Romanos retreated to Antioch. The next year 1072 he was again defeated by an army sent out from the capital, commanded by Andronikos Doukas and consisting largely of Frankish mercenaries. Romanos was captured and taken back under safe-conduct. As they were approaching Constantinople the order came that he was to be blinded. This was done so savagely that he died a few weeks later on 4 August 1072. The year of civil war had given the Turks an opportunity to exploit their victory, but it did not end there.

Russell Balliol, a Norman mercenary in Byzantine service, seized the main chance. He had taken part in the opening stages of the Norman conquest of Sicily, and recognised a similar opportunity in the confusion produced by the aftermath of Manzikert. Balliol made Amaseia his centre of operations and soon brought most of the old theme of Armeniakoi under his control. Local people welcomed his presence because he offered some protection from the marauding Turks. The government at Constantinople took the threat from Russell Balliol far more seriously than that presented by the Turks. Its apprehension increased when Balliol captured the caesar John Doukas, who had been sent with an army against him; Balliol proclaimed Doukas emperor and advanced on Constantinople. The Doukas government brought in Turks as the only means of combating Balliol and in the short term it worked. Balliol was defeated, but managed to get back to Amaseia, where he retained his independence. In retrospect, the use of Turks was a miscalculation on the part of the Byzantine government, but at the time the Turks seemed no kind of threat to Constantinople. Cocooned in the capital, Michael VII and his advisers may well have felt that the Turks could be treated like the Pechenegs in the Balkans: given lands and

<sup>25</sup> Cheynet (1980); *EI*, VI, s.v. Malazgird [Manzikert], pp. 243–4 (C. Hillenbrand); below, pp. 702–3. On eleventh-century strategy, see also Haldon (2003b).

a degree of tribal autonomy and in due course absorbed within Byzantine government and society.

Eventually the young Alexios Komnenos was sent to deal with Russell Balliol. It was his first major commission. With the help of a local Turkish chieftain he managed to apprehend the Norman and take him back to Constantinople. He acquitted himself with great skill and assurance, but the result was that much of northern Anatolia fell under Turkish domination. Alexios Komnenos had the greatest difficulty in extricating himself and his prisoner from Amaseia because the whole country was alive with Turks. He made a detour to Kastamonu where he expected a friendly reception, since it was the centre of his family's estates. He found instead his grandfather's palace occupied by Turks and he had to hurry on. This incident reveals how swiftly Byzantine control in the region collapsed. It was largely because of a lack of local leadership.

The story was much the same in other parts of Anatolia. In 1077 Nikephoros Botaneiates – a noted general – abandoned his estates in western Asia Minor and marched on Constantinople with his retinue of 300 men. He left the area unprotected. Still worse, he engaged the services of a Turkish chieftain named Suleiman ibn Qutlumush (1081–6). Botaneiates seems to have been unaware that he was no ordinary warband leader, but a capable and ambitious scion of the ruling Seljuq dynasty. It was a colossal miscalculation on Botaneiates' part, though he might not otherwise have overthrown Michael VII Doukas to become Emperor Nikephoros III (1078–81). Botaneiates in turn would have to face a challenge which compounded his own folly. Nikephoros Melissenos raised the standard of revolt on the island of Kos and he too turned to the Turks for support. The price was the surrender of cities along the western coast of Asia Minor, such as Smyrna. A succession of revolts and civil wars had drawn the Turks westward to the shores of the Aegean and handed them most of the great cities of Asia Minor. Thus was the fate of Byzantine Anatolia sealed. The Turks established themselves in force on the northern and western edges of the Anatolian plateau and proved impossible to dislodge: Suleiman's horde roamed across Bithynia and, after occupying Nicaea and Nikomedeia, he proclaimed himself sultan (see below, p. 708). Behind this shield the much slower process of Byzantine Anatolia's transformation into Turkey could go on more or less unhindered. In retrospect, the loss of Anatolia to the Turks seems to have been folly on a grand scale.

#### ALEXIOS I KOMNENOS' MILITARY DEFEATS AND POLITICAL SKILLS

Emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates was an old hero, but incapable of mastering circumstances that were spinning out of control. As if the loss

of Anatolia was not bad enough, Robert Guiscard, the Norman leader, was massing his forces in southern Italy for an invasion. The commander of Byzantium's western armies was now Alexios Komnenos, but his abilities, ambition and family connections marked him out as a threat to the regime in Constantinople. The young commander found himself in an impossible position. He struck in the spring of 1081. On 1 April 1081 Alexios with the help of his brother Isaac and the support of the caesar John Doukas seized Constantinople and overthrew the old emperor.

In the meantime Robert Guiscard and his son Bohemond had crossed to Albania and laid siege to Dyrrachium at the head of the Egnatian Way. Guiscard justified his actions by proclaiming that he was coming to restore to the throne of Constantinople the rightful house of Doukas. These dynastic pretensions made him all the more dangerous at a time when the new emperor's hold on power was still shaky. Alexios I Komnenos assembled all available forces and made for Dyrrachium, only to suffer a shattering defeat. His troops were no match for the Normans. In military terms it was a far more serious defeat than Manzikert. While one Norman army advanced down the Egnatian Way to within striking distance of Thessaloniki, another under Bohemond headed south into Greece. The key position was Larissa in Thessaly. If it fell to the Normans, then the rich provinces of Hellas and the Peloponnese were lost. With a scratch force of Turkish archers Alexios marched in 1083 to the relief of Larissa. The emperor was careful not to engage the Normans in open battle, relying instead on skirmishing tactics. He was able to raise the siege of Larissa and forced the Normans to evacuate Thessaly. The Norman threat only ended with the death of Robert Guiscard in 1085, which prompted a succession crisis in southern Italy and the withdrawal of the Normans from their bases in Albania and the Ionian islands.

More by luck than judgement Alexios I emerged from the first test of his reign with his reputation enhanced. His next task was to restore the Danubian frontier. The key this time was the fortress city of Dristra. This was under the control of the Pechenegs, who in 1086 caught Alexios by surprise. Yet another Byzantine army was lost and, once again, Alexios was lucky to escape. The Pechenegs pushed south towards Constantinople. The danger was even more serious because they allied with Tzachas, a Turkish amir who had turned Smyrna into a pirate base. By the winter of 1090–1 Alexios controlled little more than Constantinople itself, with no army to speak of. The force that he led out against the Pechenegs consisted very largely of the retainers of his relatives and supporters. He headed for the port of Ainos at the mouth of the Maritsa, in the hope of preventing the Pechenegs from linking up with their Turkish ally. The situation was further complicated by the appearance of another nomadic people – the Cumans – who had crossed over the Danube into the Balkans.



Their original intention was to cooperate with the Pechenegs, but Alexios succeeded in winning them over to the Byzantine side. Thanks largely to their help, Alexios crushed the Pechenegs at the battle of Lebounion in Thrace. The Pechenegs ceased to count. The Cumans were still a potential threat to Byzantine control of the Balkans, but in 1094 Alexios defeated them outside the walls of Anchialos on the Black Sea. At long last, Alexios was in full control of the Danubian frontier.

Alexios displayed great tenacity in the face of a series of military defeats. But this cannot disguise the fact that they were often of his own making. It was largely his own foolhardiness which had jeopardised Byzantine control of the Balkans. Without the support of his family it is doubtful whether he could have survived his early years as emperor, so patchy was his military record. Alexios had, however, wisely entrusted the running of the government to his mother Anna Dalassena. While he was campaigning, Anna kept control of Constantinople and managed to meet his military requirements. This necessitated a harsh administrative regime.

Alexios' survival also depended on the support of the great families. He came to power as the leader of an aristocratic faction and his overthrow would almost certainly have meant their downfall. The Komnenoi were linked by ties of blood and marriage to all the major aristocratic families. Alexios turned this into a principle of government, accomplishing this very largely through a radical reform of the honours system. His daughter Anna Komnena perceptively singles this out as a major achievement.<sup>26</sup> In the past the honours system had been hierarchical rather than dynastic; membership of the imperial family did not bring rank at court as of right. The inflation of honours over the eleventh century resulted in a collapse of the old honours system. Alexios rebuilt it by creating a series of new ranks that were reserved for members of his family. The imperial epithet *sebastos* was now accorded to the imperial family in its widest sense. The *sebastoi* became a distinct hierarchy with their own gradations. At the top came the rank of *sebastokratōr* which was a conflation of *sebastos* and *autokratōr*. This Alexios created for his elder brother Isaac who shared the burdens of the imperial office. The rank of *prōtosebastos* went to one of the emperor's brothers-in-law. It was normally combined with the position of *prōtovesiarios*. This too marked a profound change in the texture of government. In the past the *prōtovesiarios* had almost always been a eunuch and one of the chief officers of the imperial household. Alexios did away with eunuchs and created an imperial household staffed very largely by members of his family, while the more menial positions went to retainers of the house of Komnenos. The imperial household had always been the instrument for the exercise of

<sup>26</sup> *AL.*, III.4.3, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, p. 96; ed. and French tr. Leib, I, pp. 114–15; tr. Sewter, p. 112.

direct imperial authority. Its identification with Komnenian family interest gave it a different quality.

In the past, office and rank brought lucrative salaries. One of the attractions of reforming the honours system was that it provided a way of abolishing these profits of office. Alexios found other ways of rewarding members of his family, granting them administrative and fiscal rights over specific areas. This was the basis of grants that were later known as *pronoiai*. In the past similar grants had been made out of the imperial demesne, but Alexios extended this principle to state lands. In a sense, he was parcelling out the empire among his family and creating a series of appanages. He rebuilt imperial government as an aristocratic connection; family business might be a more accurate description. It was a radical step which would later create tensions, because the theory of imperial autocracy could not easily accommodate the transformation that occurred in practice. But it provided Alexios with the strengths necessary to hold on to power during his difficult early years.

#### ALEXIOS' PIETY AND PRAGMATISM

Many great families were not included in the Komnenian circle and it was from these that the main opposition to Alexios' regime came. The senatorial families which had run the administration under the Doukai had most to lose. The underlying current of hostility that existed between them and the Komnenoi surfaced during Alexios' seizure of Constantinople. We are told that his supporters deliberately set upon any senators they came across in the streets. Patriarch Kosmas I (1075–81) forced Alexios and members of his family to do public penance for the violence that accompanied their seizure of power. It was one more demonstration of the patriarch's moral authority, which was such a powerful factor in the politics of eleventh-century Byzantium. It was a deliberate humiliation of the imperial family. Alexios' reaction showed his mettle: he procured the dismissal of the patriarch and replaced him by Eustratios Garidas (1081–4), a monk cultivated by his mother. It revealed how ruthless he could be, but it earned him the hostility of a powerful section of the clergy led by Leo, bishop of Chalcedon. Leo objected to the way that Alexios had seized church treasures in order to pay for his first campaign against the Normans, a measure for which there were in fact good precedents. This was, in other words, chosen as a suitable issue through which to attack the emperor. Patriarch Eustratios was not strong enough to defend either himself or the emperor and was replaced in 1084 by Nicholas the Grammarian. Leo of Chalcedon switched the attack to the new patriarch, but Alexios I Komnenos was now sufficiently sure of himself to have Leo exiled.



Figure 46 Alexios I Komnenos (shown far right) receiving as if from the church fathers (shown above) the *Panoplia dogmatike*, a theological treatise condemning

The emperor's new confidence owed much to the successful outcome of the trial of John Italos on a charge of heresy. Italos had been a leading figure at the court of Michael VII Doukas, who entrusted him with negotiations with Robert Guiscard. He was also a teacher of note. He had succeeded Michael Psellos as consul of the philosophers and took over his responsibilities for the supervision of education in the capital. Unlike Psellos his bias was towards Aristotle rather than Plato. His application of philosophical method to theological questions earned him an enthusiastic following but also laid him open, like Psellos before him, to charges of heresy. Michael VII encouraged him to submit a profession of faith to Patriarch Kosmas as a way of exonerating himself. The patriarch demurred; and there the matter rested.

The case was reopened by the Komnenian regime in the winter of 1081–2, when its stock at Constantinople was very low following Alexios' defeat



all heresies past and present, which Alexios had commissioned from the monk Euthymios Zigabenos

at the hands of the Normans. Italos numbered among his former pupils members of prominent Constantinopolitan families who were seen by the Komnenoi as potential centres of opposition to their rule. If successful, an attack on Italos would help to discredit them. After a preliminary hearing before the emperor Italos was passed over to the patriarch, so that his case could come before the patriarchal synod. It duly convened in the church of St Sophia. There was a good chance that Italos would be acquitted, because feeling among the bishops was beginning to turn against the Komnenoi, but before this could happen a mob broke into St Sophia and hunted Italos down. He escaped by hiding on the roof of the Great Church. The patriarch was out of his depth and handed matters back to the emperor, who had Italos condemned as a heretic. On the feast of orthodoxy, which in 1082 fell on 13 March, Italos publicly abjured his errors.

The trial of John Italos was a significant episode. It allowed Alexios I Komnenos to establish an ascendancy over the orthodox church. There were three distinct strands to this process. The first was his use of the mob. The Constantinopolitan mob had proved itself over the eleventh century to be a significant political factor, but had normally been mobilised in support of the church. Now Alexios was able to win it over to his side and deploy it against the church. How and why he managed this has to remain a matter of speculation. The most likely explanation is that the mob responded to Alexios' pose as the guardian of orthodoxy. This receives some support from the timing of Italos' condemnation to coincide with the Feast of orthodoxy, which was a celebration of the victory over iconoclasm in 843 and the occasion on which the *Synodikon of orthodoxy* was read out (see above, p. 290). This statement of faith condemning heresy in general and iconoclasm in particular had remained virtually unchanged from 843 down to the eleventh century. It was Alexios who hit upon the device of bringing it up to date by adding the condemnation of John Italos and, as his reign progressed, that of others condemned for heresy. It was a concrete expression of the emperor's role as the guardian of orthodoxy.

Alexios was not content with the condemnation of Italos alone. He also pursued his pupils: they were forbidden to teach and remained under the shadow of their master's condemnation for heresy. This had two consequences. The first was that it discredited members of families potentially opposed to the Komnenoi. The second, paradoxically, was a rapprochement with the clergy of the patriarchal church. Among Italos' most prominent pupils were a number of deacons of St Sophia. Induced to disown their master, they were not only reconciled with the church but also permitted to continue teaching. One was Eustratios, the future bishop of Nicaea, who was soon to become Alexios' most trusted religious adviser. An understanding with the patriarchal clergy was useful to the emperor because at synod they constituted a counterweight to the episcopal presence. Alexios acted to guarantee the privileges of the patriarchal clergy. He also issued a chrysobull defining the privileges and role of the *chartophylax* of St Sophia. It upheld the precedence of the *chartophylax* over bishops, on the grounds that he was the patriarch's deputy. In practice, the holder of the office came to oversee the patriarchal administration. This was much to the advantage of the emperor because he still controlled appointments to this office.

Alexios' measures went a long way towards neutralising the independence of action which the eleventh-century patriarchs had displayed. They had, for instance, taken the initiative over marriage legislation and litigation, and this produced differences between canon and civil law. Alexios intervened to re-establish imperial control of this important area of law. He re-enacted the *novella* of Leo VI over the age of consent for betrothal and marriage

with its important rider that the emperor could use his powers of discretion to ignore the stipulations of the *novella*. Having regained the initiative over legislation, he then conceded that marriage litigation should in normal circumstances go before the ecclesiastical courts.

Alexios' church settlement is among his greatest – and most neglected – achievements. It enabled him to rebuild the moral and spiritual foundations of imperial authority, which had been undermined in the course of the eleventh century. He recovered control over the administration of the patriarchal church and regained the initiative in matters of legislation. He was the guarantor of the privileges or liberties of the church. He assumed the role of *epistēmōnarkhēs* or regulator of the church, even if this title did not enter official usage until the mid-twelfth century.

Above all, beginning with the trial of John Italos, he used heresy as a way of establishing his credentials as the guardian of orthodoxy. Under Alexios the suppression of heresy became an imperial preserve and a series of heresy trials contributed to the image Alexios was endeavouring to project, but there were political undercurrents. They were a means of discrediting potential opponents. The most spectacular heresy trial was that of Basil the Bogomil and his followers. The date can only be fixed approximately to c. 1100. The Bogomil heresy originated in Bulgaria and was a form of dualism. It is impossible to establish any clear connection between the Bulgarian and Byzantine phases of Bogomilism. It is possible that they arose quite separately and spontaneously and that a connection was only perceived in retrospect. Byzantine Bogomilism had its roots in lay piety. It was transformed by Basil the Bogomil's missionary zeal. He organised his followers around his twelve disciples and was assumed to be aiming at converting the world. It has also been suggested that he was responsible for providing Bogomilism with its theological justification; his dualist teaching transformed unease with the material world into a system of belief. Like other holy men Basil could count some distinguished figures among his followers. He had entrée to the highest circles. There is even a suspicion that Anna Dalassena was a supporter. This would explain the comic scene so graphically sketched by Anna Komnena, which otherwise beggars belief. Alexios Komnenos and his brother Isaac interviewed Basil the Bogomil and pretended to be sympathetic to his teachings. By this means they were able to induce Basil to set out his Bogomil beliefs in full. Behind a screen a secretary was taking down his words, which were then used against him.<sup>27</sup> What distinguishes Basil from other heretics is that he also possessed a large popular following, which meant that he was doubly dangerous.

<sup>27</sup> *Al.*, XV.8.3–6, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I; pp. 486–8; ed. and French tr. Leib, III, p. 219–21; tr. Sewter, pp. 497–9.

Though this was not necessarily Alexios' intention, one of the consequences of Basil's condemnation was to strengthen imperial authority on the streets of Constantinople. This is apparent from the edict issued in 1107 in the aftermath of the Bogomil trials. Alexios' purpose was to create an order of preachers attached to St Sophia who would tackle the problem of heresy on the streets of the capital and act as the moral policemen of the different neighbourhoods. His edict shows how effective his control over the church had become. The creation of an order of preachers was originally the work of Patriarch Nicholas the Grammarian (1084–1111). It was now taken over by the emperor, who also took responsibility for reorganising the patriarchal clergy.

Nicholas the Grammarian accepted imperial ascendancy. He understood that the church benefited from the emperor's benevolent supervision. He also recognised the emperor's piety. This was best seen in Alexios' patronage of monks and monasteries. This Nicholas the Grammarian would have appreciated; the founder of a Constantinopolitan monastery, he was also famed for his self-denial. Alexios was the heir of his mother's careful cultivation of monks and holy men, and their support had been useful during his difficult early years as emperor. He and members of his family supported the work of monastic figures, such as Christodoulos of Patmos, Meletios and Cyril Phileotes in the provinces. They also founded and refounded monasteries in the capital. Constantinople had been the scene of a strong current of monastic revival from the middle of the eleventh century, associated with the monastery of the Theotokos Evergetis. Its *typikon* or rule provided a guide to a series of Komnenian foundations.<sup>28</sup> Monastic order also provided the inspiration for the reform of imperial court life begun by Anna Dalassena and continued by Alexios' empress Irene Doukaina. Anna Komnena noted that under their guidance 'the palace assumed the appearance of a monastery'.<sup>29</sup> Alexios and his family became exemplars of a piety that drew its inspiration from the monastic revival that gathered strength at Constantinople from the mid-eleventh century. This went a long way towards reconciling the church to the Komnenian ascendancy and gave the new dynasty a moral standing which the emperors of the eleventh century had lacked.

The monastic revival continued, but under Komnenian auspices. This was typical of Alexios' church settlement. His main purpose was to assert imperial control, harnessing new forces and ideas that surfaced in the eleventh century and putting them at the disposal of the imperial dynasty. Alexios' patronage of monastic leaders does not mean that he was therefore

<sup>28</sup> *Theotokos Evergetis*, ed. and French tr. Gautier, pp. 14–94; tr. Jordan, pp. 472–500.

<sup>29</sup> *AL*, III.8.2, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, p. 105; ed. and French tr. Leib, I, p. 125; tr. Sewter, p. 121.

hostile to humanism. If he destroyed John Italos, he rehabilitated his pupil Eustratios of Nicaea, who continued his master's work on Aristotle. The Komnenoi promoted humanist culture. Alexios' daughter Anna Komnena was one of its adornments. The *Alexiad*, her history of her father's reign, owed something to Michael Psellos, whose learning Anna much admired. She was also a patron of Eustratios of Nicaea and Aristotelian scholarship. The *sebastokratōr* Isaac Komnenos, perhaps the brother but more probably the son of Alexios Komnenos, continued Psellos' Neoplatonic interests. Komnenian self-interest meant that the cultural revival of the eleventh century changed its character. It lost much of its effervescence, but it might have fizzled out, or the Komnenoi might have repressed it. Instead, they preserved its essentials and ensured the cultural breadth and vitality that characterises later Byzantine history.

#### REFORM OF THE COINAGE AND TAXATION

Alexios' achievement was to rebuild the Byzantine empire. The new and the traditional were mixed in equal measure. He restored the traditional role of the emperor in ecclesiastical affairs, but took it further. Caesaropapism is an apt enough description of his supervision of the church. Politically, Byzantium was organised on a dynastic rather than a hierarchical basis. This is perhaps where Alexios was at his most radical because it had far-reaching implications for the organisation of government. It meant that the emperor shared power with members of an extended family. There was, on the other hand, no radical restructuring of government. Alexios was more interested in finding ways of exercising control. His solution was to create coordinating ministries. The civil service was now subordinated to the logothete of the *sekrēta*, later known as the grand logothete; the fiscal services were placed under the control of the grand logariast.

Alexios inherited a bankrupt state. The coinage was miserably debased, with the gold coinage's fineness reduced from twenty-four to eight carats. So desperate was his situation that Alexios had to debase still further, but by 1092 he was able to restore some order to the coinage. He raised the fineness of the standard gold coinage to around twenty carats and kept the debased electrum issues, but stabilising them at around six carats. He also kept the debased silver coinage in the form of a billon coin with a minimal silver content. He issued a new copper coinage. Alexios' reform of the coinage was typical of the measures he took to restore the empire. He imposed order and stability, but his measures had radical consequences. Michael Hendy contends that 'the Alexian coinage reform of 1092 attempted and achieved nothing less than a complete reconstruction of the coinage system on an entirely novel basis; . . . only the Diocletianic reform had been on a similar





Figure 47 Alexios I Komnenos' reformed coinage: (a) a *nomisma* with low gold fineness, mainly of electrum (*aspron trachy nomisma*). On the reverse (below) Alexios and Irene are shown full-length, holding the cross between them; on the obverse (above), Alexios' son John II (full-length) is crowned by Christ. (b) a low-value *tetarteron nommion* mainly of billon; this type, showing the emperor on the reverse (below) in traditional pose, holding orb and sceptre topped by crosses, circulated widely

scale.<sup>30</sup> His innovation was to create a regular coinage based on alloys rather than pure metal. It is likely that the existence of both an electrum and a billon coinage, which took the place of the old silver *miliarēsia*, made for a more flexible monetary system. But the greatest service that Alexios' coinage reform did was to re-establish clear equivalences between the different coinages. Their absence had brought chaos to the fiscal system. In the wake of his reform of the coinage Alexios was able to proceed to a thoroughgoing reform of the collection of taxes – the so-called *nea logarikē*. It was essentially an adaptation of the taxation system to the reformed coinage. It has been estimated that it was done in such a way as to quadruple the tax rate.

Alexios I Komnenos ended the lax fiscal regime of the eleventh century. There are no signs that the Byzantine economy suffered. It quickly recovered from a period of dislocation which lasted for approximately twenty years,

<sup>30</sup> Hendy (1985), p. 513; see also Hendy's account of Alexios' coin reforms in *DOC*, IV.1, pp. 192–201.

from the defeat at Manzikert to Alexios' victory over the Pechenegs in 1091. The manorialisation of the countryside continued with largely beneficial results for the peasantry (see above, pp. 584–5). The towns of Greece and the southern Balkans prospered. Places such as Corinth, Thebes and Halmyros (in Thessaly) benefited from a growing Italian presence and there was an upsurge of local trade around the shores of the Aegean. Constantinople continued to be the clearing house of the medieval world. The empire was far from being 'internally played out'. But there had been a decisive shift in its centre of gravity from Asia Minor to Greece and the southern Balkans, which experienced sustained economic growth. It is not clear, however, that this compensated for the loss of the resources of Anatolia. Its recovery was always Alexios' major task.

#### THE FIRST CRUSADE

By 1095 Alexios had pacified the Balkans, brought peace to the church and restored sound government. He was in a position to contemplate recovering Anatolia from the Turks. He moved troops across the Bosphorus and using Nikomedeia as a base created a defensible zone, but it soon became clear that he did not have the resources to effect a reconquest of Anatolia; his preoccupation with Europe had given the Turks the opportunity to settle key parts of Anatolia in depth. Alexios had made the situation still worse at the very beginning of his reign by withdrawing the remaining Byzantine garrisons from Anatolia. Paradoxically, the only area where there was potential support for a Byzantine reconquest was in the Euphrates lands and Cilicia where the Armenians had retained their independence.

Alexios needed troops. The Byzantines had long appreciated the martial qualities of the Franks, but had reason to fear their indiscipline and ambition. The main recruiting ground had been among the Normans of southern Italy, but a chance meeting in 1089 opened up a new source of Frankish cavalry. Robert I, count of Flanders, was returning overland from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He made a detour to pay his respects to Alexios I Komnenos, then in winter quarters in Bulgaria. He offered to send Alexios a force of 500 cavalry and sealed the bargain by taking 'the usual Latin oath' to the emperor. The count was as good as his word and the Flemish cavalry arrived the next year. They were sent to guard the area of Nikomedeia, but were then evacuated in 1091 in order to take part in the campaign against the Pechenegs which culminated in victory at Lebounion. They were an important addition to Alexios' forces at a critical moment. However, Alexios required more than a contingent of 500 Flemish cavalry if he was to have any chance of recovering Anatolia. He turned for help to Pope Urban II (1088–99), with whom he had been conducting negotiations over the reunion of the churches. Their outcome was inconclusive,

but relations remained cordial. Urban II knew that his mentor Gregory VII (1073–85) had tried and failed to organise a papal expedition, which was to go to the rescue of Constantinople and then press on to Jerusalem. Whether Alexios knew about this too is another matter, but he was well aware of the importance to Latin Christians of Jerusalem. In the spring of 1095 Urban II held a council at Piacenza. Byzantine envoys were present and made a plea for papal aid against the Seljuqs, although the exact terms in which this plea was couched cannot now be recovered. Urban then held a council at Clermont in November 1095, where he made an appeal to the knighthood of France for an expedition to go to the rescue of eastern Christendom. The pope linked this with pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the attendant spiritual rewards. He fixed 15 August 1096 as the day of departure for Constantinople, which was to be the assembly-point.

The passage of the crusade was to present Alexios with huge problems. The numbers are not easy to estimate. Modern calculations vary from 30,000 to 70,000 soldiers – over 100,000 if non-combatants are included. The first contingents started to arrive in the early summer of 1096 with Peter the Hermit. They were perhaps less of a rabble than Anna Komnena would have us believe. The swiftness of their arrival took Alexios by surprise. He shipped them over to Asia Minor, where many were killed by the Turks. Alexios was better prepared for the crusading armies that followed in the autumn and winter of 1096. These were under the command of western princes, such as the dukes of Normandy and Lower Lorraine, the counts of Toulouse, Blois, Vermandois and Flanders, and worryingly, the Norman Bohemond. Alexios had had time to establish markets along the main routes to Constantinople. As the crusade leaders came one by one to Constantinople he was able to persuade them to take ‘the customary Latin oath’ to him, as the prospective leader of the expedition against the Turks. Raymond de Saint-Gilles, count of Toulouse, was the leader who gave him most trouble, refusing to take any oath to the emperor. Of all the crusade leaders he was the closest to Urban II. The pope had consulted him before making his appeal at Clermont and he was the first of the princes to take the cross. He also took a vow never to return from the east. The papal legate Adhemar of Le Puy was attached to his contingent. Raymond therefore had some claim to be the military leader of the crusade. The emperor had to be content with an alliance, whereby each agreed to respect the life and honour of the other.

The first task was to conquer Nicaea, now the headquarters of an emirate. The Turks preferred to surrender the city to the Byzantines rather than face the fury of the Franks. The fall of Nicaea opened the road leading up to the Anatolian plateau. Alexios had turned down the proposal made by the crusade leaders that he should take personal command of the expedition.

But he supplied an important contingent under the command of Tatikios, one of his most trusted commanders. Alexios' strategy was to encircle the Turks: the crusaders were to force a passage across Anatolia and establish control over Cilicia, the Euphrates lands and northern Syria, where there was still a reasonable basis for the restoration of Byzantine rule. At first all went according to plan and the crusaders won a great victory over the Turks on 1 July 1097 at Dorylaion on the edge of the Anatolian plateau. By the end of the summer they were encamped in Cilicia and had started to blockade Antioch. Alexios followed up the victory by conquering large parts of western and northern Asia Minor and pushing the Turks back to the Anatolian plateau (see below, p. 710).

But the period of cooperation was soon over. Ostensibly the stumbling block was control of Antioch, but tensions went much deeper than this. The hardships of the passage across Anatolia followed by those of the siege of Antioch transformed the crusade from a joint venture of Byzantium and the west into an ideology that was fixated on Jerusalem and quickly took on an anti-Byzantine stamp. Such was crusader hostility that the Byzantine commander Tatikios abandoned the siege of Antioch and returned to Byzantium. His withdrawal was taken as an act of betrayal. The crusaders' distrust of Byzantine intentions was then reinforced by Alexios' failure to go to their rescue. He had set out and reached Philomelion, a Byzantine outpost on the Anatolian plateau, when he was met by two of the leaders of the crusade who had fled from Antioch in despair. They told the emperor that all was lost. Alexios therefore turned back. This was the sensible thing to do, but in fact all was far from lost. Thanks to Bohemond the lower city was secured at the beginning of June 1098 and on 28 June the crusaders inflicted a crushing defeat on the Seljuq relief force. Bohemond secured possession of the city for himself, while the crusade moved on towards Jerusalem.

#### BOHEMOND'S EXPEDITION OF 1107–1108

Antioch, traditionally the main Byzantine centre of operations in the east, was vital to Alexios I Komnenos' plans for recovering Anatolia from the Turks. The crusade leaders had given Alexios an undertaking that they would return Byzantine cities and territories. This Bohemond was refusing to do. Alexios therefore set about trying to evict him from Antioch, and his forces had some success. They occupied Cilicia but the key point was the port of Latakia. In 1103 the Byzantines secured the lower city of Latakia and were endeavouring to dislodge the Normans from the citadel. Such was the pressure that in 1104 Bohemond decided to leave his nephew Tancred in charge of Antioch, while he returned to the west for reinforcements.

He won the backing of Pope Paschal II (1099–1118) and the support of the French king Philip I (1060–1108), whose daughter he married.

It remains an open question whether his expedition qualified as a 'crusade'. The final goal was Palestine, and Bohemond was accompanied by a papal legate. The pope presented him with the banner of St Peter and according to a contemporary, Bartolf of Nangis, appointed him 'standard-bearer of the army of Christ'.<sup>31</sup> Bohemond's propaganda stressed the treachery of Alexios towards the crusade as just cause for his invasion. Bohemond's expedition against Byzantium displayed many features of a crusade, but full recognition would depend on its outcome, simply because crusading theory was still in its infancy. But for Anna Komnena it was a different matter. She was clear that Bohemond's invasion not only had papal approval, but had also been accorded the status of a 'just war'.<sup>32</sup> It confirmed Byzantine apprehensions about the dangers that the crusade held in store.

Bohemond landed on the Albanian coast in 1107 and laid siege to Dyrrachium. Alexios deployed his forces in the surrounding mountains. Bohemond soon found himself in an impossible position, isolated in front of Dyrrachium with his escape by sea cut off by the Venetians, and Paschal II withdrew his support. In 1108 Bohemond sued for peace. He recognised Alexios as his overlord, accepting that he held the principality of Antioch from Alexios. On paper Alexios had won what he most wanted: recognition of his claims to Antioch. But the treaty remained a dead letter.<sup>33</sup> Bohemond returned to southern Italy, while his nephew Tancred continued to rule at Antioch and refused to countenance the concessions made to the Byzantine emperor. Alexios was in no position to enforce them. To meet Bohemond's invasion he had withdrawn his forces from Cilicia and Syria. This allowed the Seljuqs to regain the initiative in western Asia Minor. Alexios was unable to mount a major expedition against them until late in his reign. The aim of his expedition to Philomelion in 1116 was to evacuate from central Anatolia the Greek populations still living under Turkish rule. It was a tacit admission of defeat.

#### ALEXIOS I KOMNENOS' ACHIEVEMENTS AND FAILURE

Alexios' appeal to Urban II was brilliantly conceived, but Byzantium gained very little from the crusade. In its wake Byzantine forces recovered the rich coastlands of western Anatolia, which they might reasonably have expected

<sup>31</sup> Bartolf of Nangis, *Gesta Francorum*, ch. 65, p. 538.

<sup>32</sup> *AL*, XII.8.5, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, p. 380; ed. and French tr. Leib, III, p. 80; tr. Sewter, p. 390.

<sup>33</sup> For the treaty, see *AL*, XIII.12, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, pp. 413–23; ed. and French tr. Leib, III, pp. 125–39; tr. Sewter, pp. 424–34; Lilie (1993a), pp. 75–81. On the development of crusading ideas and practice, see Riley-Smith (2002); Tyerman (2004), pp. 95–124.

to achieve anyway. The shadow of 1204 looms over Alexios' achievements and calls in question the success of his restoration of the Byzantine empire. His reputation has also suffered among modern historians because of the *Alexiad*, his daughter Anna Komnena's history of his reign. It is judged to lack objectivity, being too obviously an exercise in filial piety and too much of an idealisation. It is all these things, but it also provides a consummate portrait of an age, which, when allowance is made for bias, carries conviction.<sup>34</sup> Anna Komnena's assessment of her father's greatness is borne out by his administrative and fiscal reforms and his church settlement, about which she has relatively little to say. These aspects of her father's reign have to be pieced together from the documentary sources. They provide the best evidence for Alexios' achievement in restoring the empire.

Anna Komnena breathes not a word about her father's appeal to Pope Urban II which triggered the crusade. This may have been because she did not know about it or because she did not connect her father's appeal with the crusade, but more probably, she was trying to protect her father's reputation. By the time she was writing – some thirty years after her father's death – it was apparent that the crusade was the cutting edge of western expansion. It was Alexios' task to come to terms with western encroachment, which had begun to make itself felt from the middle of the eleventh century and which took various forms. Least harmful appeared to be the commercial activities of Venetian and other Italian merchants. They offered a solution to Byzantium's need for naval assistance, and early in his reign Alexios engaged the services of the Venetian fleet. In 1082 he granted the Venetians special privileges in Constantinople and exemption from the payment of customs duties throughout the empire.<sup>35</sup> It appeared a very good bargain. In 1111 Alexios entered into a similar arrangement with the Pisans, reducing their customs duty to 4 per cent. He was angling for their support in his plans – which never came to anything – to bring the crusader states under Byzantine control. Alexios was using the Italians much as the emperors of the tenth century had used the Rus: to strengthen the empire's naval and commercial resources. The appeal to Urban II was intended to complement this by harnessing the military potential of the Franks. Alexios could not have imagined that it would trigger off a crusade, nor that this would cease to be a cooperative venture and be turned against Byzantium.

Within Byzantium the crusade not only hardened attitudes towards the west, it also created tensions. Opinion polarised between those who favoured continuing cooperation with the west and those who rejected this approach, preferring to fall back on 'splendid isolation'. This put added

<sup>34</sup> See the contributions to Gouma-Peterson (ed.) (2000).

<sup>35</sup> Frankopan (2004a) makes a better case that the chrysobull to the Venetians was reissued in 1092 by Alexios Komnenos than that it was originally granted in that year.

pressure on the fault-lines that existed within the Komnenian settlement: between the emperor and church; between autocracy and aristocracy; between the Komnenian ascendancy and the excluded; between the capital and the provinces. Alexios hoped that an understanding with the west would provide Byzantium with the additional resources needed to restore its position as a world power. He could not have foreseen how it would undermine Byzantium from within. This was the true nature of Alexios' failure. It was counterbalanced by his success in restoring the integrity of the imperial office and the soundness of imperial administration. For more than half a century after his death Byzantium remained a great power.

## CHAPTER 17

# THE EMPIRE OF THE KOMNENOI (1118–1204)

PAUL MAGDALINO

Between the death of Alexios I Komnenos and the establishment of the Latin empire of Constantinople, eight emperors ruled in the eastern Roman capital. Their reigns were as successful as they were long: under John II Komnenos (1118–43) and Manuel I Komnenos (1143–80) Byzantium remained a wealthy and expansionist power, maintaining the internal structures and external initiatives which were necessary to sustain a traditional imperial identity in a changing Mediterranean world of crusaders, Turks and Italian merchants.<sup>1</sup> But the minority of Manuel's son Alexios II Komnenos (1180–83) exposed the fragility of the regime inaugurated by Alexios I. Lateral branches of the reigning dynasty seized power in a series of violent usurpations that progressively undermined the security of each usurper, inviting foreign intervention, provincial revolts and attempted *coups d'état*. Under Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–5), Isaac II Angelos (1185–95), Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203), Alexios IV Angelos (1203–4) and Alexios V Doukas (1204), the structural features which had been the strengths of the state in the previous hundred years became liabilities. The empire's international web of clients and marriage alliances, its reputation for fabulous wealth, the overwhelming concentration of people and resources in Constantinople, the privileged status of the 'blood-royal', the cultural self-confidence of the administrative and religious elite: under strong leadership, these factors had come together to make the empire dynamic and great; out of control, they and the reactions they set up combined to make the Fourth Crusade a recipe for disaster.

The Fourth Crusade brought out the worst in the relationship between Byzantium and the west that had been developing in the century since the First Crusade; the violent conquest and sack of Constantinople expressed and deepened old hatreds, and there is clearly some sense in the standard opinion that the event confirmed beyond doubt how incompatible the two cultures had always been. Yet the Fourth Crusade also showed how central Byzantium had become to the world of opportunity that Latin Europe was

<sup>1</sup> For a re-evaluation of twelfth-century Byzantium, see Magdalino (1993a). The classic presentation of a bleaker, long influential view is Chalandon (1910–12), II.



discovering in the east, and how great an effort Byzantine rulers had made to use this position to advantage. Growing estrangement came from growing involvement; the xenophobia which manifested itself in the 1182 massacre of the Latins in Constantinople was the reverse side of the accommodation of westerners and their values taking place at all social and cultural levels. Both sides of the coin are reflected in the main source for the period, the *History* of Niketas Choniates, which combines impassioned outbursts against the Latins with idealisation of individual western leaders and disapproval of his own society in terms which echo western criticism of Byzantium.

#### SOURCES

Niketas Choniates' *History* covers the years 1118–1206. The author was a contemporary of most of the events he relates, and from about 1175 he was an increasingly close eyewitness of developments at the centre of power, first as a student and clerk in government service, then as a rising government official involved in the making and presentation of imperial policy. Such credentials, together with the power, the nuance, the acuity and the high moral tone of his narrative, make it difficult to resist seeing the period through his eyes. However, there is growing recognition that the very qualities which make Choniates a great literary commentator on his age also make him a sophisticated manipulator of the facts to fit his picture of a decadent society being punished by divine providence for the excesses of its rulers and the corruption of their subjects.<sup>2</sup> For the period 1118–76 his account can be balanced by the *History* of John Kinnamos, which is slightly more critical of John II and much more favourable to Manuel I, whom the author served for most of his reign.<sup>3</sup> Otherwise, as for earlier and later periods of Byzantine history, the picture has to be supplemented and corrected by a wide range of other material – literary, legislative, archival, epigraphic, visual. The balance of this material partly reflects and partly determines what makes the twelfth century look distinctive. It is richer than the preceding century in high-quality information from Latin chronicles, in rhetorical celebration of emperors and in canon law collections which preserve a wealth of imperial and patriarchal rulings.<sup>4</sup> The flow of documentation from Patmos and Mount Athos dries up for much of the period, though some material has been preserved from other monastic archives in Asia Minor and Macedonia, and the archives of Venice, Pisa and Genoa

<sup>2</sup> *ODB*, I, p. 428 (A. Kazhdan); Magdalino (1993a), pp. 3–22. See now Simpson (2006).

<sup>3</sup> *ODB*, II, p. 1130 (A. Kazhdan); Magdalino (1993a), pp. 18–20; Stephenson (1996).

<sup>4</sup> For the collections, see Macrides (1990); Macrides (1991) and other contributions to Oikonomides, (ed.) (1991); Macrides (1994). Evaluation of other written sources in Magdalino (1993a).

begin to yield substantial evidence for the movement of their merchants into Constantinople and other markets throughout the empire.<sup>5</sup>

#### JOHN II KOMNENOS (1118–1143)

Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118) left his successor with a state in good working order. Territorially it was smaller, especially in the east, than the empire of the early eleventh century, but thanks to Alexios' reforms and good management over a long reign, it was once more an effective financial and military power, and as a result of Alexios' controversial family policy, it had a structural coherence which was largely new to Byzantium. After the failure of numerous conspiracies against Alexios, the ruling family of Komnenos had established itself not only as the unchallenged source of the imperial succession, but also, in association with the Doukai, as the centre of a new princely aristocracy in which wealth, status and military command depended on kinship to the emperor and were reflected in a hierarchy of titles all of which had originally applied to the emperor. The emperor's kinsmen were in such a dominant position, and so widely connected, that for almost the first time in the empire's history the threat to the ruling dynasty from a rival faction was entirely eliminated (see above, pp. 612–13). Instead, competition for power had moved inside the family circle.

The weakness of the system was that it gave the whole imperial family a share and a stake in the imperial inheritance without providing any firm rules of precedence. Thus John II, though Alexios' eldest son and crowned co-emperor in 1092, had to contend with a serious effort by his mother Irene Doukaina to exclude him from the succession in favour of his sister Anna and her husband Nikephoros Bryennios. Only by building up his own group of loyal supporters, inside and outside the family, and making a pre-emptive strike while Alexios lay on his deathbed did John secure his claim, and only by putting those supporters into key positions did he prevent a conspiracy by Anna within a year of his accession. To gain and maintain power, the emperor had had to create his own faction. He was well served by the members of this faction, especially by John Axouch, a Turkish captive with whom he had grown up and whom he entrusted with the supreme command of the armed forces. But the promotion of these favourites played

<sup>5</sup> For monastic evidence from Asia Minor, see MM, IV, pp. 62–3, 305–8, 317–29; Wilson and Darrouzès, 'Restes du cartulaire de Hiéra-Xérochoraphion', pp. 31–4; Ahrweiler (1965), pp. 5, 100, 127–9. For monastic evidence relating to Macedonia, see Petit, 'Le monastère de Notre Dame de Pitié'; Lefort (1985); Lefort (2005). For Italian evidence, see TT, I, pp. 67–74, 95–8, 109–33, 150–67, 177–203, 206–11, 215–16, 246–81; *Trattati con Bisanzio*, ed. Pozza and Ravegnani, pp. 47–137; *Documenti sulle relazioni delle città toscane*, ed. Müller, pp. 8–10, 11–13, 40–58, 66–73, 74–9; *Nuova serie di documenti sulle relazioni di Genova coll'Impero bizantino*, ed. Sanguineti and Bertolotto.

a part in causing the growth of an opposition at court. Anna and Nikephoros were no longer a threat; Nikephoros served the emperor loyally until his death in 1138, leaving Anna to nurse her grievances in writing the epic biography of her father, the *Alexiad*.<sup>6</sup> However, their place as a magnet for the disaffected was taken by John's brother, the *sebastokrator* Isaac, who had supported John at their father's death, but in 1130 sought the throne for himself. When his plot was detected, he fled with his son John into exile among the empire's eastern neighbours, moving from court to court until he sought reconciliation in 1138. But his son again defected to the Turks in 1141, Isaac remained a prime political suspect and his other son, the future Andronikos I Komnenos, would later inherit his role.

John II's power base in Constantinople was secure enough to allow him to leave the City on campaign year after year, but this ceaseless campaigning, in which he surpassed most of his imperial predecessors, including his father, is indicative of his need to command the loyalty of the army and prove himself worthy of his inheritance. It was rarely necessitated by emergencies as serious as those Alexios had faced for most of his reign, and it was not clearly dictated by any pre-existing strategy of territorial expansion. Certainly, the recuperation of lost territory was high on the agenda which John took over from his father. The First Crusade had originated in a Byzantine attempt to reverse the Turkish occupation of Asia Minor and northern Syria, and for the last twenty years of his reign Alexios I had expended great military and diplomatic energies in pressing his claims to Antioch and other territories which the crusaders had appropriated (see above, pp. 623–4). Yet over the same twenty years, the empire had learned to live with the eastern borders which Alexios had established in the wake of the crusade and with the new Turkish dynastic states of the Danishmend *maliks* and the Seljuq sultans, which had formed in the lost territories of central and eastern Anatolia. The empire was left in control of the coastal plains and river valleys which were the most valuable parts of Asia Minor to a ruling elite based, more than ever, on Constantinople; the loss of the Anatolian plateau and the frontier regions of northern Mesopotamia, which had been the homeland of many military families, greatly facilitated the integration of the aristocracy into the Komnenian dynastic regime. Alexios' successor thus had to strike a balance between the completion of unfinished business and the consolidation of such gains as had been made. Either way, he was expected to produce victories, and these John delivered consistently. Their propaganda value was their most lasting result, and possibly their most important objective.

The year after his accession, John took and fortified the town of Laodicea in the Maeander valley; the next year he captured and garrisoned Sozopolis,

<sup>6</sup> See above, p. 625; contributions to Gouma-Peterson (ed.) (2000).

on the plateau to the east. This might have been the beginning of a campaign of reconquest against the Seljuq sultanate of Rum; on the other hand, both places lay on the land route to Antalya (Attaleia), and John's later interest in this area suggests that he might have been securing his lines of communication for an expedition to Antioch. Yet if Antioch was the goal, it is surprising that John did not simultaneously revive the negotiations for a dynastic union which Alexios had been conducting at the end of his reign, especially after the disastrous battle of the Field of Blood (1119); this first major crusading defeat at the hands of the Muslims provided an ideal opportunity for John to offer imperial protection in return for concessions. There is no evidence that John tried to take advantage of the crisis in the Latin east, as Venice did by joining the crusading movement. Indeed, the fact that John initially refused to renew his father's treaty with Venice, and did not change his mind even in 1122, when a Venetian armada passed through Byzantine waters on its way to Palestine, suggests that the new emperor was pursuing a policy of deliberate isolationism with regard to the Latin world. Only when the Venetian fleet ravaged Chios, Samos and Modon on its return journey in 1125 did John agree to renew the treaty. This he did in 1126, acceding to two further Venetian demands.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, John had been forced to turn his attention from Asia to Europe by an invasion of the Pechenegs which caused great alarm but which he defeated by resolute military action in 1122. No campaigns are recorded for the next five years, during which John became occupied by diplomatic relations not only with Venice but also with Hungary, where he was connected through his wife to the ruling Árpád dynasty. In 1125 he welcomed her kinsman Almos as a refugee from the king of Hungary, Stephen II. Stephen took offence at this support for a political rival, and he may have felt threatened by the Byzantine rapprochement with Venice, which disputed Hungary's dominion over the cities of the Dalmatian coast. There followed a two-year war: Stephen attacked the imperial border fortresses and stirred the Serbs into revolt, while John retaliated by leading two expeditions to the Danube to restore the status quo.

When in 1130 John II returned to campaigning in Asia Minor, it was with a new objective: the northern sector of the frontier, where the imperial position in Bithynia and along the Black Sea was being eroded by the aggressive Danishmend polity, and by the defections of the Greek magnates who controlled much of the littoral. For six years the emperor led expeditions into

<sup>7</sup> Crete and Cyprus were added to the list of places where the Venetians could trade without paying taxes, and Byzantines with whom they did business were now exempted from paying the *kommerkion* or any other taxes on their transactions: TT, I, pp. 95–8. See also Lilie (1984b), pp. 374–5; Nicol (1988), pp. 80–1; Laiou and Morrisson (2007), p. 144.

Paphlagonia. The Byzantine sources highlight the successful sieges of Kastamonu (twice) and Gangra, thus giving the impression that this was a war of reconquest. But these and other gains in the area were soon retaken after the emperor's departure and it is difficult to believe that John realistically expected to be able to hold them with the modest garrisons that he could afford to leave behind (see below, p. 711). On balance, it seems that the aim was to make a show of force, to raid the flocks of the Turkish nomads in retaliation for past depredations and to impress all in Constantinople and in the imperial entourage whose loyalty was wavering. For John's first campaign against the Danishmends was cut short by the conspiracy of his brother Isaac, and it was to these Turks that Isaac fled to avoid arrest in 1130. A year or two later, John abandoned another campaign in order to deal with a plot to put Isaac on the throne. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that the emperor's subsequent successes were advertised to maximum effect and that he celebrated the taking of Kastamonu by a triumphal entry into Constantinople, to the accompaniment of panegyric songs and speeches (1133). These celebrations set the tone for the extravagant glorification of imperial achievements that was to characterise the imperial image for the rest of the century.

Isaac's movements in exile, which took him from Melitene to Armenia, Cilicia, Ikonion and Jerusalem, help to explain why, from 1135, John II made larger plans for political and military intervention further east. The opportunity arose when Alice, the widow of Bohemond II of Antioch, offered their daughter Constance in marriage to John's youngest son Manuel. The offer was a desperate and doomed attempt to prevent Constance from marrying Raymond of Poitiers, to whom she had been promised, but it encouraged John to focus on Antioch as the key to the strategy for dealing with all the empire's eastern neighbours, Muslim and Christian. Raymond's marriage to Constance in 1136 provided a justification for military action in support of imperial claims to Cilicia and Antioch. An imperial expedition in 1137 succeeded in reconquering Cilicia from the Armenian Rupenid prince Leo I, who held the mountainous areas, and from the Latins, who held the cities of the plain, Adana, Mopsuestia and Tarsus. John also compelled the new prince of Antioch to become his vassal, to allow him right of entry into the city, and to hand it over in return for investiture with the cities of the Syrian interior – Aleppo, Shaizar, Homs and Hama – once these were recaptured from the Muslims.

The subsequent campaign to take these cities failed, and so did the emperor's attempt to use the excuse to take possession of Antioch. But overall, the performance of the imperial army and the deference shown by all the local rulers were a triumphant demonstration of the empire's and the emperor's power. According to Niketas Choniates, it had the effect of making John II's exiled brother Isaac seek a reconciliation, 'for lacking

money . . . and seeing the emperor John universally renowned for his feats in battle, he found no one who would fall in with his ambitions'.<sup>8</sup> During the following years, John returned to Asia Minor, to strengthen the frontier defences in Bithynia, to strike at Neocaesarea, the town from which the Danishmends threatened the eastern section of the Black Sea coastal strip, and to secure and extend imperial control in the southern sector of the frontier in western Asia Minor. Yet these last operations, in the area where he had conducted his earliest campaigns, were clearly a prelude to the new expedition to Syria which he launched at the end of 1142. He wintered in the mountains of Cilicia, preparing to strike at Antioch in the spring and from there to go on to Jerusalem.

The emperor's death from a hunting accident in February 1143 aborted what looks like the most ambitious attempt at restoring the pre-Islamic empire that any Byzantine ruler had undertaken since the tenth century. John was finally making up for Alexios' failure to take personal command of the First Crusade. With the wisdom of hindsight, we may question whether the course of history would have been very different if John had lived. Constant campaigning and drilling had made the Byzantine field army into a superb expeditionary force with an unrivalled siege capability, but John II had pushed its performance to the limit. It had consistently run into problems when operating beyond the empire's borders and rarely held on to its acquisitions. In addition to the standard logistical constraints of medieval warfare, there was the basic problem that the empire was frequently unwelcome in many of its former territories, even among the Greeks of Turkish-occupied Asia Minor. John had, moreover, developed the army at the expense of the navy. However, Cilicia had remained in imperial control since 1138. If John had succeeded in his aim of welding Antioch and Cilicia together with Cyprus and Antalya into a kingdom for his son Manuel, the benefits to the empire and to the crusader states would have been enormous; at the very least, if the imperial army had remained in Syria throughout 1143, the emperor would have formed a coalition of local Christians that would have checked the Islamic counter-crusade of *atabey* Zengi (1127–46) of Aleppo and thus postponed, or even prevented, the fall of Edessa and the calling of the Second Crusade.

The revival of imperial interest in the crusader states had permanent consequences in that it led to a renewal of Byzantine links with western Europe. During the first half of his reign, John had retreated from the active western diplomacy that Alexios had conducted. But this changed in 1135, when John revived imperial claims to Antioch and sought to cover his back against interference from Roger II of Sicily (1130–54), who also had an interest in the principality. He renewed the empire's treaty with Pisa,

<sup>8</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 32; tr. Magoulias, p. 19.



Figure 48 Monastery of Christ Pantokrator, Constantinople

negotiated alliances with the German emperors Lothar III (1125–37) and Conrad III (1138–52), and sent a very conciliatory letter to Pope Innocent II (1130–43) on the subject of church union. Most importantly for the future, the alliance with Conrad III was sealed by the betrothal of Conrad's sister-in-law Bertha to John's youngest son Manuel. Manuel not only happened to be available; he had also been proposed as a husband for the heiress to Antioch, and was the intended ruler of the projected kingdom of Antioch, Cilicia, Cyprus and Antalya.

Apart from the conspiracies of his sister and brother, the internal history of John's reign looks conspicuously uneventful. On the whole, it seems fair to conclude that the paucity of documentation generally reflects a lack of intervention or of the need for it. As with the frontiers, it was a case of maintaining internal structures that had stabilised in the last ten years of Alexios' reign. John's most significant policy change was to reduce expenditure on the fleet, on the advice of his finance minister John of Poutza. Although he looked outside his family for individual support, John upheld the ascendancy of the Komnenoi and Doukai, and continued to consolidate their connections by marriage with other aristocratic families. In the church, he was by Byzantine standards remarkably non-interventionist, apparently because church affairs had settled down after the disputes of Alexios' reign. He left his mark on them principally through generous benefactions to churches and monasteries, above all through his foundation of the monastery of Christ Pantokrator. The foundation charter and the church buildings provide the best surviving picture of the appearance, the organisation and the wealth of a great metropolitan monastery and its annexes, which included a hospital.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> 'Le Typikon du Christ Pantocrator', ed. and French tr. Gautier, pp. 26–131. See also *ODB*, III, p. 1575 (A.-M. Talbot and A. Cutler); Ousterhout (1999), pp. 104–8 and figs. 78, 79, pp. 120–1; Freely and Çakmak (2004), pp. 211–20 and plates XXX, XXXI.



Map 28 The empire and its neighbours in the twelfth century



## MANUEL I KOMNENOS (1143–1180)

For most of his reign, John had managed to prevent his own children from being divided by the sibling rivalries which had bedevilled his own succession. Yet in the months before his death, his arrangements were thrown into confusion when Alexios, his eldest son and co-emperor of long standing, fell ill and died, followed shortly by the next son, Andronikos. This left John, on his deathbed, with a highly invidious choice between his older surviving son, Isaac, who was in Constantinople, and the youngest, Manuel, who was with him in Cilicia. John no doubt voiced many of the arguments for Manuel's superiority which the Byzantine sources put into his mouth, but it is hard to fault the explanation of William of Tyre that Manuel was chosen in order to ensure the army's safe return.<sup>10</sup> Prompt action forestalled any attempt by Isaac to take advantage of his presence in the capital. Manuel was thus able to enter Constantinople and have himself crowned without opposition. As the winner, he was able to command or commission the propaganda which represented his election as providential and inevitable. Yet Isaac nursed a legitimate grievance, and his sympathisers included his father's right-hand man, John Axouch. Isaac was not the only one who coveted his brother's throne: their brother-in-law, the caesar John Roger, attempted a coup, backed by a faction of Norman exiles, and their uncle Isaac was believed to be still awaiting his opportunity. Even apparently innocuous female relatives, Manuel's aged aunt Anna and his widowed sister-in-law Irene, were treated as political suspects. The new emperor was unmarried and therefore without immediate prospect of legitimate issue. All in all, the circumstances of his accession put him under intense pressure to prove himself by emulating his father's achievements without putting his inheritance at risk.

The immediate priority was to bring the unfinished foreign business of John II's last years to an honourable conclusion. There could be no question of the emperor leading another grand expedition to Syria, so Manuel contented himself with sending an army and a fleet to ravage the territory of Antioch. This and the fall of Edessa to Zengi in 1144 obliged Raymond of Antioch to come to Constantinople and swear obedience, while Manuel promised to come to the prince's aid. There was also the matter of the German alliance. Manuel's marriage to Bertha of Sulzbach had been negotiated and she had come to Constantinople, before he had any prospect of becoming emperor. It was probably to extract more favourable terms from Conrad III that Manuel put off the marriage and exchanged embassies with Roger II of Sicily, against whom the alliance with Conrad had been directed. When he finally married Bertha, who adopted the Greek

<sup>10</sup> William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, XV.23, ed. Huygens, II, pp. 705–6; tr. Babcock and Krey, II, pp. 128–9.

name Irene, in 1146 he had evidently won some sort of unwritten promise from Conrad, possibly to guarantee Manuel a free hand in the east, but more likely to give him a share of the conquests from his planned invasion of southern Italy.

These treaties opened up commitments and prospects which Manuel did not immediately pursue. Instead, he used the security they gave him to revert to the limited-objective campaigning against the Turks which had characterised his father's reign, with even more emphasis on military victory for its own sake. The expedition which he led as far as Ikonion in 1146 was ostensibly in retaliation for the capture of a border fortress in Cilicia. In effect, however, it was a display of the emperor's prowess in leading his army up to the walls of the sultan's capital and then fighting courageous rearguard actions in the retreat. This gratuitous bravery was intended to vindicate Manuel's youthful heroism in the eyes of his critics. It may also have been meant to impress the Latins with the emperor's zeal for holy war. But it did nothing to help the crusader states, and that help now came in a form which exposed Manuel's lack of a strategy for dealing with the fall of Edessa and the repercussions this was bound to have in the wider world of Latin Christendom. The fact that the Byzantine sources fail to mention the event which provoked the Second Crusade suggests that they seriously underestimated its importance.

The Second Crusade would have been a major military and political crisis even if it had been confined to the expedition of Louis VII of France (1137–80), as Manuel was originally led to expect. The size of Louis' army, his royal status, which precluded any oath of vassalage to the emperor, and the ties which bound him and his entourage to the nobility of the Latin east were sufficient to thwart any effective concordance between Byzantine claims and crusader objectives. The problem was more than doubled by the unexpected participation of Conrad III with an equally huge army and an even touchier sense of sovereign dignity. His arrival in the east strained their alliance almost to breaking point, since it brought the German emperor-elect where Manuel least wanted him from where he needed him most, namely as a threat to Roger II of Sicily. Roger now exploited the situation to seize the island of Corfu and launch raids on the Greek mainland, whose garrisons had been redeployed to shadow the crusading armies. It was alarmingly reminiscent of earlier Norman invasions of Epiros, and Manuel responded by calling on Venetian naval help, in return for which he renewed Venice's trade privileges and extended the Venetian quarter in Constantinople.<sup>11</sup>

In these circumstances, it is understandable that Manuel moved the crusading armies as quickly as possible across the Bosphorus into Asia Minor, where the treaty of peace that he had signed with the sultan of Rum may

<sup>11</sup> TT, I, pp. 109–24; Nicol (1988), pp. 85–9. On the quarter: Jacoby (2001b), pp. 156–8.

well have contributed to the appalling casualties they suffered at the hands of the Turks. These casualties, which rendered the armies largely ineffective by the time they reached Syria and Palestine, earned Manuel a lasting reputation as the saboteur of the Second Crusade. However, they did lead eventually to a renewal of the alliance with Conrad III, who, when he fell ill at Ephesos in December 1147, accepted Manuel's invitation to come and recuperate in Constantinople. Manuel then provided ships and money for Conrad to continue to Palestine and recruit a new army. On his return to Europe late in 1148, the two monarchs met at Thessaloniki to agree on a joint invasion and partition of southern Italy and Sicily. The Byzantine share was to count as the dowry owing to Manuel from his marriage to Bertha-Irene. The alliance was sealed by the marriage of Manuel's niece Theodora to Conrad's cousin Henry of Babenberg.

The renewal of the German alliance determined the principal orientation of Manuel's foreign policy for the rest of his reign. For the next twelve years he remained committed to a partnership with the Hohenstaufen which he hoped would bring substantial territorial gains in Italy. Manuel pursued this goal despite setbacks and distractions, and despite the gradual divergence of interests between the two empires after Conrad III died and was succeeded by Frederick I Barbarossa (1152–90). As soon as Manuel had recovered Corfu from its Sicilian garrison in 1149, he planned to carry the war into Italy. The invasion plan was frustrated, first by bad weather, and then by wars in the Balkans stirred up by the disruptive diplomacy of Roger II. Thus the campaigns which Manuel led from 1150 to 1155 against the Serbian *župans* of Raška and King Géza II of Hungary were essentially diversions, for all the energy he put into them and the considerable publicity they generated. However, the war at sea continued and upon the death of Roger II in 1154 Manuel moved to take advantage of the insecurity and unpopularity of the young William I of Sicily (1154–66), reviving the invasion plan of 1149. Lacking German participation, the campaign eventually came to grief at Brindisi in 1156, and Frederick disowned it as a Greek initiative which interfered with his own programme of Roman imperial renewal. Yet for a time, the Byzantine agents had enjoyed great success, receiving the cooperation of disaffected Norman lords and the submission of many towns throughout Apulia. Manuel did not act as if either the German alliance or the prospect of a Byzantine revival in Italy had been destroyed by the defeat. His agents returned to sow disaffection against William I in 1157, and he continued to seek collaboration with Frederick Barbarossa even after he had concluded a peace treaty with William in 1158. In 1160, they were still exchanging embassies to discuss joint action against Sicily, and a Byzantine request for a share of imperial dominion in the Italian peninsula.

Manuel's basic and consistent objective was the acquisition of the coastal towns of Apulia; they had Greek populations, had belonged to the theme of

Langobardia before 1071, and control of them would prevent the recurrence of invasions like those of Robert Guiscard, Bohemond and Roger II.<sup>12</sup> Beyond that, Byzantine territorial aims in Italy were flexible, and by 1160 it seems that Manuel had traded his empire's historic claims to Calabria and the Naples area in return for the recognition of a right to the Pentapolis, the area comprising the city of Ancona and its hinterland. Ancona was the Byzantine base of operations in 1155–6, and it had been chosen for this purpose in 1149. It may well, therefore, have been designated in the treaty of 1148 between Conrad and Manuel as belonging to the Byzantine sphere of influence. Justification for the Byzantine claim could have been found in the fact that the Pentapolis had been part of the old exarchate of Ravenna (see above, pp. 449–53). While the coastal towns of Apulia were ruled by the king of Sicily, Ancona was the only alternative to Venice as a gateway for Byzantine agents, envoys, troops and subsidies to reach the empire's Italian and German allies – and Venice was basically opposed to any Byzantine revival in Italy. Once the coastal towns of Apulia also reverted to Byzantine rule, possession of the Pentapolis would have given Manuel control of almost the entire east coast of Italy.

The failure of his negotiations with Frederick Barbarossa in 1160 caused Manuel to try an alternative to the German alliance, which was coming under strain for other reasons. Frederick's increasingly strident imperialism made him less receptive to the idea of sharing sovereignty in Italy with the Greek empire. Indeed, his programme of reclaiming imperial rights, which he had stated at the diet of Roncaglia in 1158 and showed every sign of enforcing, threatened to change the balance of power in Italy and make the Hohenstaufen empire the main danger to Byzantium's western flank. At the same time, his quarrel with Pope Hadrian IV (1154–59), and his refusal to recognise the canonical election of Hadrian's successor, Alexander III (1159–81), made him an embarrassment for Manuel's relations with other parts of Latin Christendom, particularly the crusader states. Above all, the bond of kinship between the two emperors was severed when Manuel's German wife Bertha-Irene died in 1159.

From 1161, Manuel aligned himself with Pope Alexander III and all who took his side against Frederick and the antipope elected by Frederick's council of Pavia in 1160. Thus relations between Byzantium and Alexander's main European supporter, Louis VII of France, began to improve for the first time since the Second Crusade. Manuel's main diplomatic priority, however, was to cultivate close relations with all those in the Italian peninsula who, like Alexander, felt threatened by Frederick's expansionism. Chief among them was the king of Sicily, and Manuel twice entered into negotiations with a view to marrying his daughter to William I's son,

<sup>12</sup> See Magdalino (1993a), pp. 57–61.

William II (1166–89). But Manuel also poured money into creating an extensive web of potential supporters among the towns and the aristocracy throughout Italy. Byzantine money helped to rebuild the walls of Milan, razed at Frederick's orders in 1162. To the pope himself, Manuel not only gave material support but offered the prospect of reuniting the Greek and Roman churches, and several discussions were held. In return, the pope gave Manuel to understand that he would consider recognising him as sole Roman emperor.<sup>13</sup>

This ambition seems like a vastly unrealistic escalation of Manuel's previous aims, but it is unlikely to have involved any major political changes, other than excluding Frederick Barbarossa from Italy and giving Manuel the senior place among the rulers of Christendom. For the pope to entertain the notion, it must have been predicated on a guarantee to maintain the status quo in Italy: the continued existence of the communes in the north, the papal lordship in the centre and the kingdom of Sicily in the south. It is far from certain that the arrangement would have involved any territorial concessions such as Manuel had sought from the Hohenstaufen. The ulterior aim of Manuel's diplomacy after 1160 may have been to pressurise Frederick Barbarossa into renewing the alliance. The prospect of renewing it in 1170–2 was certainly enough to make Manuel pull out of a marriage treaty with William II of Sicily for what he thought was a better offer from Frederick. The offer did not materialise, and the 'cold war' resumed, but the episode demonstrated that what Manuel sought above all was a partnership with the sovereign powers of the Christian west that would guarantee security for his empire within negotiated territorial limits. In the papal alliance as in the Hohenstaufen alliance, Italy was the focus for negotiation, and Ancona remained the Byzantine gateway to Italy.

The peace of Venice in 1177, in which Frederick Barbarossa and Alexander III settled their differences and Italian affairs without reference to Manuel, put an end to the latter's hopes of either territorial gains in Italy or a western imperial crown. However, it was neither the end of his diplomacy nor of his deeper ambition to align his dynastic programme of imperial restoration with the power structure of Latin Christendom from which his empire had been perilously excluded at the time of the Second Crusade. That ambition was as close to being realised at his death in 1180 as it would ever be. He had failed to secure a working relationship with Frederick Barbarossa, but he remained on good terms with Alexander III, his daughter had married Renier of Montferrat, from the major magnate family of north-western Italy, and his son was betrothed to the king of France's daughter.

On other fronts, while Manuel did not neglect the security and the extension of the empire's borders, his initiatives were ultimately shaped by

<sup>13</sup> Further details in Magdalino (1993a), pp. 83–92.

the aim of being taken into partnership by the great powers of the west. The crusader states provided an ideal opportunity for him to enhance his credentials in western eyes. The disaster of the Second Crusade had left them increasingly vulnerable to Zengi's successor, Nur al-Din (1146–74), who had taken over Damascus following the failed crusader offensive, and had made the kings of the west wary of getting involved in a major new expedition to the Holy Land. Although they were responsive to the plight of the Latin settlers, their own domestic problems and mutual rivalries kept them in Europe, while the armed pilgrimages undertaken by some of their vassals did not properly compensate for the lack of a general crusade. In the circumstances, the princes of Outremer turned increasingly to Byzantium for military and financial aid and the Byzantine emperor was only too pleased to avoid the recurrence of a general crusade.<sup>14</sup>

Soon after the Second Crusade, the northern principalities suffered a crisis: Raymond of Edessa was killed in battle in 1149 and Joscelin II of Edessa was captured a year later. Manuel bought the remaining castles of the county of Edessa from Joscelin's wife and attempted to persuade Raymond's widow Constance to marry his recently widowed brother-in-law, the half-Norman caesar John Roger. However, the castles soon fell to the Muslims, and Constance rejected John Roger in favour of Reynald de Châtillon, a recent arrival from France. Neither these failures nor Reynald's subsequent raid on Byzantine Cyprus in conjunction with Thoros II (1148–68), the Armenian prince of Cilicia, drew an immediate response from Manuel, who was occupied with the war with Sicily. Only when this was over did the emperor intervene personally with a show of force. Moreover, his expedition to Cilicia and Syria in 1158–9 was not, despite superficial resemblances, a repeat of those conducted by his father. It followed the conclusion of a marriage alliance with Baldwin III, king of Jerusalem (1143–63), who in 1157 broke with crusader precedent and sought a bride from the Byzantine imperial family. Thus the reassertion of imperial supremacy in Cilicia and Antioch, and the humiliation of Reynald and Thoros, were performed with the full cooperation of the senior potentate in Outremer, who accepted them as the ritual price the Latin settlers had to pay for Byzantine material aid, and as the necessary prelude to joint military action against Nur al-Din by all the local Christian powers.

Although this action was cut short when Manuel was recalled to Constantinople by news of a conspiracy, he continued to work closely with the crusader states. It was to Tripoli, and then to Antioch, that he looked for a new bride after Bertha-Irene's death in 1159. He married Maria of Antioch, daughter of Raymond and Constance, in 1161, and some fifteen years later strengthened his connection with her brother, Prince Bohemond III

<sup>14</sup> Phillips (1996).

(1163–1201), by providing the latter with a Komnenian bride. The connection with Jerusalem was briefly interrupted at Baldwin III's death in 1163 but resumed when the king's brother and successor, Amalric I (1163–74), decided he could not do without Byzantine aid and negotiated a marriage to another imperial relative in 1167. Following a treaty in 1168, a Byzantine naval force joined Amalric in an invasion of Egypt in 1169, and the king came to Constantinople to negotiate a fresh agreement in 1171. The resulting plans for further joint operations against Egypt were halted upon Amalric's death in 1174, but were back on the agenda in 1176–7, when a Byzantine fleet was despatched to Palestine. These ventures came to nothing militarily, but they proved that the empire would deploy impressive resources in offensive as well as defensive support of its Latin allies, and thus undoubtedly helped to impede the counter-crusade of Nur al-Din and Saladin. Manuel further bolstered the Latin settlements both by providing their princes with generous subsidies, and by ransoming their knights who were captured in battle. In return, the emperor asked only for due recognition of his overlordship, and for fulfilment of the long-standing treaty agreement to appoint a Greek patriarch in Antioch.

Despite his considerable investment in Latin Syria, Manuel did not revisit the area after 1159. On the other hand, he returned more than once to the Danube frontier after King Géza II of Hungary died in 1161, leaving a disputed succession. The position of Hungary between the German and Byzantine empires, and adjacent to the empire's Serbian vassals, gave it a strategic importance in Manuel's growing conflict of interest with Frederick Barbarossa, which increased his concern to ensure that it was in friendly hands. His kinship with the Hungarian royal dynasty via his mother, and the empire's historic claim to certain frontier areas of the kingdom, also incited his intervention in Hungarian affairs (see below, pp. 684–5). Although Manuel initially failed to install his first candidate, Stephen IV, repeated campaigning from 1162 to 1167 ensured the future succession of his next protégé, Béla III, and the cession to the empire of Béla's patrimony, consisting of the central Dalmatian coast and an area south of the middle Danube known as Frangochorion, which included the old Roman frontier capital of Sirmium. Béla III lived in Constantinople from 1164, where he was betrothed to Manuel's daughter Maria and regarded as heir apparent to the throne until the birth of the emperor's son Alexios in 1169. He took power in Hungary at the death of his brother Stephen III in 1172 and served the empire loyally while Manuel was alive.

On the empire's other land frontier, in Asia Minor, Manuel's preferred policy was similarly one of trying to maintain and improve the status quo by drawing the main regional power, the sultanate of Rum, into the imperial orbit. After some fighting in 1159–60, Manuel welcomed the sultan, Kilij Arslan II (1156–92), to Constantinople in 1161. The two rulers concluded



Figure 49 Manuel I Komnenos and his second wife Maria of Antioch; the shade of Manuel's skin corresponds with contemporary reports concerning his swarthy complexion

a treaty whereby the emperor ritually adopted the sultan as his son and undertook to subsidise his wars against his Turkish rivals; in return, any important cities recovered from the latter were to be surrendered to the emperor, and the sultan promised to prevent raids on the empire's territories. Kilij Arslan did not keep his side of the treaty, which effectively allowed him to unify Turkish Asia Minor under his rule. But it brought peace to western Anatolia for fourteen years, and it set up an effective Islamic rival to the rising power of *atabey* Nur al-Din of Damascus, which helped the crusader states. Only when the death of Nur al-Din in 1174 changed the configuration of power in the Islamic world did Manuel adopt a policy of confrontation with Kilij Arslan, building fortresses on the Anatolian



plateau to control the routes to the east in 1175, and then mounting a major expedition to conquer the sultan's capital of Ikonion in the following year.

It is clear from the publicity surrounding Manuel's offensive in Asia Minor that it was not only a belated move from appeasement to reprisal, but also a holy war intended to restore Asia Minor to imperial rule and open up the land route for pilgrims to Palestine. The grand expedition of 1176 was thus, above all, the culmination of Manuel's long attempt to redeem the failure of the Second Crusade, which had come to grief in the borderlands of Asia Minor. It was meant to finish, under imperial leadership, the business that had got out of imperial control in the First Crusade. The resounding defeat which the expedition suffered at Myriokephalon was correspondingly devastating for Manuel's attempt to take over the crusading movement and to reverse a century of Turkish occupation in Asia Minor (see below, pp. 716–17). Yet the empire's army, finances and borders were intact; its power in the Balkans and its influence in eastern Europe had never stood higher. Louis VII of France gave a big vote of confidence by sending his daughter Agnes as a future bride for the young Alexios II Komnenos (1180–3). There is no knowing how things would have developed if Manuel had not died only four years after the battle.

Manuel conducted his warfare and his diplomacy with lavish ceremony and rhetorical publicity which explicitly recalled Constantine and Justinian. This and the autocratic style which he adopted in his legislation and regulation of church doctrine led Niketas Choniates to assert, and modern scholars to accept, that Manuel dreamed the impossible dream of restoring the Roman empire in all its ancient glory. Careful attention to the reality behind the rhetorical and ceremonial image reveals that Manuel's Roman imperialism was more concerned with security than expansion.<sup>15</sup> It is true that at different times he sought the elimination of the two main neighbouring states, the Norman kingdom of Sicily and the Seljuq sultanate of Rum, which had recently been founded at the empire's expense. However, he did not do so consistently and he acted only within the framework of an alliance. Manuel's imperialism only began to depart from tradition after 1160, when he was obliged to seek an alternative to the German alliance. The main departure (though even this had precedents) was that instead of following the time-honoured practice of weakening the empire's neighbours by setting them against each other or destabilising their regimes, Manuel sought to establish a ring of reliable satellite kingdoms which he strengthened against their enemies in return for their support. The kingdom of Jerusalem, Hungary, the sultanate and the kingdom of Sicily were all tried in this role to a greater or lesser extent.

<sup>15</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, pp. 100, 159–60; tr. Magoulias, pp. 58, 91. See Magdalino (1993a).

In general, it seems clear that Manuel sought allies and clients more than he sought territories. As we have seen, he hoped that the German alliance would give him control over the Adriatic coast of Italy, while from Hungary he gained Frangochorion and the Dalmatian coast. Otherwise, apart from his rather belated crusade of reconquest in Asia Minor, his main identifiable objective was the coastal area of Egypt, which was to be the Byzantine share in the partition of the country agreed between Manuel and Amalric in 1168 and, presumably, in later renewals of their treaty. This was hardly a programme to restore the empire of Justinian. At the same time, it was more than random opportunism. The Egyptian coast, including the ports of Alexandria and Damietta, was the most sought-after trading destination in the Mediterranean. Possession of the east coast of Italy together with possession of the Dalmatian coast would have given the empire control of the Adriatic and thus of the access to eastern markets from Venice, the main trading city in the Mediterranean.

Realisation of all these territorial goals would have allowed the empire to dominate the commerce of the eastern Mediterranean and thus to renegotiate its treaties with the Italian maritime republics. That this was indeed Manuel's aim is suggested, first, by his considerable investment in the Byzantine navy, and, secondly, by the evolution of his policy towards Venice, an evolution which parallels his adoption of a less indulgent line in dealing with the Byzantine church, the other main beneficiary of economic privilege. In 1148, during the crisis of the Second Crusade, he had extended the already exceptional privileges enjoyed by Venetian merchants throughout the empire, but in 1171 he ordered their arrest and the confiscation of their goods. The Pisans and Genoese to some extent took their place, but not with the same exemption from the 10 per cent sales tax. Pisa was unable to negotiate an improvement to the terms of its original treaty with Alexios I (see above, p. 625), which had allowed a total exemption only on bullion exports, and a 6 per cent reduction on imports of other goods. The Genoese were originally admitted on the same basis in 1155, but had to accept further restrictions on the 6 per cent concession in 1169.<sup>16</sup>

In the light of recent work on Byzantium in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it is clear that Manuel's power was more impressive and his ambitions more moderate than previously thought. However, his achievements still fell short of his ambitions, and his military failures against Sicily and the Turks were spectacular, perhaps more so than his successes against Hungary. The empire declined so rapidly after his death that historians from Niketas Choniates onwards have sought, and continue to seek, the seeds of its decline in his reign and in his policies. Modern commentators have also

<sup>16</sup> Lilie (1984b), pp. 76–8, 84–100; Day (1988), pp. 25–7, 135–8; Magdalino (1993a), p. 94. On the role of Italian merchants in Byzantium, see Laiou and Morrisson (2007), pp. 143–7.

looked for structural weaknesses in the imperial regime of the Komnenian dynasty.

#### THE LEGACY AND SUCCESSORS OF MANUEL I: 1180–1204

Choniates believed that the empire and its rulers had incurred God's displeasure by their impious behaviour, and he identified the beginnings of this sinfulness in Manuel – in the emperor's belief in astrology, in his jealousy of popular and talented nobles, in his extravagant expenditure, in his favouritism towards kinsmen and foreigners and in his assumption of authority in church matters.<sup>17</sup> These were flaws that Manuel could be seen, with hindsight, to have shared with the emperors who reigned after him with obviously disastrous effect. But in picking on these characteristics, Choniates also undoubtedly echoed criticisms which had surfaced during Manuel's lifetime. His military failures in Italy and Asia Minor, together with his failure to produce a male heir by his first wife or in the first eight years of his second marriage, must have led to speculation that he had offended God by his style of government, and the speculation would have been encouraged by those male relatives, notably Manuel's cousin Andronikos, who were suspected of harbouring designs on the throne. Thus the insecurity which Manuel had faced at his accession stayed with him throughout his reign, and the soundness of his imperial edifice was already under scrutiny during his lifetime. The imperial image projected by the voluminous court rhetoric of his reign seems altogether too confident to be plausible.<sup>18</sup>

Yet on the whole the image commanded respect from foreigners and subjects alike. Manuel controlled his subjects, his resources and his policies as well as any of his imperial predecessors or royal contemporaries. What he did not control was beyond the control of any ruler: the tender age at which his son succeeded him. The crisis of Byzantium after 1180 was in a very obvious way the familiar story of a monarchy thrown into disarray by a minority.

However, Byzantium had experienced minorities in the past without falling apart and falling prey to foreign conquest. Is there a case for thinking that the disasters of the period 1180–1204 were waiting to happen, inherent in the structure of the empire of the Komnenoi? In the mid-twentieth century, the view prevailed that although the Komnenian emperors gave the empire a temporary reprieve by their vigorous military leadership, their aristocratic dynastic priorities undermined the efficacy of the state system

<sup>17</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, pp. 143, 154, 179, 204–5, 209–21; tr. Magoulias, pp. 81, 87, 101, 116, 119–24. On Manuel's interest in astrology and his critics: Magdalino (2006), pp. 109–30.

<sup>18</sup> See Magdalino (1993a), pp. 434–70.

that had made Byzantium great in the 'imperial centuries'. According to the classic formulation of George Ostrogorsky,

in structure the empire now differed considerably from the rigid centralised state of the middle Byzantine period. The age of the Komnenoi saw an intensification of the feudalising process and those very feudal elements in the provinces, against which the tenth-century emperors had battled with such insistence, were to become the mainstay of the new state . . . Byzantium had thrown over its once solid foundations and its defences, and its economic and financial strength were greatly diminished. This is the explanation why the successes of the Komnenoi were not enduring and were followed by the collapse of the Byzantine state.<sup>19</sup>

Recently, this view has been replaced by the realisation that the privileges and immunities bestowed by the Komnenian emperors did not in themselves decentralise, weaken or impoverish the machinery of government and warfare. The Komnenian empire had all the apparatus of a fully developed pre-industrial state: a standing army and navy, regular monetary taxation and an elaborate bureaucracy. The armed forces performed indifferently, the taxation was oppressive and iniquitous and the bureaucracy often inefficient and corrupt, but under strong leadership the apparatus worked. Moreover, the resource base on which it worked was not obviously diminished by either the loss of territory in Asia Minor or the granting of exemptions. Rather, all the indications from written and material evidence are that agricultural production and trade intensified throughout the twelfth century, and that the government was reaping the benefits as well as the aristocracy, the monasteries and the Italian merchants.

The most eloquent testimony to the wealth of Byzantium in the late twelfth century comes from the observation of an Anglo-Norman writer, Gerald of Wales, that the revenues of the German and English monarchies were as nothing compared with those of the kingdom of Sicily and the Greek empire before these were destroyed 'by the Latins'; the yearly income from Palermo alone (a smaller city than Constantinople) exceeded that from the whole of England.<sup>20</sup> Interesting here is the coupling of Byzantium and Sicily as wealthy states which were destroyed by northern European conquest. Gerald goes on to recall a remark of Louis VII of France, reported somewhat differently by Walter Map,<sup>21</sup> contrasting the great resources of other kingdoms with the simple self-sufficiency of his own. The king of Germany had many armed men but no wealth, the rulers of Sicily and Greece were rich in gold and silk, but had no men who could do anything but talk, and the king of England had something of both. In the perception,

<sup>19</sup> Ostrogorsky (1968), pp. 374–5.

<sup>20</sup> Gerald of Wales, *De principis instructione*, III.30, ed. Warner *et al.*, VIII, pp. 316–17; tr. Stevenson (repr. 1991), p. 108.

<sup>21</sup> Walter Map, *De nugis curialium*, V.5, ed. and tr. James, rev. Brooke and Mynors, pp. 450–1.

and the reality, of statehood in twelfth-century Europe, strong finances and a strong war machine did not necessarily go together.

Byzantium's problem was one of survival in a world where weak, wealthy Mediterranean societies were in the way of northern warrior aristocracies with slender means and big appetites. Survival lay in the effective use of wealth to manage the bonds which kept the empire together and free from confrontation with potential aggressors. These bonds consisted in three characteristic features of the Komnenian empire which had either not existed or had been less pronounced before 1081: the deep involvement of the empire with the Latin west, the centralisation of power and resources in Constantinople and the emphasis on family, lineage and kinship as the defining elements in the Byzantine political system. The unravelling of all three features is clearly visible in the disintegration of imperial power at the end of the twelfth century.

#### BYZANTIUM AND THE WEST

The empire's involvement with the west derived partly from its historic interest in the Italian peninsula (see above, chs. 3, 11, 15), and partly from the consequences of its attempt to use western military power to restore its position in Asia Minor. The relationship set up by the First Crusade persisted and intensified throughout the twelfth century, tying the empire's eastern interests to its western relations, and making the viability of its traditional role in the Christian orient dependent upon its standing among the powers of the Latin west. The Second Crusade confirmed what John II had belatedly begun to realise in the 1130s: that to succeed, and even to survive, Byzantium needed to keep one move ahead of the crusading movement in preserving the Latin settlements in Syria; it needed to participate as an inside player in the power politics of western Christendom. In the thirty years following the crusade, Manuel had done all in his power to make the involvement inextricable and irreversible. The proliferation of ties with the Latin world which he cultivated so assiduously at all levels was a natural response to the growing volume of western business and religious interests in the eastern Mediterranean. These would have affected Byzantium regardless of imperial policy.

Yet the period following Manuel's death and the overthrow of the regency government of Alexios II saw reversion to something like the isolationism of John II's early years. Under Andronikos I Komnenos, Isaac II Angelos and Alexios III Angelos, Byzantium opted out of the crusading movement at a time when crusading activity was intensifying, and abandoned the search for a high-level European *entente* with one or more of the major western powers. To some extent this was the result of a backlash against Manuel's expensive Latinophilia, which was carried to even greater excess

by the regency government of Maria of Antioch; it proceeded inexorably from the massacre of the Latins in Constantinople, mostly Pisans and Genoese, which accompanied the seizure of effective power by Andronikos Komnenos in 1182, as well as from his liquidation of the key members of Manuel's family through whom dynastic links to the west had been forged: Manuel's widow Maria of Antioch, Manuel's daughter Maria and her husband Renier of Montferrat, and the young Alexios II himself. That Andronikos, who was probably older than Manuel, did not murder Alexios' child fiancée, Agnes of France, but forced her to marry him, can hardly have made her family warm to him. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that when he was threatened with invasion by the king of Sicily, the only western power prepared to ally with him was Venice, whose citizens had been unaffected by the massacre of 1182 and were only too glad to take advantage of the removal of the Pisans and Genoese. Nor is it surprising that Andronikos considered that imperial interests in the east were better served by alliance with the growing power of Saladin rather than with the beleaguered Latin princes of Outremer, who no doubt remembered Andronikos' scandalous sexual adventures in Antioch and Jerusalem in 1166–7.<sup>22</sup>

It is perhaps more remarkable that no realignment was attempted after 1185 by Isaac II Angelos, who otherwise had every reason to reject his predecessor's reign as a tyrannical deviation from the normal course of imperial policy. Isaac was not anti-western. Soon after his accession he took as his second wife Margaret, a daughter of Béla III of Hungary, and he invited Conrad of Montferrat, brother of the murdered Renier, to Constantinople, where he played a large part in defeating a major revolt in 1187. Yet despite receiving the title of caesar, which Renier had held, and the hand of the emperor's sister in marriage, Conrad became dissatisfied and moved on to Syria, where he joined in the defence of Tyre against Saladin and became a candidate for the throne of Jerusalem. Isaac's renewal of Andronikos' alliance with Saladin may have been a factor in Conrad's disenchantment; what is certain is that Saladin's conquest of the Holy Land and the mobilisation of the Third Crusade in response in 1188–9 only confirmed Isaac in the alliance, from which he hoped to gain some sort of Byzantine dominion in Palestine, including the occupation of all the episcopal sees and the Holy Places, in return for obstructing the crusaders' advance. The rapprochement with Saladin should also be seen in the context of Isaac's treaties with Venice, which also took no part in the Third Crusade and stood to gain

<sup>22</sup> While *doux* of Cilicia, Andronikos seduced Philippa, the prince of Antioch's sister; subsequently he won over the niece of Manuel and widow of King Baldwin III of Jerusalem, Theodora, siring two children by her: NC, ed. van Dieten, I, pp. 139–42; tr. Magoulias, pp. 79–81; Kinn., VI.1, ed. Meineke, p. 250; tr. Brand, p. 188; William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, XX.2, ed. Huygens, pp. 913–14; tr. Babcock and Krey, II, pp. 345–6.

at the expense of Genoa and Pisa from either a Byzantine or a Muslim occupation of the coast of Palestine. In both alliances, one may detect the influence of Isaac's spiritual mentor, Dositheos, a Venetian-born monk who had predicted Isaac's rise to power and was duly rewarded, being appointed patriarch, first of Jerusalem, and then of Constantinople.<sup>23</sup>

This disengagement from the Latin west – which was not total, since it gave the Venetians an even more privileged position in Byzantine society than they had enjoyed before 1171 – may have seemed more true to the 'national' interest, which was increasingly being seen in terms of Greek as well as orthodox identity, than Manuel's costly commitments to allies with no love for the empire. Indeed, the process of dissolution had been started by one of those allies, Manuel's brother-in-law Bohemond III, who put aside his Komnenian wife well before Andronikos' usurpation. However, the empire paid dearly for its withdrawal. The pirates who terrorised the shipping and the coastal settlements of the Aegean world in the 1180s and 1190s came mainly from Pisa and Genoa, the cities which had suffered most from the massacre of 1182. The Sicilian invasion of 1185, which took Dyrrachium and went on to sack Thessaloniki, could have been prevented if Andronikos had had firm alliances, or at least a proactive diplomacy, in the west. By failing to anticipate the Third Crusade, and by allying with Saladin instead of supporting the crusaders, Isaac II weakened his moral claim for the restitution of the island of Cyprus when Richard I of England (1189–99) conquered it from its self-proclaimed emperor, Isaac Komnenos, in 1191: Cyprus was too important a source of supplies for the crusaders to entrust it to an unfriendly power.

Isaac II also entered into a damaging confrontation with Frederick Barbarossa when the latter came through Byzantine territory on the overland route to Palestine in 1189–90. The damage was not so much in the humiliating defeats inflicted by the German army, or in its systematic plundering of much of Macedonia and Thrace from its base at Philippopolis, as in the manifest contrast between Isaac's inability to obstruct a crusade which he wrongly assumed to be directed against Constantinople and Frederick's ability to threaten Constantinople if Isaac persisted in obstructing him. The contrast was painfully apparent to Niketas Choniates, who was assigned to Philippopolis at the time, and it was much appreciated by the Serbs and Vlachs, then in revolt against Byzantine authority, who offered to join forces with the Germans (see below, p. 688). Nor was the significance of the episode lost on Frederick's son Henry VI Hohenstaufen (1190–7), whom Frederick had charged with collecting money and ships from Italy in preparation for an assault on Constantinople. When Henry succeeded as emperor after Frederick's tragic death by drowning in Cilicia, he inherited

<sup>23</sup> See Magdalino (2007a).

Frederick's unfulfilled crusading ambitions and placed them high on his agenda, along with his claim to the throne of Sicily which he derived from his marriage to Constance, the aunt of William II of Sicily; William had died childless in 1189. The danger from Henry VI spurred Isaac II into diplomatic action. In 1192, he negotiated the renewal of the empire's commercial treaties with Pisa and Genoa, the two cities which Henry relied on to provide him with ships for his conquest of Sicily. Isaac also married his daughter Irene to Roger of Apulia, the son of Tancred of Lecce, who had occupied the Sicilian throne in defiance of Henry's claim. But Irene was widowed a year later, and in 1194 she was among the spoils which fell to Henry VI in his violent occupation of the Sicilian kingdom. He married her to his brother Philip of Swabia, thus making her an instrument in his policy of aggression against Byzantium.

It is uncertain whether Henry VI of Hohenstaufen really intended to take over the Byzantine empire by force, but he threatened to do so, and he used the threat, first against Isaac II, and then against Alexios III, to try and extort money and ships for his forthcoming crusade. Alexios accordingly levied an extraordinary tax, the *alamanikon*, to pay the tribute.<sup>24</sup> He was saved by Henry's sudden death in 1197. Yet the episode showed that however much Byzantium wanted to opt out of the crusading movement, the crusading movement would not leave it alone. It had relinquished the initiative, but was still expected to pay the bill. On this point, the western empire and the papacy, although in all other respects implacable enemies, were in agreement. Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) insisted on it in his letters to Alexios III: Alexios ought to model himself on Manuel, whose devotion to the cause of the Holy Land and the unity of the church had been exemplary.<sup>25</sup>

Isolationism still might have worked, and the Byzantine empire might just have been allowed to find a niche as a neutral regional power, if the Fourth Crusade, preached in 1198, had gone according to its original plan of sailing directly against Egypt. The crusade seems to have been intended to bypass Byzantium completely, and the conquest of Egypt would not only have liberated the Holy Land, but made the crusader settlements materially self-sufficient. But the leadership failed to communicate its strategic vision to the majority of crusaders. The army which assembled in Venice was well below the numbers which the Venetians had estimated in building and equipping the fleet. A detour via Byzantium thus seemed an irresistible option, indeed, the only option for keeping the crusade on course, when a pretender to the imperial throne conveniently turned up with a promise

<sup>24</sup> On the *alamanikon*, see *ODB*, I, pp. 50–1 (C. M. Brand).

<sup>25</sup> *PL* 214, col. 1125, tr. in Andrea, *Contemporary sources for the Fourth Crusade*, p. 38; *PL* 216, col. 1185.



of rich rewards if the crusaders restored him to what he plausibly claimed was his rightful inheritance. The pretender was Alexios, son of the deposed Isaac II Angelos, who had escaped from custody in Constantinople and gone to join his sister Irene and her second husband, Philip of Swabia; the promise, no doubt formulated on Philip's advice and calculated partly on the basis of the demands made by Henry VI, was to place the empire under the obedience of the Roman church, to pay 200,000 silver marks and supply provisions for every man in the army, to send 10,000 men with the expedition to Egypt and to maintain 500 knights for the defence of Outremer for the duration of his lifetime. As Isaac II later remarked, 'this is a big commitment, and I do not know how it can be kept',<sup>26</sup> especially since Byzantium was to get no share in the conquest of Egypt. Whether or not the crusade leaders knew that the offer was too good to be true, the diversion to Constantinople attracted them for other reasons. It appealed to Boniface of Montferrat, who saw a chance to claim the Byzantine inheritance of which his brothers Renier and Conrad had been cheated. It appealed to Enrico Dandolo, the doge of Venice, which stood not only to recover the costs of the fleet, but also to improve its trading position in Constantinople through the restoration of Isaac II, a much better friend than Alexios III Angelos, who had tended to favour Genoa and Pisa despite his confirmation of Venetian privileges in 1198. It could be made to appeal to the crusaders from northern France by reminding them of the generosity with which Manuel I Komnenos had treated their forebears.

The diversion of the Fourth Crusade was thus a reversion to a prevailing tendency. Now, however, Byzantium had to promise much more than it could expect in return, and Byzantium's weakness could not really help the crusading movement. The problem for both the Byzantines and the crusaders was that the latter came to Constantinople in 1203 at the invitation not of a reigning emperor, but of a rival claimant for power, and that resources were dwindling rapidly. In 1197, Alexios III had only just managed to raise the money to buy off Henry VI. By 1203 Alexios IV had a much smaller resource base from which to make good his promises: Alexios III had emptied the treasury on fleeing from Constantinople, and he and his supporters in the provinces naturally denied the government in Constantinople the provincial revenues which they controlled. Alexios IV made himself unpopular in Constantinople by his demands for money, by resorting to the requisitioning of church valuables and by consorting with the crusaders; he then alienated the crusaders by failing to keep up his payments. His overthrow and murder in a palace coup by Alexios Doukas Mourtzouphlos relieved them of the embarrassment of making war on their

<sup>26</sup> Villehard., ch. 189, ed. and French tr. Faral, I, p. 192; tr. Shaw, p. 75. On the promise see, e.g. Brand (1968), pp. 241–2; Angold (2003a), p. 86; Phillips (2004), pp. 127–9.

own protégé and gave their renewed attack on Constantinople the status of a holy war against a traitor and regicide. Alexios V Doukas put up a competent defence, but it could not prevent the Venetians from using their ships to storm the low sea walls on the Golden Horn; and when the crusaders entered the City the defence collapsed. The crusaders were thus able to gorge themselves on the riches of Constantinople, set up a Latin regime and divide up the empire on paper. However, making the division a reality proved much harder, and in the end they held on to only a fraction of the twelfth-century empire (see below, pp. 759, 763–5). The Fourth Crusade never reached Egypt, and the Latin empire of Constantinople operated at a loss.

#### CONSTANTINOPLE AND THE PROVINCES

The Byzantine state was one of the most centralised in the medieval world, and never more so than in the period 1081–1180, when the loss of central and eastern Anatolia forced the empire's military elite, as well as its bureaucratic elite, to identify with the capital as never before. Territorial contraction thus accentuated the already marked tendency of the Byzantine aristocracy to think fiscally rather than territorially, to invest in office-holding rather than land-holding. Indeed, it is possible to see a correlation between the centralised structure of the Komnenian empire and its territorial limits, which were essentially those of the area within which expeditionary forces mobilised from Constantinople could operate without allied help, and within which the emperor could safely absent himself from Constantinople. By these criteria, the Danube and the Adriatic were within the range of imperial government from Constantinople, but southern Italy, Ikonion and Egypt were not, and the empire was overextended in Dalmatia, Cilicia and Syria. Thus the empire consisted of those territories which a secure, mobile, military emperor could control from Constantinople. Those territories corresponded by and large to the limits of Greek linguistic culture and orthodox Christianity. The main exceptions were, first, in the Balkan interior, where Slavonic, Vlach and Albanian speakers predominated, along with a sizeable, non-integrated Armenian population, and, secondly, in the areas of southern Italy and Asia Minor which had been lost to the empire in the late eleventh century, and in which Greek-speaking orthodox Christians were numerous.

Looked at another way Byzantium – or *Romania* as its inhabitants termed it – corresponded to the area needed to support a large standing army and navy, an expensive international diplomacy and an enormous capital city. There was an outer frontier zone, broad in the Balkans, thin in Asia Minor, which was partly protective shield and partly forward base for imperial operations in Italy and Syria. In this zone, direct imperial administration was

limited to a few key strongholds, and local resources were either unexploited (to starve invading forces), untaxed (to secure local loyalties) or used to pay for regional defence and diplomacy (notably the case in Cyprus). Surrounded by this zone, in an area consisting essentially of the Aegean and southern Black Sea hinterland, the core Komnenian empire existed largely to maintain the safety, the opulence and the population of Constantinople.

The pull of Constantinople was due not only to its role as the administrative capital, but also to its status as the 'reigning city' of New Rome, an unrivalled showcase of holy relics, glittering treasures, ancient public monuments and magnificent buildings, a megalopolis with a population somewhere between 200,000 and 400,000 which appears to have been growing steadily throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries, even as the empire contracted overall in territorial extent. By the late twelfth century, the relationship between the 'reigning city' and the provinces was seen, on both sides, as that of a metropolis to its satellite tributaries, which were inhabited by culturally inferior second-class citizens. Ownership of the empire's prime agricultural land was overwhelmingly concentrated in Constantinople (see above, p. 490).<sup>27</sup>

In the 'outer territories', as opposed to Constantinople, heretics abounded, ignorance of the law was standard, uncanonical, semi-pagan religious customs were practised, people spoke bad Greek and there was no protection against corrupt and brutal officials. Yet this unequal relationship obviously depended on the productivity of the suppliers, on the ability of provincial communities to provide the metropolis not only with money, foodstuffs, manpower and raw materials, but also, increasingly, with manufactured goods, such as silks from Thebes and knives from Thessaloniki. It is abundantly clear that Constantinople was not the only place where urban society was expanding.<sup>28</sup> It is also clear, although documentation is patchy, that revenue could not have been raised or military defence organised in the localities without the cooperation and participation of the local aristocracy, the *archontes*. In frontier cities, such as Dyrrachium, Philadelphia or Trebizond, their loyalty was crucial in keeping invaders out. Equally, in those parts of Asia Minor which had come under Turkish rule, the attitude of the local notables was crucial in the empire's failure to recover lost territory.

The administration of the *pronoia* system, the conditional allocation of state lands and revenues as livings to mounted soldiers, which was greatly extended by Manuel I, must have created opportunities for patronage at the local level.<sup>29</sup> Thus, as Constantinople became more and more self-important, self-centred and exclusive of the 'outer territories', it became

<sup>27</sup> Magdalino (2000b); Magdalino (2007b), no. 10.

<sup>28</sup> Magdalino (1993a), pp. 144–6, 150–60; Laiou and Morrisson (2007), pp. 117–24, 127–33, 136–7.

<sup>29</sup> On *pronoia*, see *ODB*, III, p. 1734 (M. C. Bartusis); Magdalino (1993a), pp. 232–3. See also above, p. 613 and below, pp. 810–11.

increasingly noticeable that Constantinople needed the 'outer territories' more than the latter needed Constantinople. The perception may have existed before 1180, but it found expression in the following years – for the first time in the middle ages – as central government proved less and less capable of protecting the provinces from raiders and invaders. The period 1180–1204 also saw the resurgence of the Constantinopolitan populace as a political factor for the first time since 1082: in changes of regime, in anti-government and anti-Latin riots and in opposition to imperial demands for money to buy off Henry VI and the Fourth Crusade.

Under Manuel I Komnenos' successors, the empire's provinces were lost to imperial control or became centres of opposition to the government in Constantinople. The process began, predictably, in areas of the frontier zone where the empire's hold had been short or shaky, and administration largely in the hands of local potentates. Soon after Manuel's death, Béla III of Hungary seized Byzantine Dalmatia and Sirmium, which he considered to be his own patrimony. Next to secede were the Serbs of Raška and the Armenians of Cilicia, whose princes – respectively, Stefan Nemanja (c. 1165/68–96) and Rupen III (1175–87) – had always been unwilling vassals of the emperor. In the process, Rupen took possession of the last Byzantine cities in Cilicia and captured their governor, Isaac Komnenos.<sup>30</sup> Released upon payment of a ransom by Andronikos I, Isaac promptly spent the money – no doubt with the connivance of Rupen and Bohemond III of Antioch – on making himself lord of Cyprus in 1185, where he ruled independently until dispossessed by Richard I and the Third Crusade. At least initially, Isaac had the support of the local aristocracy. The usurpation of Andronikos also provoked rebellions in two major cities of north-western Asia Minor, Nicaea and Prousa, and dissatisfaction with his rule may have contributed to the ease with which the Sicilian army took Dyrrachium in 1185 and advanced to Thessaloniki unopposed.

The most serious and damaging centrifugal movement, however, was provoked not by the 'tyrant' Andronikos, but by Isaac II Angelos, the emperor who delivered the empire from Andronikos' tyranny. This was the Vlach revolt started by the brothers Peter and Asen and continued by their brother Kalojan. As it spread, the revolt came to resemble the other ethnic separatist movements, those of the Serbs and Armenians. Like them, it occurred in a mountainous frontier area, it was boosted by the Third Crusade and it resulted in the formation of a national kingdom, whose ruler received a crown from the pope. Yet there were differences: the revolt of Peter and Asen involved two peoples, the Vlachs and the Bulgarians, and the kingdom it created was a conscious resurrection of the first Bulgarian empire of the tenth century. Like its predecessor, it was not marginal to the

<sup>30</sup> See below, p. 686; Der Nersessian (1969), pp. 643–4; Boase (1978), pp. 14–15.

Byzantine heartland, but encroached significantly on the agricultural hinterland of Constantinople and the northern Aegean. Moreover, it originated in what had been, for almost a century, the most trouble-free sector of the frontier zone, where there were no local dynasties with a history of political insubordination, and contacts with the neighbouring nomads, the Cumans, took the form of peaceful commerce in the cities of the lower Danube. The revolt resulted largely from the complacency that is evident, first, in Isaac II Angelos' failure to prevent, punish or recompense the rapacity of his officials who seized Vlach livestock for his marriage feast; secondly, in his rude rejection of Peter and Asen when they requested a modest benefice; thirdly, in his failure to move quickly to deprive the rebels of their military advantages, their mountain strongholds and their Cuman allies.<sup>31</sup> Peter and Asen were thus local chieftains politicised by the carelessness of central government. In this, they may have had something in common with Theodore Mangaphas, a Greek magnate in Philadelphia, who used his proximity to the Turkish frontier to declare independence from Isaac II. Although eventually subdued by Isaac, Mangaphas re-emerged at the time of the Fourth Crusade, as one of several 'dynasts' who took advantage of the changes of regime in Constantinople to seize power in their localities.<sup>32</sup> By then, many other rebels had more or less successfully defied imperial authority from a variety of provincial power bases.

It is difficult to generalise about the origins and aims of all these figures. Several were from the Komnenian nobility, and ultimately sought power at the centre. Others such as Ivanko and Dobromir Chrysos were by-products of the Vlach–Bulgarian revolt.<sup>33</sup> A certain John Spyridonakes, who followed their example, was a Cypriot immigrant who had worked in the treasury of the imperial household and then been posted as administrator of Smolena in the Rhodope mountains. Aldobrandinus, who ruled Antalya in 1204, may have been a Pisan pirate. The others must have originated among the provincial *archontes*, and notably among the local cadres of military recruitment and defence. They included the least ephemeral of the local lordships to emerge before the formation of the Byzantine successor states: that of Theodore Mangaphas in Philadelphia, the main command centre on the eastern frontier, and those of Leo Sgouros and Leo Chamaretos in the coastal towns of the eastern Peloponnese which contributed contingents to the imperial fleet.<sup>34</sup>

Whatever the specific origins and aims of these individuals, they all shared the conviction that more was to be gained from opposition to central

<sup>31</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, pp. 368–9, 371–4; tr. Magoulias, pp. 203–4, 205–6. See below, pp. 687–8.

<sup>32</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, pp. 399–401, 603–4; tr. Magoulias, pp. 219–20, 331. On Mangaphas, see Brand (1968), pp. 85–7, 244; Cheynet (1990), pp. 123, 134–5, 454–5.

<sup>33</sup> On Ivanko and Dobromir Chrysos, see Brand (1968), pp. 125–31; Cheynet (1990), pp. 132–3; Stephenson (2000), pp. 305–8.

<sup>34</sup> Brand (1968), pp. 132–3, 143, 152–4, 244–5; Cheynet (1990), pp. 138–9, 147–8, 152–3, 454–8.

government than from service, and that they could count on provincial support. The trend they represented received spectacular endorsement in 1203, when it was joined by the emperor Alexios III Angelos. Instead of persisting in the defence of Constantinople against the crusaders, he decided to abandon the City to Alexios IV. He established his court at Mosynopolis in Thrace, where he drew on the resources of a rich hinterland extending as far as Thessaloniki.

#### THE KOMNENIAN FAMILY SYSTEM: BONDS AND FLAWS

The most distinctive, as well as the most fatal, characteristic of the Komnenian empire was the identification of the state with the imperial family; this was the essence of what used to be labelled the feudalism of the Komnenian dynasty. In some ways, Manuel's regime looks less feudal than that of Alexios or John, despite his liking for the culture and the company of western knighthood. As he matured, according to Choniates, 'he ruled more autocratically, treating his subjects not as free men but as if they were servants who belonged to him by inheritance'.<sup>35</sup> His reliance on eunuchs recalls the pre-Komnenian period, as do his attempts to cut back on grants of privilege and immunity. Yet the cut-back was mainly at the expense of the church and the Italian maritime republics. All other indications are that he was at least as indulgent to his extended family as his father and grandfather had been, and that he was scrupulous in maintaining a strict hierarchy by blood-relationship. He created one new title, that of *despotēs*, for Béla-Alexios of Hungary, when designating him as his future son-in-law and heir to the throne; the title lapsed at the birth of Alexios II, but it was revived by later emperors, and it remained the most senior of the three titles (the others were *sebastokrator* and *caesar*) which were reserved for the emperor's immediate family, and carried semi-imperial status, allowing their bearers to wear quasi-imperial insignia and to sit with the emperor on ceremonial occasions.

Manuel may also have introduced certain changes to the titulature of the wider circle of imperial relatives. In the earlier years of the dynasty, all relatives by blood or marriage below the rank of *caesar* had been designated by variants of the title *sebastos* (see above, p. 612). In the ceremonial lists of Manuel's reign, however, the imperial nephews and cousins, who stand next to the enthroned imperial family, have no titles beyond their kinship designation, with the sole exception of the senior imperial nephew, who is *prōtosebastos* ('first *sebastos*') and *prōtovesiarios*, i.e. head of the imperial household. The ranks of the *sebastoi* begin at the next level down and, among them, those who are designated as the emperor's *gambroi*, that is

<sup>35</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 60; tr. Magoulias, p. 35.

the husbands of his female nieces and cousins, rank senior to those whose relationship is too distant to be named. Not only are ranks carefully graded by degree of kinship to the emperor, and within each degree according to the seniority of the kinsman through whom the kinship is traced, but kinship designations begin to take the place of titles.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to this continual articulation of the imperial family system, Manuel's reign witnessed its further extension downwards from the military to the bureaucracy, and outwards into the sphere of foreign relations. As the Komnenian aristocracy proliferated, more of its members came to hold civilian office, while others married into the more illustrious civilian families, one of which, the Kamateroi, was already connected with the Doukai and well on the way to establishing its later ascendancy in the church and the bureaucracy. The marriage diplomacy of Alexios I and John II had created blood lines leading from the Komnenoi to ruling dynasties in the lands of the Rus, the Caucasus, Hungary and Germany. Manuel more than doubled the network with marriage alliances that related the imperial family in Constantinople to royal and princely families in Austria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Tuscany, Piedmont, northern France and Languedoc. Marriage alliances were also discussed with Henry II of England (1154–89) and William II of Sicily. This was perhaps the closest Byzantium came to being at the centre of an international 'family of kings'; even the sultan of Rum was included by virtue of his ritual adoption as the emperor's son. That Manuel saw a close connection between his internal and external families is evident in the way he interfered with the church's marriage legislation on the forbidden degrees of kinship and punished men from undistinguished bureaucratic families who threatened to devalue the status of Komnenian brides by attempting to marry into noble families.

In 1180, then, the political existence of the Byzantine empire was governed by kinship and lineage to an unprecedented degree. The future of the system consisted as never before in the cohesion of the extended imperial family. For a century that cohesion had been managed by the emperor as head of the family, but now that the emperor was an eleven-year-old, it depended on a consensus of loyalty to the young Alexios II among the Komnenian nobility. Manuel did what he could to create a framework of collective patriotic and familial responsibility: he set up a regency council, perhaps based on his inner circle of advisers, comprising his widow, the patriarch and a number of relatives. The latter were presumably selected on the basis of seniority, although Niketas Choniates indicates that they participated on a basis of equality.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, Manuel obtained guarantees from the sultan, the prince of Antioch, the king of Jerusalem and possibly other

<sup>36</sup> For further details see Magdalino (1993a), pp. 181–5, 188–91, 501–9.

<sup>37</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, pp. 224, 253–4; tr. Magoulias, pp. 127, 142.

members of the external ‘family of kings’ that they would defend Alexios’ inheritance.

With hindsight it seems clear, and contemporaries seem to have sensed, that these measures were doomed to failure. The Komnenian family had been prone to factionalism from the time of Alexios I, and its solidarity inevitably weakened as each generation multiplied the number of household units (*oikoi*) with which the imperial *oikos* at the heart of the kin-group (*genos*) had to share the finite resources of an empire which they all still regarded as the Komnenian family patrimony. The accessions of John II and Manuel I had not gone unchallenged, and although Manuel saw off his original challengers, the *sebastokratores* Isaac, his brother and uncle, the latter’s place was taken by his son Andronikos, while the former’s supporters seem to have gravitated towards Alexios Axouch, the husband of Manuel’s niece by the emperor’s late brother Alexios.

Axouch’s ‘conspiracy’ in 1167 was quickly disposed of, but Andronikos was a constant worry to Manuel from 1154, almost as troublesome during his long spells in prison, from which he escaped twice, in 1159 and 1164, and in exile among the empire’s eastern neighbours (1167–80), as he was during his brief period of liberty. After his return and rehabilitation in Manuel’s final year, he was understandably sent – like his father before him – into comfortable internal exile on the Black Sea coast. But this exclusion from Constantinople played into Andronikos’ hands, by giving him a provincial power base where he could recruit supporters, and by casting him as an impartial outsider to the selfish intrigues which divided the regency council of Alexios II, to the gross neglect of the boy’s upbringing and the public interest.

According to Niketas Choniates, there were those who lusted after the widowed empress and sought to seduce her, those who lusted after money and appropriated public funds to meet their growing expenses and those who lusted after imperial power.<sup>38</sup> Elsewhere he describes them in somewhat different terms: ‘Some of his noble guardians winged their way repeatedly like bees to the provinces and stored up money like honey, others like goats hankered after the tender shoots of empire which they continually longed to crop, while others grew fat like pigs on filthy lucre’.<sup>39</sup> The emphasis on money-making is interesting, particularly the implied distinction between the misappropriation of tax revenue from the provinces, and the sordid enrichment from the profits of trade, and possibly of prostitution, in Constantinople. It shows that the search for funds to maintain an aristocratic lifestyle was a constant motivating factor in political loyalty.

<sup>38</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, pp. 223–4; tr. Magoulias, p. 127.

<sup>39</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, pp. 227–8; tr. Magoulias, p. 129.



His enforced isolation thus put Andronikos in an ideal position, which he exploited masterfully, to pose as champion of Alexios II's best interests, which the boy's guardians were patently neglecting, and to win the sympathies of the many noble figures in Constantinople: these included Manuel's daughter Maria, who resented the dominance which one of the regency council, Manuel's nephew the *prōtosebastos* Alexios, acquired over the young emperor by forming an amorous liaison with the dowager empress. After the tension between Maria and the *prōtosebastos* broke out in armed conflict, Andronikos' intervention became inevitable. If Andronikos, once in power, had kept his election promises and formed a genuinely inclusive regency government for Alexios II, he might have held the Komnenian nobility together. His programme of administrative reform, admirable in itself, could have won him support even among his peers if he had treated them fairly and generously. But by instituting a reign of terror against all potential rivals for the regency, including the emperor's sister and mother, he provoked a serious revolt in Asia Minor; then, by going on to eliminate Alexios II and settle the succession on his own son John, he removed the only focus of consensus among the Komnenian kin-group, and committed himself to dependence on a faction bound to him by self-interest.

The terror continued, and those who could escape by fleeing abroad, to the courts of rulers who had had ties or treaties with Manuel and Alexios II. Thus the sultan, the prince and patriarch of Antioch, the king of Jerusalem, the pope, Frederick Barbarossa, the marquis of Montferrat, the king of Hungary and, above all, the king of Sicily were approached by refugees imploring their intervention. It was at the insistence of Manuel's great-nephew, the *pinkernēs* Alexios Komnenos, that William II of Sicily sent the invasion force which took Dyrrachium and Thessaloniki in 1185. The stated aim of the expedition was to replace Andronikos with a young man claiming to be Alexios II: pseudo-Alexioi were the inconvenient but inevitable consequence – for later emperors, too – of the fact that Andronikos had sunk Alexios' body in the Bosphorus. The Sicilian invasion thus not only recalled the past invasions of Robert Guiscard, Bohemond and Roger II; it also set a precedent for the diversion of the Fourth Crusade, both by the damage and humiliation it caused, and in the way it involved the external 'family of kings' in the politics of the Komnenian family.

Andronikos would probably have succeeded eventually in repelling the Sicilian invasion, as he succeeded in quelling every organised conspiracy against him, but the very diligence of his agents in hunting down potential conspirators led, quite unpredictably, to the spontaneous uprising which toppled him. When his chief agent went to arrest a suspect who had given no cause for suspicion, the suspect slew the agent in desperation, and then did the only thing he could do in order to avoid immediate execution: he rushed for asylum to the church of St Sophia. A crowd gathered, Andronikos –

evidently feeling secure – was out of town and, St Sophia being also the imperial coronation church, one thing led to another. So Isaac II Angelos became emperor because he was in the right place at the right time, and this had a decisive effect on the course of his reign. His propagandists claimed, and he firmly believed, that his accession was providential, that he was the Angel of the Lord sent by heaven to end the tyranny, so that his whole reign was ordained, blessed and protected by God. He considered his power irreproachable and untouchable, and he exercised it with a mixture of grandiosity and complacency quite inappropriate to his situation.

Other important people did not share Isaac II's belief. His miraculous elevation was not enough to convince Isaac Komnenos in Cyprus, Peter and Asen in Bulgaria, Theodore Mangaphas in Philadelphia or Basil Chotzas at Tarsia, near Nikomedeia, that they owed loyalty to Constantinople, or to prevent two young men from raising rebellions by pretending to be Alexios II. Among his own close family, it did not make up for his lack of seniority, or his military incompetence; he was challenged by his uncle John and his nephew Constantine Angelos. The Komnenian nobility as a whole were not impressed, because many of them had equally good, if not better, dynastic claims in terms of the hierarchy of kinship which had operated under Manuel: Isaac was descended from Alexios I's youngest daughter, but others could trace their descent through the male line, and some could count John II among their ancestors. For several of them, Isaac's success was only an incentive to follow it and turn up at St Sophia in the hope of being acclaimed. The first to try this was Alexios Branas, the general who had halted the Sicilian invasion. Having failed in this first attempt, he waited until he was put in command of the army sent to quell the Vlach revolt. What made his rebellion so dangerous was the fact that he combined good Komnenian lineage with military expertise and strong family connections among the military aristocracy of Adrianople. Isaac was saved only by the loyalty of the people of Constantinople and a bold sortie by Conrad of Montferrat.

During ten years in power, Isaac II faced at least seventeen revolts, a number exceeded in the eleventh and twelfth centuries only by the twenty-one plots that are recorded for the thirty-nine-year reign of Alexios I. Isaac undoubtedly saw something providential in the fact of his survival, but repeated opposition took its toll on the effectiveness of his rule, making it virtually impossible for him to delegate important military commands to highly competent noble commanders. This was probably decisive for the outcome of the rebellion of Peter and Asen. Lack of support among the Komnenian nobility may have prompted what was seen to be Isaac's excessive favouritism to his grand logothete, his non-Komnenian maternal uncle Theodore Kastamonites, and to the latter's successor, Constantine Mesopotamites. It certainly drove the members of five leading Komnenian

families, the Palaiologos, Branas, Kantakouzenos, Raoul and Petraliphas, to mount the coup in 1195 which replaced Isaac with his elder brother Alexios III Angelos.

Sibling rivalry had, as we have seen, threatened to destroy the Komnenian system in the past, but it had been kept under control, and its eruption into successful usurpation sealed the fate of the system in its twelfth-century phase. Niketas Choniates saw the overthrow of brother by brother as the supreme manifestation of the moral depravity for which the fall of Constantinople was just retribution.<sup>40</sup> From the deposition of Isaac II proceeded the escape of his son Alexios to the west just when the Fourth Crusade needed an excuse for a detour via Constantinople. In their comeback, the internal and external dimensions of the system fatally converged. Choniates, perhaps looking back to Andronikos and even to his father, saw a pattern:

If anything was the supreme cause that the Roman power collapsed to its knees and suffered the seizure of lands and cities, and, finally, itself underwent annihilation, this was the members of the Komnenoi who revolted and usurped power. For, dwelling among the nations which were unfriendly to the Romans, they were the bane of their country, even though when they stayed at home they were ineffectual, useless and incompetent in anything they tried to undertake.<sup>41</sup>

This retribution apart, however, Alexios III faced relatively little opposition from the Komnenoi. In 1200–1 there were provincial revolts led by his cousins Michael Angelos and Manuel Kamytzes, and a one-day occupation of the Great Palace in Constantinople by a son of Alexios Axouch, John Komnenos the Fat. But otherwise, Alexios enjoyed fairly good support in the bureaucracy and the church through his connection by marriage with the Kamateros family, and the consortium of Komnenian families which brought him to power appear to have been satisfied with his *laissez-faire* regime, and with his adoption of the name Komnenos in preference to Angelos. All five families flourished after 1204; four were to be prominent after 1261 in the restored empire of the Palaiologoi, and the Palaiologoi gained a head start in their future ascendancy from the marriage which Alexios III arranged between his daughter Irene and Alexios Palaiologos.

The marriage of another daughter, Anna, to Theodore I Laskaris (1205–21) laid the dynastic basis for the empire of Nicaea, the most successful of the three main Greek successor states after 1204. Cousins of Isaac II and Alexios III established the western state which enjoyed brief glory as the empire of Thessaloniki and then survived in north-western Greece as the despotate of Epiros. The empire of Trebizond, which lasted until 1461,

<sup>40</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, pp. 453–4, 532; tr. Magoulias, pp. 249–50, 292.

<sup>41</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 529; tr. Magoulias, p. 290.

was ruled by a dynasty calling themselves the Grand Komnenoi, who were descended from Andronikos I.

Under the successors of Manuel I the Komnenian system, centred on Constantinople, was programmed for self-destruction. Relocated to the provinces after 1204 through the leading families of the last twelfth-century regimes, it ensured the survival of the Byzantine empire for another two and a half centuries, while losing none of its divisive potential.

CHAPTER 18  
BALKAN BORDERLANDS (1018–1204)

PAUL STEPHENSON

BYZANTIUM'S NORTH-WESTERN APPROACHES IN THE REIGN OF  
BASIL II AND HIS SUCCESSORS

Byzantine emperors desired stability and security in the peripheral regions of the empire so as to continue controlling and exploiting the productive lands which provisioned the principal cities, most importantly Constantinople; these also yielded tax revenues to support the apparatus of government. In the Balkans the vital regions were the rich lands of Thrace and the hinterland of Constantinople in the east, and Thessaly and the lands around Thessaloniki in the west. Security required direct supervision of major communication routes, by land and water, and of strategic cities across the peninsula, but only a stabilising influence in the mountainous interior, the north-eastern plains and the north-western littoral. Control of the Black Sea ports between Constantinople and the lower Danube, notably Anchialos, Mesembria and Varna, was considered essential, as was command of the major mountain passes through the Haemus mountains. Minor paths remained in the hands of locals, largely Vlachs, whose allegiance was assiduously cultivated.

A similar situation prevailed to the west, where Albanians (*Arbanoî*) and Vlachs (*Blachoi*) had intimate knowledge of the tracks and defiles of mountains known to the Byzantines as the Zygos. Close regulation of the Egnatian Way, the principal land route between Constantinople and Thessaloniki which ran on to the Adriatic coast at Avlona and Dyrrachium, was a priority; so was control over the main land roads to the north, along the course of the Maritsa, Vardar and Velika Morava rivers. This required supervision of such cities as Skopje, Sofia, Niš and Braničevo. However, there was never an attempt to establish a centralised administrative structure across the whole Balkan peninsula: stability was best ensured by retaining the allegiance of regional potentates and populations, including Serbs and Bulgarians, through a combination of force and favour. This would also, in principle, prevent insurrection or defection in the event of foreign invasion.

Basil II (976–1025) was well able to assert his will in the periphery by virtue of the formidable reputation he established through regular

campaigning, and by occasional acts of great brutality, for example mass blinding, which instilled fear in those who might contemplate resistance or rebellion. There is little evidence that Basil intended to conquer Bulgaria before 1014; rather, he used it as an arena for exercising his troops and as a source of booty and slaves.<sup>1</sup> Following the death of Samuel of Bulgaria (987/8–1014), no individual was able to dominate the Bulgarian magnates, and the consequent instability forced Basil's hand. In four years of hard, not always successful campaigning, he established his military superiority and received the submission of the magnates.<sup>2</sup> Basil's annexation of Bulgarian lands in 1018 involved primarily the military occupation of strategic towns and fortresses. Civilian administration was left to local potentates, who received stipends and honours from the emperor, and whose sons and daughters were married to those of Byzantine aristocrats. Members of the Bulgarian royal family were taken to Constantinople and absorbed into the hierarchy and ceremonial life of the imperial court. A few powerful chieftains were transferred with their retinues to the eastern frontier. Most of the lesser Bulgarian nobles were left in place, where they continued to levy taxes in grain and wine, now as representatives of the Byzantine emperor. These they passed on, in part, to the local garrisons. In his determination not to innovate in this matter, Basil will have considered the best way to supply an army.<sup>3</sup>

Supreme authority over the Byzantine forces of occupation rested with the *stratēgos autokratōr* of Bulgaria, based in Skopje, the *patrikios* David Areianites.<sup>4</sup> His most important subordinate was the *patrikios* Constantine Diogenes, who from 1018 was designated commander in Sirmium, which he had captured himself, as well as the neighbouring territories.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that Diogenes' title was *stratēgos* of Serbia at this time.<sup>6</sup> Diogenes later bore the elaborate title '*anthypatos, patrikios* and *doux* of Thessaloniki, Bulgaria and Serbia'.<sup>7</sup> Further subordinate *stratēgoi*, stationed in key cities as commanders of garrisons, were responsible for liaising with and monitoring local potentates. George Ostrogorsky noted astutely that '... the mention of a *stratēgos* in any particular town by no means implies that this town was the centre of a theme'.<sup>8</sup> We may take this a stage further, as did Hélène Ahrweiler, and state that the presence of a *stratēgos* need not imply the establishment of a theme, except insofar as the term signifies military control

<sup>1</sup> Shepard (2002b), pp. 73–6; Stephenson (2003b), pp. 127–33.

<sup>2</sup> Yahya of Antioch, *History*, ed. and French tr. Kratchkovsky, Vasiliev *et al.*, III, pp. 406–7.

<sup>3</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, p. 412; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, pp. 340–1; see above, pp. 529–30.

<sup>4</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, p. 358; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, pp. 298–9.

<sup>5</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, pp. 365–6; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, pp. 303–4.

<sup>6</sup> DOS, I, no. 34.1, p. 102; Maksimović (1997), p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> Swiencickij (1940), pp. 439–40. <sup>8</sup> Ostrogorsky (1968), p. 311 n. 2.



Map 29 The Balkans: physical geography and regions



Map 30 The imperial mesh in the Balkans, eleventh and twelfth centuries



of a locality or region. John Skylitzes uses the term in exactly this limited sense.<sup>9</sup>

Basil II's efforts to consolidate military control of the north-western limits of Bulgaria have left clear traces in the archaeological record. At Sirmium renovations were undertaken on the walls, and a garrison installed.<sup>10</sup> On the opposite bank of the Sava, at modern Mačvanska Mitrovica, a new episcopal church was built, the third on the site.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, a sixth-century church was renovated at Veliki Gradac, some way to the east of Sirmium.<sup>12</sup> The restoration of ramparts, and relatively large number of bronze coins found there, suggest that Basil also installed a garrison at Belgrade.<sup>13</sup> Excavations at Margum, at the confluence of the Velika Morava and Danube, have turned up seals and several coins from Basil's reign.<sup>14</sup> A new fortress was constructed at Braničevo, at the confluence of the Mlava and Danube, and it grew in importance through the eleventh century.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast, there are no clear indications that Basil established garrisons in the interior highlands south of the Danube and west of the Velika Morava, namely in Raška and Bosnia. Instead, a line of small watch-towers studded the passes through the Zygos mountains west of the Velika Morava corridor between Skopje and Niš. Excavations or surveys have identified several fortresses constructed or rebuilt in the eleventh century, including those at, from south to north, Lipljan, Zvečan, Galič, Jelec, Ras and Brvenik.<sup>16</sup> In the later eleventh century we know that a no-man's-land stretched to the west of these fortresses.<sup>17</sup> Serbia, lying beyond this, was never to become a Byzantine administrative district. A seal struck by a *katepanō* of Ras has been convincingly dated to the reign of John I Tzimiskes (969–76), and may indicate that he enjoyed a brief period of recognition in Raška.<sup>18</sup> This is apparently confirmed by the *Chronicle of the priest of Duklja*.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, a seal has demonstrated that a command known as Serbia existed briefly, perhaps related to the recovery of Sirmium in 1018. However, these brief periods of intensified Byzantine presence never compromised the local Slavic power structures. Instead, Constantinople sought to work through local rulers, to whom titles and stipends were distributed. Thus, in a charter

<sup>9</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, p. 363; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, p. 302; Ahrweiler (1960), pp. 48–52, 78–9. See also above, pp. 240–1, 266–7.

<sup>10</sup> Popović, V. (1978), pp. 189–93. <sup>11</sup> Popović, V. (1980), pp. i–iv.

<sup>12</sup> Janković (1981), pp. 21–3, 41–2, 75–8. <sup>13</sup> Ivanišević (1993); Popović, M. (1982), pp. 42–3.

<sup>14</sup> Maksimović and Popović (1993), pp. 127–9; *DOS*, I, no. 36a, p. 195; Ivanišević and Radić (1997), pp. 133–4, 141.

<sup>15</sup> Ivanišević (1988); Popović and Ivanišević (1988), p. 130.

<sup>16</sup> Popović, M. (1991); Stephenson (2000), pp. 125, 148–50.

<sup>17</sup> *AL*, IX.4.3, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, p. 266; ed. and French tr. Leib, II, p. 167; tr. Sewter, p. 277.

<sup>18</sup> *DOS*, I, no. 33.1, pp. 100–1; Kalić (1988), pp. 127–40. <sup>19</sup> *LPD*, p. 324.



Figure 50 Seal of Leo, imperial *spatharokandidatos*: his exact relationship with the imperial authorities is uncertain, but he was probably a local Croat notable; the seal is weakly imprinted and the obverse appears to be blank

issued in July 1039, the Slavic ruler of Zahumlje boasted a string of imperial titles: 'Ljutovit, *prōtopatharios* of the Chrysotriklinos, *hypatos* and *stratēgos* of Serbia and Zahumlje'.<sup>20</sup>

Beyond Serbia, in Croatia and Dalmatia, authority was similarly exercised by local notables who were willing to recognise Byzantine overlordship. A seal has come to light which bears the legend 'Leo, imperial *spatharokandidatos* and [*archōn*] of Croatia'.<sup>21</sup> The use of the name Leo may suggest that the Croat in question had taken a Byzantine name, or a bride, or had been baptised by the emperor, or by one of his subordinates. We have examples of all such eventualities in the Balkan lands recovered by Basil II.<sup>22</sup> A certain Dobronja, who also went by the name Gregory, accepted Byzantine money and titles in recognition of his authority in the northern Dalmatian lands. Charters preserved in Zara show that he had been granted the rank of *prōtopatharios* and the title *stratēgos* of all Dalmatia. Kekaumenos records that he travelled twice to Constantinople as *archōn* and toparch of Zara and Split before 1036, when he was taken prisoner and later died in gaol.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> von Falkenhausen (1970). <sup>21</sup> DOS, I, no. 16.1, pp. 48–9.

<sup>22</sup> Stephenson (2000), pp. 74–7, 123–30. <sup>23</sup> Kek., ed. and Russian tr. Litavrin, pp. 316–18.

REBELLIONS AND CULTURAL COMPROMISE IN  
OCCUPIED BULGARIA

Dobronja's change of fortunes is likely to have been the result of a change in Byzantine policy towards the western Balkans. Rather than patronise regional potentates and continue to raise taxes in kind, a policy was devised to extract gold from the periphery through taxation in coin. This initiative was taken in response to cash shortages within the state economy generally,<sup>24</sup> and in particular to demands to redirect both coinage and manpower to the north-eastern Balkans, which were threatened by the Pechenegs in the 1030s.<sup>25</sup> While the medium-term result was the increased monetisation of the region, the immediate consequence was a series of rebellions between 1040 and 1042. The first was started by a certain Peter Deljan in Belgrade and Margum. The second was a direct result of the first, and involved the troops raised in the theme of Dyrrachium to fight Deljan. Instead of fighting Deljan, they and their leader Tihomir joined him. The third rebellion was also a response to Deljan's activities: a Bulgarian prince, Alusjan, observed his success with envy from Constantinople and determined to seize control of the rebellion to further his own interests. He succeeded in dividing support for Deljan and, ultimately, replacing him at the head of the rebel army. He then surrendered to the Byzantines.

The fourth rebellion was an entirely distinct affair which arose in Duklja under Stefan Vojislav, who went by the title *archōn* and 'toparch of the *kastra* in Dalmatia, Zeta and Ston'. According to Kekaumenos, Vojislav invited the *stratēgos* of (Ragusa) Dubrovnik, named Katakalon, to act as godfather to his son, but kidnapped him en route to the ceremony.<sup>26</sup> This confirms that a close working relationship – albeit one subject to arbitrary violation – existed between local potentates and Byzantine officers in this peripheral zone of the empire into the 1040s. Eventually, Vojislav's rebellion was crushed with the aid of neighbouring Slavic potentates. If we can trust the *Chronicle of the priest of Duklja*, Ljutovit 'princeps of Zahumlje' mentioned above, as well as the *ban* of Bosnia and the *župan* of Raška, all welcomed Byzantine ambassadors offering piles of imperial silver and gold in return for military assistance against Vojislav.<sup>27</sup>

After Vojislav's demise, Duklja's loyalty was to be ensured by the marriage of Vojislav's son and successor Michael to a relative of Constantine IX (1042–55).<sup>28</sup> Michael's four sons by this marriage, and seven by another, extended their authority over neighbouring regions, including Zahumlje, Travunija and Raška, without provoking serious complaints or interference from Constantinople. In contrast, an increased Byzantine presence was

<sup>24</sup> Oikonomides (2002), pp. 1019–26.      <sup>25</sup> Stephenson (1999); Stephenson (2000), pp. 130–5.

<sup>26</sup> Kek., ed. and Russian tr. Litavrin, pp. 186–8.

<sup>27</sup> *LPD*, pp. 346–7.      <sup>28</sup> *LPD*, p. 357; Stephenson (2000), pp. 138–41.



Figure 51 Illustration from the Madrid Skylitzes of Peter Deljan being proclaimed ruler by his fellow Slavs

introduced into the lands around Ohrid and Skopje, which comprised the secular and ecclesiastical centres of the theme of Bulgaria. In the 1040s we learn of a *pronoētēs* of (all) Bulgaria, the eunuch and monk Basil, who was also called the *satrapēs* of Bulgaria.<sup>29</sup> Subsequently a *praitōr* operated alongside the military commander, now known as the *doux* of Bulgaria or Skopje. The *praitōr* John Triakontaphyllos held the elevated rank of *prōtoproedros*, which was introduced c. 1060,<sup>30</sup> and he may well have been a contemporary of Gregory, *prōtoproedros* and *doux* of Bulgaria.<sup>31</sup>

The autocephalous status of the Bulgarian church, with its prelate in Ohrid, had been guaranteed in directives issued by Basil II in 1019–20. Basil had left the church under a local archbishop, who could conduct services in Slavonic and communicate effectively with his subordinates; the latter were left in post throughout the Bulgarian lands, from the Adriatic to the Danube and Black Sea.<sup>32</sup> In effect, the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the archbishop of Bulgaria in 1020 matched that of the *stratēgos autokratōr* of Bulgaria in military affairs. And just as the role of the latter diminished over time, so did that of the archbishop. By the mid-eleventh century a metropolitan of Dristra was appointed for the bishoprics of the lower

<sup>29</sup> Kek., ed. and Russian tr. Litavrin, p. 180; Attal., ed. Bekker, p. 37; ed. and Spanish tr. Pérez Martín, p. 29; Schlumberger, *Sigillographie*, pp. 740–1.

<sup>30</sup> Oikonomides (1976a), p. 126; *ODB*, III, p. 1727 (A. Kazhdan, A. Cutler).

<sup>31</sup> *DOS*, I, nos. 29.2, 29.4, pp. 94–5. For further references to officials in charge of Bulgaria, see: Skyl., ed. Thurn, p. 478; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, p. 394; Kek., ed. and Russian tr. Litavrin, p. 280; Skyl. Con., p. 121; Attal., ed. Bekker, p. 83; ed. and Spanish tr. Pérez Martín, p. 63; Bănescu (1946), p. 144; Hunger (1968), pp. 186–7; Cheynet (1990), p. 409; Prinzing (1995), p. 223; Kühn (1991), p. 230.

<sup>32</sup> Gelzer, 'Orientalischen Kirche II'.

Danube, a parallel to the emergence of a theme known as Paradounabon.<sup>33</sup> In 1037 Leo, a Greek-speaking archbishop, was installed in Ohrid. He conducted services in Greek in the church of St Sophia, a domed basilica named after the Great Church in Constantinople, but whose wall-paintings have parallels in contemporary structures in Thessaloniki,<sup>34</sup> and it has been suggested that 'the program of decoration provides an explicit statement of the imperial agenda for the newly reintegrated province'.<sup>35</sup>

There can be no doubt that the theme of Bulgaria was treated differently from semi-autonomous lands left in the hands of local rulers. However, the extent to which Bulgarian culture was hellenised under Byzantine rule is impossible to quantify, and there is no evidence for systematic suppression of the Slavic language, which continued to exist alongside Greek as a language of worship and literary production. A number of Old Church Slavonic liturgical codices, for example the mid-eleventh-century *Epistolarium eninensis* and twelfth-century *Euchologium sinaiticum*, attest the vitality of the language. Indeed, it is only in the twelfth century, not the tenth, that Slavic appears to have replaced Greek as the principal language of sung liturgies throughout Bulgaria.<sup>36</sup> If the number of original Slavonic works of the highest order was small, translations of Greek works into Slavic continued uninterrupted into the twelfth century, including those of the Cappadocian fathers Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa. This production suggests an increasingly bilingual community of scholars in the major centres, but also in provincial monastic settings, for example the new Slavic foundations of St Joachim at Mount Osogovo and St Gabriel at Lesnovo.<sup>37</sup> There emerged also, for the first time, a genre with no contemporary parallels in Byzantine Greek: popular Slavic saints' *Lives* composed in a simple style without rhetorical introductions and conclusions or long theological digressions, for example the *Lives* of the forementioned Joachim and Gabriel.<sup>38</sup>

The fifth Greek-speaking archbishop of Ohrid, Theophylact, wrote extensively from and on Bulgaria, elucidating the balance between secular and ecclesiastical affairs. From his letters we learn that taxation and conscription were pursued ruthlessly in the lands around Ohrid, and he appeals on numerous occasions to Byzantine administrators on behalf of locals.<sup>39</sup> Although he often appears scornful of their rusticity, Theophylact took the care of his Bulgarian flock seriously and showed grudging respect

<sup>33</sup> The lands bordering the lower Danube were known as either Paradounabon (literally '[lands] beside the Danube') or Paristrion ('beside the Ister', the ancient name for the Danube).

<sup>34</sup> Zarov (2003), pp. 130–1. <sup>35</sup> Wharton (1988), p. 106.

<sup>36</sup> Hannick (1988); Hannick (1993), pp. 932–3.

<sup>37</sup> Thomson, F. (1989), pp. 140–4; *pace* Fine (1983), pp. 219–20.

<sup>38</sup> Bojović and Georgiev (1997), pp. 28–31, 43–4.

<sup>39</sup> Theophylact of Ohrid, *Letters*, ed. and French tr. Gautier, pp. 166–9, 194–5, 208–II, 237, 324.

for distinctive Bulgarian institutions in the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition.<sup>40</sup> It would appear that the principal agents of hellenisation, such as Theophylact, had no desire to eradicate Slavonic, but rather allowed it to develop in an enriched cultural context.<sup>41</sup>

#### WEALTH, MIGRATIONS OF NOMADS AND DISARRAY ON THE LOWER DANUBE

The reorganisation of the western Balkan lands in the mid-eleventh century took place against a background of renewed nomad threats to Paradounabon. Between 1032 and 1036, a series of raids by the Pechenegs penetrated the empire as far as Thessaloniki, laid waste much of Thrace and Macedonia, and sacked a number of the smaller fortified *kastra* on the lower Danube. Excavations at two such fortresses, Derwent and Capidava, have revealed destruction levels dated by coins of Michael IV (1034–41). At Capidava archaeologists have uncovered a pit full of dismembered bodies and burnt debris.<sup>42</sup> The suburbs of Dinogetia show similar signs of a devastating nomad assault, datable by over 100 coins to spring 1036.<sup>43</sup> New houses were subsequently built there; unlike earlier semi-subterranean dwellings, they were erected at ground level on a foundation of small stones and twigs, and the regular pattern of construction suggests this was a coordinated imperial enterprise. A contemporary project saw the construction of similar surface-level houses on the island of Păcuilui lui Soare near Dristra.<sup>44</sup>

Both Dinogetia and Păcuilui lui Soare appear to have flourished as trading posts in the mid-eleventh century, sharing in the remarkable growth in trade between Constantinople and the lower Danube which coincided exactly with the intensification of the Pecheneg threat. This probably reflects a deliberate policy of encouraging the nomads to trade rather than raid. Contemporary written references to this phenomenon are scarce. The *Life* of Cyril the Phileote reveals that the saint was employed as a navigator on board a ship that traded along the Black Sea coast and at the watch-towers of the lower Danube.<sup>45</sup> Michael Attaleiates provides a brief description of these fortified entrepôts, where a myriad of languages could be heard.<sup>46</sup> However, the archaeological record provides greater insights. Finds of amphorae, used to transport a variety of goods including olive oil and wine, have been abundant at sites along the lower Danube, while trade in other ceramics also grew rapidly, most commonly olive-green glazed wares produced in Constantinople.<sup>47</sup> Further evidence for trade links with the imperial capital

<sup>40</sup> Mullett (1997), pp. 272–3. <sup>41</sup> Thomson, F. (1989).

<sup>42</sup> Diaconu (1970), pp. 48–9; Madgearu (1999), p. 485. <sup>43</sup> Stefan *et al.* (1967), pp. 22–50.

<sup>44</sup> Diaconu (1970), p. 62. <sup>45</sup> *Life of Cyril the Phileote*, pp. 63, 284–5.

<sup>46</sup> Attal., ed. Bekker, p. 204; ed. and Spanish tr. Pérez Martín, p. 150.

<sup>47</sup> Diaconu *et al.* (1972–7), I, pp. 71–119; Stefan *et al.* (1967), pp. 229–49.

is provided by a seal discovered at Noviodunum struck by 'Niketas, *notarios* and *boulloṭēs*', a Constantinople-based official responsible for oversight of controlled merchandise.<sup>48</sup>

Large numbers of coins facilitated trade on the lower Danube. Most of them were struck in Constantinople. To cite just a couple of examples, over 1,000 eleventh-century Byzantine bronze coins have been discovered at Păcuilui lui Soare, with a peak under Michael IV (c. 200 coins) and Constantine IX (c. 300 coins). Of the more than 600 bronze coins discovered at Dinogetia, 100 represent a single hoard of *folleis* struck by Michael IV. While such numbers are still modest when compared with extensively excavated sites in the heart of the empire, such as Athens or Corinth, they are far greater than in previous periods in this region. Significant numbers of Byzantine precious coins have been found in lands which were then occupied by the Pechenegs, for example in Bessarabia and Wallachia, which may represent tribute payments.<sup>49</sup> Great care was taken to maintain good relations with the people who lived alongside the Pechenegs. The citizens of the towns on the lower Danube were provided with annual stipends (*philotimiai*) to guarantee their loyalty and to support a substantial local army.<sup>50</sup>

Payments and opportunities for trade failed to prevent a massive migration of Pechenegs into Byzantine lands in 1043. A feud had erupted between the Pechenegs' supreme chieftain, Tyrach, and his subordinate Kegen, who had fled with his followers to an island near Dristra.<sup>51</sup> Kegen was baptised in Constantinople, awarded the rank of *patrikios* and given command of three *kastra* on the Danube, whence he provoked Tyrach to launch an invasion across the frozen river in winter 1047.<sup>52</sup> The nomads pillaged widely, before an outbreak of pestilence forced their surrender. Captives were settled along the main road that ran from Niš to Sofia.<sup>53</sup> Just as all seem settled, an attack on the eastern frontier by the newly arrived Seljuq Turks inspired the emperor to raise a force of 15,000 from among the Pecheneg colonists. Despatched to the east under their own chiefs, the nomads rebelled as soon as they had crossed the Bosphorus. They made their way back into the Balkans, crossed the Haemus and settled in the vicinity of Preslav. Kegen's Pechenegs, previously loyal to the emperor, joined the rebellion, and efforts to crush the rebellions led to a series of imperial defeats.<sup>54</sup> Public reaction was strong, and the emperor was left with no option but to recognise the

<sup>48</sup> Barnea (1983), p. 265; *LPB*, p. 321.

<sup>49</sup> Madgearu (2001b), pp. 207–8; Custurea (2000), pp. 185–95.

<sup>50</sup> Attal., ed. Bekker, pp. 83, 204–5; ed. and Spanish tr. Pérez Martín, pp. 63, 150.

<sup>51</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, p. 433; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, pp. 359–60; Shepard (1992).

<sup>52</sup> Kazhdan (1977). See above, p. 328.

<sup>53</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, pp. 455–7; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, pp. 377–9; Shepard (1975); Malamut (1995), pp. 118–22.

<sup>54</sup> Kek., ed. and Russian tr. Litavrin, p. 180.

settlement of an independent group of nomads between the Haemus and lower Danube, in a region called the ‘hundred hills’.<sup>55</sup> In 1053 he agreed a thirty-year peace treaty, and with ‘gifts and imperial titles soothed the ferocity and barbarity’ of the Pechenegs.<sup>56</sup>

It is in the context of the Pecheneg wars that we first find mention of an integrated command known as Paradounabon. We have the seals of several *katepanoi* of Paradounabon, which have all been dated later than c. 1045.<sup>57</sup> The *magistros* and *doux* Basil Apokapes was probably appointed to command Paradounabon during the brief reign of Isaac I Komnenos (1057–9).<sup>58</sup> In response to a joint assault of Hungarians and Pechenegs, Isaac renewed an aggressive policy. He achieved no substantive success, but returned to Constantinople having destroyed some nomad tents and bearing booty, with ‘his head crowned with the garlands of victory’.<sup>59</sup> If the Pechenegs proved unwilling to relinquish territory in Paradounabon it had much to do with the Uzes, or Oghuz, who now occupied their former lands north of the lower Danube. Ominously for both the Pechenegs and Byzantines, in 1064,

when the commanders of the towns of the Danube were the *magistros* Basil Apokapes and the illustrious *magistros* Nikephoros Botaneiates, the entire tribe of Uzes, bringing their possessions, crossed the frozen river Danube in long wooden boats and sharp-prowed vessels made of branches lashed together. They defeated the Bulgarians and other soldiers who attempted to block their passage.<sup>60</sup>

Both Byzantine commanders were captured, and lands were despoiled even beyond Thessaloniki. Fortunately for the Byzantines, like Tyrach’s Pechenegs in 1047, the Uzes fell victim to disease. Some survivors were recruited into the Byzantine army, others returned north and were employed as border guards by the rulers of the Rus and Hungarians.

#### SLAV MALCONTENTS, ARMED HERETICS AND PECHENEGS

The persistent threat posed by the various nomadic peoples led the new emperor and former general Constantine X (1059–67) to believe there could be no effective military solution to the problems in Paradounabon, and

<sup>55</sup> Skyl., ed. Thurn, pp. 465, 467; French tr. Flusin and Cheynet, pp. 384–6; Diaconu (1970), pp. 66–9.

<sup>56</sup> Attal., ed. Bekker, p. 43; ed. and Spanish tr. Pérez Martín, p. 33; Diaconu (1970), pp. 75–6. See also above, p. 600.

<sup>57</sup> Iordanov (2003). See also Banescu (1946), p. 70; Iordanov, ‘Neizdadeni vizantiiski olovni pechatī’, pp. 89–92; Madgearu (1999), pp. 426–9; Zacos *et al.*, *Byzantine lead seals*, II, p. 300.

<sup>58</sup> Iordanov, ‘Neizdadeni vizantiiski olovni pechatī’, pp. 89–92; Grünbart (1998) pp. 37–40; Barnea (1987), pp. 84–5.

<sup>59</sup> Psell., VII.70, ed. Renauld, II, p. 127; ed. and Italian tr. Impellizzeri *et al.*, II, pp. 270–1; tr. Sewter, p. 320; Attal., ed. Bekker, pp. 66–8; ed. and Spanish tr. Pérez Martín, pp. 51–2; Skyl. Con., pp. 106–7.

<sup>60</sup> Attal., ed. Bekker, p. 83; ed. and Spanish tr. Pérez Martín, p. 63. See also Skyl. Con., pp. 113–14.



that security was better achieved by appeasement. However, even this broke down in the fiscal and political crisis of the 1070s, when the empire suffered assaults from all sides. In 1071 Seljuq Turks and Turkoman nomads invaded Anatolia, and in the extended aftermath of the battle of Manzikert bands of Turkoman nomads moved into the interior plateau of Anatolia (see above, pp. 609–10). No decent defence was mounted while the emperor Romanos IV Diogenes (1068–1071) competed with the Doukas family for control of the throne. The Balkan and Italian lands of the empire were no more stable at this time than Anatolia. In 1071, Bari, the last Byzantine stronghold in southern Italy, fell to the Normans. In the same year, the Hungarians and the Pechenegs crossed into imperial lands and plundered throughout Thrace and Macedonia; as a consequence

the Slav people threw off the Roman yoke and laid waste Bulgaria, taking plunder and leaving scorched earth. Skopje and Niš were sacked, and all the towns along the river Sava and beside the Danube between Sirmium and Vidin suffered greatly. Furthermore, the Croats and Dukljans throughout the whole of Dalmatia rose in rebellion.<sup>61</sup>

Skylitzes Continuatus provides a useful account of the Slavs' rebellion. Michael of Duklja, we are told, was approached by Bulgarian chieftains who demanded that he despatch a son 'to deliver them from the oppression and exactions of the Romans'.<sup>62</sup> Michael gladly sent his son Bodin with 300 troops to Prizren, where he was met by the magnates and the leading man of Skopje, George Vojteh, who acclaimed Bodin 'as emperor of the Bulgarians and gave him the new name Peter'. Peter was an imperial name in Bulgaria, recalling the tsar who reigned from 927 to 969. The *doux* of Skopje, Nikephoros Karatenos, marched on Prizren with an allied force of Byzantines and Bulgarians. However, Karatenos was undermined by rumours and replaced by a certain Damian Dalassenos, who taunted and insulted his troops, destroying their morale on the eve of battle; they suffered a bloody rout at the hands of the Serbs. Consequently, the rest of the Bulgarians recognised Bodin-Peter as their emperor, while he set about plundering lands around Niš and abusing the locals.

Vojteh's opportunism in approaching the Dukljans had thus been turned against him, for the new 'Bulgarian emperor' proved to be more avaricious than the Byzantines. Moreover, when a Byzantine army marched on Skopje, Bodin-Peter showed no concern for his 'subjects', obliging Vojteh to surrender without offering resistance. A garrison was installed in Skopje while Byzantine forces turned to Niš and promptly captured Bodin-Peter, who was despatched to Constantinople, and thence to Antioch.<sup>63</sup> Skylitzes Continuatus considered the reason for the rebellions to have been the

<sup>61</sup> Nikephoros Bryennios, III.1, *Histoire*, ed. and French tr. Gautier, p. 208–11.

<sup>62</sup> Skyl. Con., pp. 162–3; Stephenson (2000), pp. 141–4. <sup>63</sup> *LPD*, p. 358.

‘insatiate greed’ of the treasurer Nikephoritzes, which he compared to the policy that had sparked the rebellions of the 1040s. The burden of taxation caused particular offence to the local leadership in lands around Skopje, at the northern limits of direct Byzantine administration, where Peter Deljan had initially found his supporters. Such sentiments were not shared by all Bulgarians, and many fought alongside the Byzantine troops against Bodin-Peter.<sup>64</sup>

The turmoil of the early 1070s left Pechenegs in charge of key outposts on the Danube. It also saw the end of the distribution of stipends, forcing the nomads to look elsewhere for booty. Once again they set their sights on the lands south of the Haemus, and in 1077 launched a devastating raid into Thrace.<sup>65</sup> Ominously, the Pechenegs began to forge connections with the Paulicians, a heretical sect settled near Philippopolis, who had taken control of several passes through the Haemus. The fact that the nomads relied on a heretical minority may also suggest that they could expect little assistance from the orthodox majority. From his stronghold at Beliatoba, which dominated a pass of the same name through the Haemus, the Paulicians’ leader Traulos controlled access between Paradounabon and Thrace. When Traulos sought to ally himself with the Pechenegs, marrying the daughter of one of their chieftains, the new emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118) ‘foresaw the evil likely to result, and wrote conciliatory letters full of promises. He even sent a chrysobull guaranteeing Traulos an amnesty and full liberty.’<sup>66</sup> The emperor’s efforts at conciliation were fruitless, and once again the Pechenegs crossed into Byzantine lands.

Gregory Pakourianos, commander-in-chief of the imperial forces in the west, was given responsibility for resisting the Pechenegs while the emperor campaigned against the Normans at Dyrrachium. Pakourianos prosecuted his war with some success, but died in battle in 1086, riding his horse headlong into an oak tree.<sup>67</sup> In spring 1087, Tzelgu, the supreme chieftain of the Pechenegs who were still settled north of the Danube, launched a devastating invasion. His route, crossing the middle Danube, suggests that he had reached an agreement with the Pechenegs settled in Paradounabon not to violate their territory. He had also reached an understanding with the Hungarians, and a large force under the former Hungarian king Salomon (1063–74) accompanied him. A Byzantine force fell on them in a mountain pass and succeeded in killing Tzelgu. However, those who escaped ‘returned to the Danube and made their camp there. Living

<sup>64</sup> Fine (1983), p. 214.

<sup>65</sup> Nikephoros Bryennios, III.14, *Histoire*, ed. and French tr. Gautier, pp. 236–7.

<sup>66</sup> *AL*, VI.4.4, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, p. 174; ed. and French tr. Leib, II, p. 49; tr. Sewter, p. 187.

<sup>67</sup> *AL*, VI.14.3, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, p. 200; ed. and French tr. Leib, II, p. 83; tr. Sewter, p. 213.

alongside [Byzantine] lands they treated them as their own and plundered with complete licence.<sup>68</sup>

Groups of nomads on both sides of the Danube had made common cause, forcing Alexios Komnenos to reconsider his northern policy. In an oration delivered in January 1088 by Theophylact, the future archbishop of Ohrid, the emperor's willingness to treat with the Pechenegs is celebrated as a 'bloodless victory'.<sup>69</sup> However, this was ephemeral, and the Pecheneg wars, which are copiously documented by Anna Komnena, reached their bloody conclusion at Lebounion in Thrace on 29 April 1091. This was a magnificent victory for the imperial forces, hence the chant by the Byzantines: 'All because of one day, the Scythians never saw May.'<sup>70</sup> The *Life* of Cyril the Philote provides a near-contemporary account of the panic before the battle when 'because of the imminent danger all took refuge in citadels', and the relief afterwards when 'the insurmountable turmoil caused by the Scythians was transformed into peace with the aid of God and the perseverance of the emperor'.<sup>71</sup> The victory at Lebounion established the Komnenoi in an unassailable position in Constantinople. Alexios was able to disinherit the son of Michael VII Doukas and appoint his own three-year-old son John – the future John II (1118–43) – as junior emperor.

#### THE WESTERN BALKANS: THE NORMAN CHALLENGE, AND VENETIAN AND HUNGARIAN ALLIANCES

Peace in the western Balkans was equally hard-won. There the greatest menace was posed by the Normans who had come to dominate southern Italy, and wished to expand across the Adriatic into the theme of Dyrrachium. A Norman invasion, led by Robert Guiscard and his son Bohemond, accompanied Alexios I's accession in April 1081 (see above, pp. 610–11), and the earliest indications for the new emperor were not good. First, the citizens of Dubrovnik and other unspecified 'Dalmatians' provided transport ships for Norman troops.<sup>72</sup> Next, advance forces were handed the citadel at Corfu by its defenders, and proceeded to capture the ports of Vonitsa, Butrint and Avlona without difficulty.<sup>73</sup> Evidently, the greatest concern for the emperor was retaining the loyalty of the native population. Anna Komnena records that 'Alexios sent letters to the leaders (*hēgemones*) of the coastal towns and

<sup>68</sup> *AL*, VII.1.1–2.1, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, pp. 203–4; ed. and French tr. Leib, II, pp. 87–8; tr. Sewter, pp. 217–18.

<sup>69</sup> Theophylact of Ohrid, *Discourses*, ed. and French tr. Gautier, pp. 222–7; Malamut (1995), pp. 138–9.

<sup>70</sup> *AL*, VIII.5.8, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, p. 249; ed. and French tr. Leib, II, p. 143; tr. Sewter, p. 258.

<sup>71</sup> *La Vie de Sainte Cyrille*, pp. 127, 135.

<sup>72</sup> William of Apulia, *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi*, pp. 210, 220.

<sup>73</sup> William of Apulia, *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi*, pp. 214–17.

to the islanders earnestly exhorting them not to lose heart, nor to relax their efforts in any way.' Guiscard's intention was to secure, through intimidation and persuasion, the support of these same *hēgemones*. Moreover, the Norman had taken a crucial measure to secure their defection: he had in tow a man claiming to be the deposed emperor Michael VII. Clearly, Guiscard was aware that the population of Dyrrachium was loyal to the empire, but not necessarily to the current emperor. The Byzantine *doux* in Dyrrachium, George Palaiologos, kept the emperor informed of developments with regular despatches.<sup>74</sup> From his missives 'the emperor learnt that . . . countless hosts from all directions were rallying thick as winter snowflakes, and the more frivolous folk, believing that the false Michael was in truth the emperor, were joining Robert.'<sup>75</sup>

As he marched to the city Alexios I received news that Palaiologos had lost a pitched battle and been badly wounded. The emperor lost a second battle on 18 October 1081, in military terms a worse defeat for the Byzantines than the infamous rout at Manzikert.<sup>76</sup> Many magnates fell, and the emperor barely escaped, leaving Dyrrachium at the mercy of the Normans. A saving grace appeared to be the retention of the citadel by the Venetians, Alexios' allies who shared the imperial antipathy towards Norman expansion across the Adriatic, and rallied to the Byzantine cause in return for exceptional trading privileges. The Venetian doge Domenico Silvio was granted the title *doux* of Dalmatia and Croatia, and the elevated rank of *prōtosebastos*, placing him fourth in the new imperial hierarchy devised by Alexios.<sup>77</sup>

Venetian support was instrumental in the Byzantine recovery of territory and authority in Dyrrachium after 1082. The doge maintained vigilant guard over the Adriatic sea lanes while the emperor slowly clawed back land. The turning-point came at Larissa, where the emperor took advice from locals and determined to 'lay an ambush there and so defeat the Latins by guile'.<sup>78</sup> Alexios won his first significant victory by avoiding pitched battle, tricking the Norman cavalry into a chase and shooting at their horses from a distance. When Guiscard returned in full force in 1084 he was confronted by the Venetians, who achieved important victories at sea. Then, having landed and advanced into the interior of the theme of Dyrrachium, the Normans were caught between a vigorous naval blockade and the mountains, where the Byzantines vigilantly guarded the passes. Guiscard withdrew to the port of Jericho where he was trapped for two

<sup>74</sup> DOS, I, no. 12.2, p. 41.

<sup>75</sup> *AL*, IV.2.1, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, p. 122; ed. and French tr. Leib, I, p. 146; tr. Sewter, p. 137.

<sup>76</sup> *AL*, IV.6., ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, pp. 131–6; ed. and French tr. Leib, I, pp. 157–63; tr. Sewter, pp. 145–9; William of Apulia, *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi*, pp. 224–7.

<sup>77</sup> *AL*, IV.2.2–3, VI.5.7–10, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, pp. 122–3, 178–9; ed. and French tr. Leib, I, pp. 146–7, II, pp. 53–5; tr. Sewter, pp. 137–8, 190–1. See also p. 625.

<sup>78</sup> *AL*, V.5.5, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, p. 155; ed. and French tr. Leib, II, p. 25; tr. Sewter, p. 168.

months by adverse winds and the allied ships.<sup>79</sup> Up to 10,000 Normans are said to have starved to death before a withdrawal was effected. Guiscard died the following year, 1085. Alexios had discovered how best to use the natural defences of Dyrrachium and the services of his allies. These tactics would serve him well again, in 1106–7.

The city of Dyrrachium was returned to the empire, and thereafter the command was considered sensitive enough only to be granted to close relatives of the emperor, including Alexios' brother-in-law John Doukas and his nephew John Komnenos, the son of the *sebastokrator* Isaac.<sup>80</sup> This second John led an unsuccessful campaign against the Dukljans, suffering many casualties through inexperience and impetuosity. However, John retained his command and in 1096 was the Byzantine commander who first encountered an entirely new menace from the west: the First Crusade. It has been demonstrated that during the course of the crusade the emperor enjoyed particularly close ties with Bohemond.<sup>81</sup> In spite of their earlier conflict, indeed probably because of the familiarity that encounter engendered, Alexios had received favourably Bohemond's proposals to act as his intermediary with the crusading leaders, and promised him lands and office in the east. However, the agreement was abandoned at Antioch, where a remarkable victory left Bohemond in command of the city. While in the following years the emperor accepted the crusaders' conquests, and acknowledged their local jurisdiction in exchange for recognition of his overlordship, he would never accept the Norman domination of Antioch. Thus, Bohemond returned to the west in autumn 1104 to recruit new troops, and proposed a crusade directed against his foe in Constantinople. His resolve and status were strengthened when he married the elder daughter of Philip I of France (see above, p. 624).

Alexios I responded swiftly to the Norman's mission: he wrote to potentates throughout Europe denying charges levelled by Bohemond and urging against a second armed pilgrimage. He was peculiarly keen to prevent any alliance that would expose the empire's western flank to attack, and Anna emphasises his concern over approaches to the Italian maritime cities of Venice, Pisa and Genoa.<sup>82</sup> Alexios had a further concern: the possibility of an aggressive Norman–Hungarian alliance. In 1097 Bohemond's cousin, Roger of Sicily, had forged a marriage alliance with the Hungarians. Alexios could not afford to let Bohemond reach a similar understanding, which would expose the empire to a massive invasion through the northern marches. A simultaneous assault on the coast at Dyrrachium would

<sup>79</sup> *AL*, IV.3., ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, pp. 124–6; ed. and French tr. Leib, I, pp. 148–50; tr. Sewter, pp. 139–40. Anna incorrectly places these events in her account of the 1082 campaign.

<sup>80</sup> Frankopan (2002), pp. 75–98.

<sup>81</sup> Shepard (1988a).

<sup>82</sup> *AL*, XII.1.2, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, p. 359; ed. and French tr. Leib, III, pp. 53–4; tr. Sewter, p. 369.

have led to the loss of the whole of the western Balkans. Thus the emperor orchestrated an extraordinary diplomatic initiative. In 1104 an embassy was sent to the court of the Hungarian king, and it was arranged that Piroska, the daughter of the late King Ladislas I (1077–95), should be betrothed to John, heir to the Byzantine throne. Bohemond was left to launch his assault on the southern Adriatic littoral, and the emperor had sufficient time to make suitable preparations.

The emperor had learned from earlier campaigns to use the terrain of Dyrrachium to his advantage, and took great pains to seal the mountain passes to the east of Dyrrachium. Even after Alexios was betrayed by certain *Arbanoi*, who showed Bohemond the mountain tracks, the Normans could neither advance nor easily retreat.<sup>83</sup> An effective naval blockade, mounted with Venetian assistance, prevented further supplies and troops from reaching the invasion force.<sup>84</sup> Norman foraging parties were frequently ambushed and returned empty-handed, if they returned at all. In this way Bohemond's spirit was broken, and he sued for peace, agreeing the treaty of Devol which is recorded in full by Anna Komnena.<sup>85</sup> Bohemond was to receive the elevated imperial rank of *sebastos* and command of the cities of Antioch and Edessa, both of which would revert to imperial control upon his death. However, Bohemond never returned to Antioch, and the carefully constructed clauses of the treaty of Devol were not implemented. Consequently, Alexios and his successor John II (1118–43) were committed to an arduous military and diplomatic struggle to regain Antioch, devoting little attention to the empire's Balkan lands. Into this vacuum stepped two expansionary powers, the Venetians and Hungarians.

The need to secure first Venetian and then Hungarian assistance for wars against the Normans saw the Byzantines delegate authority in Dalmatia and Croatia. As early as 1081–2 the Venetian doge was granted the title '*doux* of Dalmatia and Croatia', ostensibly acting for the emperor, but in reality advancing his own interests. The Hungarians did likewise, and in 1102 Coloman completed the annexation of Croatia to his kingdom and had himself crowned King of Croatia in Biograd.<sup>86</sup> The betrothal in 1104 of Piroska and John Komnenos gave this act Byzantine recognition, and also appears to have offered tacit imperial support to a Hungarian invasion of Dalmatia, which took place against Venetian interests in 1105. The inhabitants of the maritime cities surrendered to the Hungarian king

<sup>83</sup> *AL*, XIII.5.2, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, pp. 397–8; ed. and French tr. Leib, III, pp. 104–5; tr. Sewter, pp. 408–9.

<sup>84</sup> *AL*, XIII.7.4–5, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, pp. 404–5; ed. and French tr. Leib, III, pp. 113–14; tr. Sewter, pp. 414–15.

<sup>85</sup> *AL*, XIII.12., ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, pp. 413–23; ed. and French tr. Leib, III, p. 125–39; tr. Sewter, pp. 424–34. See also above, pp. 623–4.

<sup>86</sup> *Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae*, II, p. 1; Steindorff (1984), pp. 44, 47–8.

in return for certain privileges, the details of which have been preserved in extant charters.<sup>87</sup> Venetian retaliation was delayed until 1115–16, when the doge recovered the major cities. Despite Hungarian efforts, the Venetians retained control of most of Dalmatia into the 1140s.

During this time John II showed little interest in the northern Balkans. In 1122 he achieved a significant victory over an invading force of 'Scythians', possibly Pechenegs, but probably Cumans. His only subsequent military venture into the region was brief and opportunistic. Niketas Choniates notes that in 1127 the Hungarians sacked Braničevo and Sofia, and in response John sailed 'along the Danube from the Black Sea, falling upon the foe by both land and water . . . captured Frangochorion [between the Sava and Danube] . . . and Semlin, and attacked Haram, from which he wrested great spoils. After further struggles, he offered peace.'<sup>88</sup> For the remainder of John's reign the treaty signed with the Hungarian king was honoured. Furthermore, stability was guaranteed by the good relations John enjoyed with the German rulers Lothar III (1125–37) and Conrad III (1138–52). In 1136 Byzantine troops took part in Lothar's campaign which pressed into Norman-occupied southern Italy. Relations with Conrad were even better, and from 1140 were destined to be cemented by the marriage of John's fourth son, Manuel, to Conrad's sister-in-law, Bertha of Sulzbach (see above, pp. 636–7). Thus John was free to concentrate on his eastern campaigns, and it was in Cilicia in 1143 that he was killed in a hunting accident. The younger of his two surviving sons, Manuel, succeeded.

#### NORMANS, HUNGARIANS, SERBS AND GERMANS: MANUEL KOMNENOS' BALANCING ACT

In the early years of his reign Manuel I Komnenos (1143–80) remained committed to his father's policies in the east. The crusader principalities, particularly Antioch, were priorities, and he was prepared to tolerate both increased Hungarian influence in Sirmium and the Venetian domination of Dalmatia. However, Manuel's attention was drawn increasingly towards the west, not least when Conrad III led the forces of the Second Crusade through Byzantine lands against his wishes. While the Germans were marching across Bulgaria and Thrace, a Norman fleet seized the island of Corfu and captured Thebes and Corinth. It sailed back to Sicily with great plunder and many captives, retaining control of Corfu, whence attacks on the lands south of Dyrrachium might easily be launched. Manuel turned to the Venetians for naval assistance, and in October 1147 renewed their

<sup>87</sup> Steindorff (1984), pp. 11–25; Stephenson (2000), pp. 199–203.

<sup>88</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, pp. 17–18; tr. Magoulas, pp. 11–12. Kinn., I.4, ed. Meineke, pp. 10–13; tr. Brand, pp. 18–19, offers an alternative account. See also Stephenson (1996).

trading privileges. The Venetians were themselves troubled by the Norman occupation of Corfu.

In 1149, while preparing a retaliatory assault on Norman positions in southern Italy, Manuel learned of an uprising by the Serbs of Raška. He marched north, swiftly recovering the fortress of Ras, where around fifty metres of the western ramparts of the city were destroyed in the assault and later rebuilt.<sup>89</sup> The decisive blow was struck with the storming of the fortress of Galič. Manuel took many captives, but failed to capture the elusive *veliki župan* Uroš II. The court panegyrist Theodore Prodromos provides a contemporary account of the campaigns of 1149, when

the supreme ruler of the barbarous Serbs, the *archiserbozoupanos*, this mountain-reared swine, thrice a slave since birth, driven by senseless audacity, rose against us and our lord, having Hungarian forces for allies and thus misled by the Sicilian Dragon [Roger II of Sicily], and he was persuaded by his [Roger's] gifts to enter into treaties to distract the emperor from attacking him.<sup>90</sup>

Evidently the Normans were responsible for inciting the Serbian uprising, and for the deterioration in Byzantino-Hungarian relations. If the Serbs were seduced by gifts, the Hungarians saw in an alliance with the Normans the opportunity to consolidate their interests in Dalmatia. The Normans were the only naval power capable of challenging Venetian domination of the Adriatic. Ominously, the emperor was unable to ensure stability in the region by the distribution of largesse and titles, or through his proxies. Manuel was drawn into more frequent shows of strength in the Balkans.

Manuel I's biographer, John Kinnamos, provides a detailed account of the campaigns of the following year, 1150, which culminated in the battle of Tara. The historian describes a hard-fought battle, the climax of which was Manuel's victorious duel with the commander of the Hungarian attachment, Bakchinus (Bagin). In defeat the Serbian *veliki župan* swore to remain loyal to the emperor, breaking off his alliance with the Hungarians and Normans. However, the emperor determined to punish the Hungarians and set off for the Danube before he had 'even wiped the dust of the battlefield from his face and was still covered in warm sweat'.<sup>91</sup> Thus he was able to devastate the lands between the Sava and Danube rivers and seize tens of thousands of captives before a treaty was agreed. Details of these campaigns are provided by the sycophantic panegyrist Manganeios Prodromos, who delivered at least three orations to praise the emperor as a 'brilliant triple victor'. 'What yearly cycle', he asked, 'ever saw so great a miracle, a terrible bloodless victory, a capturing of prisoners, herds of goats and cattle, many thousands of mares, innumerable flocks of the fattest sheep?'<sup>92</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Popović, M. (1999), pp. 171–85. But see also Kalić (2000).

<sup>90</sup> Theodore Prodromos, *Poems*, p. 354. <sup>91</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 92; tr. Magoulas, p. 54.

<sup>92</sup> Manganeios Prodromos, *Poems*, nos. 1, 2 and 27.



King Géza II of Hungary (1141–62) came to blows and agreements with Manuel on three more occasions, in 1151, 1153 and 1154. On the first two occasions he was acting as an ally of the Normans, and the third was inspired by secret negotiations with Manuel's cousin, the pretender Andronikos Komnenos. The instability was indicative of the new balance of power that had emerged in the north-western Balkans. Both Hungarians and Normans offered alternative sources of patronage for the Serbs and Dalmatians, even before Venetian interests were considered. This seemed of secondary importance while Byzantium was allied with Germany, for the two imperial powers imagined they might control their neighbours. However, relations with Germany began to worsen, and Manuel felt obliged to strengthen the Byzantine presence in the north-western Balkans. He renovated key fortresses on his border with Hungary, at Belgrade and Braničevo, where larger garrisons were installed.<sup>93</sup> Within the frontier, he staged a trial to arbitrate a dispute between the Serbian *veliki župan* Uroš II and his brother Desa; the latter had ousted the former in the turmoil of autumn 1153. Manuel's judgement in favour of Uroš was carefully orchestrated, 'a statement about the nature of imperial sovereignty, calculated to impress the German, French and Turkish emissaries who happened to be present'.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, it mirrored a similar judgement reached by the new German emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (1152–90) in 1152, arbitrating between two claimants to the throne of Denmark. Manuel, thereafter, was swift to press his claims as suzerain of Serbia. More ambitiously, he also sought to extend his influence beyond the Danube, into Hungary.

Kinnamos states explicitly that 'Manuel wished to establish control of Hungary because it lay in the midst of the western realms'.<sup>95</sup> In fact he wished to secure the loyalty of the Hungarian king and thereby retain a pliant buffer kingdom between his empire and Germany. This is the context for the Hungarian succession disputes of the early 1160s, where both emperors supported rival candidates, exploiting factionalism within the kingdom.<sup>96</sup> Barbarossa and his clients supported Stephen III, while Manuel favoured Stephen IV, and later Stephen III's younger brother Béla; Béla was brought to Constantinople in 1163, betrothed to Manuel's own daughter Maria, and given the name Alexios (see above, p. 642). Before the death of his father, Géza II, Béla-Alexios had been promised a large appanage at the frontier between Hungary and the empire, and it was ostensibly in defence of his rights that Manuel invaded and occupied Sirmium and Frangochorion in spring 1164.<sup>97</sup> It is not clear that these were in fact the lands Béla-Alexios had been promised, but they were certainly the lands

<sup>93</sup> Popović, M. (1982), pp. 49–53; Popović and Ivanišević (1988); Stephenson (2000), pp. 241–5.

<sup>94</sup> Magdalino (1993a), p. 56. <sup>95</sup> Kinn., V.5, ed. Meineke, p. 214; tr. Brand, p. 163.

<sup>96</sup> Makk (1989), pp. 63–106; Stephenson (2000), pp. 247–61.

<sup>97</sup> Kinn., V.6, ed. Meineke, pp. 217–18; tr. Brand, pp. 164–5.

on which Manuel had set his sights. So much is demonstrated by the reaction in 1165 to an attempt by Stephen III to recover the territory, when the emperor despatched letters and envoys to numerous powers requesting their support for his attack on Stephen III. The Venetians were willing allies, and committed 100 ships for an attack on Hungarian positions in Dalmatia which was launched in May 1165. By the time Manuel arrived on the Danube the whole of central Dalmatia was in Byzantine hands, and the Venetians had recovered Zara. John Kinnamos states that:

Already [the Byzantine general] John Doukas had subdued Dalmatia and turned it over to Nikephoros Chalouphe, as he had been directed by the emperor, who had previously sent him there to conquer it by force of arms or negotiation. The reason for this was that the Hungarians had designated it in a treaty as Béla's patrimony. . . . At that time Trogir and Šibenik came over to the Byzantines, as well as Split . . . and whatever cities are located in Dalmatia which total fifty-seven.<sup>98</sup>

Manuel took personal responsibility for the recovery of Sirmium, and having obliged Stephen III of Hungary to sign an unfavourable treaty, left generals in the region who showed 'the most earnest concern for the fortifications of Belgrade, built walls around Niš, and brought Braničevo under settlement'.<sup>99</sup> Traces of their efforts to strengthen the established fortifications have been uncovered in excavations.<sup>100</sup> In 1166 the Hungarians launched retaliatory campaigns in both Sirmium and Dalmatia, the latter led by the *ban* Ampud, the former under the count Denis and thirty-seven disgruntled generals which ended with the plains 'almost covered in the carcasses of barbarians'. Five generals were captured, along with 800 men and 2,000 breastplates of the fallen: 'the war on the Hungarians concluded there'.<sup>101</sup> Ampud's attack on Split also failed, but he managed to capture the Byzantine governor, Nikephoros Chalouphe. Extant charters issued in the name of the Hungarian king suggest that Ampud recovered Biograd and possibly Šibenik. However, this was ephemeral. Following the defeat of Denis' army, Manuel enjoyed control of Dalmatia south of Šibenik. As allies who had provided invaluable assistance to John Doukas in 1166, the Venetians maintained control of the lands north of Zara.

The recovery of Dalmatia was considered an essential stepping-stone to extending Byzantine influence in northern Italy, which, like Hungary, was an arena for competition with the German emperor. Immediately before his appointment to command Dalmatia, Nikephoros Chalouphe had travelled to Venice to secure the assistance of the doge in the 1165 campaigns, and had also persuaded 'Cremona and Padua and many other outstanding cities in

<sup>98</sup> Kinn., V.17, ed. Meineke, pp. 248–9; tr. Brand, pp. 186–7.

<sup>99</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 136; tr. Magoulas, p. 77.

<sup>100</sup> Popović, M. (1982), pp. 49–53; Popović and Ivanišević (1988).

<sup>101</sup> Kinn., VI.7, ed. Meineke, p. 274; tr. Brand, p. 205.

Liguria to join with the emperor'.<sup>102</sup> The *doux* of Dalmatia was charged with certain responsibilities in northern Italy, just as, after 1071, the Byzantine governor in Dyrrachium was charged with oversight of affairs in southern Italy. Thus, Chalouphes' replacement, Constantine Doukas, was often to be found there distributing money to potential allies, and even commanded a Byzantine garrison during the German siege of Ancona.<sup>103</sup>

The empire's Balkan lands, therefore, drew increased attention as a consequence of anxieties about German imperial ambitions. Manuel advanced the empire's frontiers across the Danube and into Dalmatia, and made inroads into Italy and Hungary through strategic use of force and aggressive diplomacy. Expansionary policies were pursued to prevent the loss of suzerainty over peripheral potentates in the face of interference from the west, and to confront the perceived enemy on safer, more distant ground. Manuel exploited the resources of his rich empire, with an economy expanding throughout his reign, to distribute cash and prestige goods within and beyond his borders, and to bind disparate potentates and peoples to him. Moreover, he quashed rebellions effectively and efficiently, for example bringing the Serbs to heel on numerous occasions. In many ways his policies resembled those of Basil II, although Manuel was remembered for his generosity as much as for his martial capabilities. His legacy also resembled that of Basil, for Manuel's successors lacked his reputation, meticulously constructed through decades, and were unable to impose their authority in the periphery or extend their influence beyond.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, it can be argued that Manuel's expansionary policies were, like Basil's, unsustainable and precipitated the crises that the empire faced after his death.

#### AFTER MANUEL: SERB SECESSION, VLACH AND BULGARIAN UPRISINGS

As soon as news of Manuel's death reached Serbia, Stefan Nemanja (c. 1165/8–96) declared independence. In the following years he annexed Duklja and the southern Adriatic littoral, where there were many Latin bishoprics. This placed 'medieval Serbia on the crossroads of Byzantium and the west', but even as Stefan turned away from Constantinople his faith was increasingly orthodox.<sup>105</sup> He founded four monasteries, the last being Studenica, built after 1183, which became a model for later richly endowed royal foundations. Stefan's youngest son, Rastko, drew Nemanjid patronage to Mount Athos, where he fled c. 1191 and took the monastic name Sava. As a monk at the Vatopedi monastery he was visited by his

<sup>102</sup> Kinn., V.9, ed. Meineke, p. 231; tr. Brand, p. 174.

<sup>103</sup> Abulafia (1984), pp. 210–11. See also above, pp. 639–40.

<sup>104</sup> Magdalino (1993a), pp. 413–70. <sup>105</sup> Obolensky (1988a), p. 120.

dying father who brought lavish gifts including horses, mules, and buckets of gold and silver.<sup>106</sup>

Béla III, Manuel I's protégé who had been king of Hungary since 1172, also reacted to Manuel's death with a land-grab, annexing Dalmatia and Sirmium. Furthermore, when Andronikos I (1183–85) usurped the imperial throne, Béla established unopposed his control across the whole of the Niš–Braničevo region, from Belgrade as far as Sofia.<sup>107</sup> That territory, but not Sirmium and Dalmatia, was returned in 1185, when Béla reached an agreement with the new emperor, Isaac II Angelos (1185–95); Isaac agreed to marry Béla's daughter Margaret, who took the name Maria, and to receive as her dowry the region of Niš–Braničevo.<sup>108</sup>

Before this, Andronikos had also to face an invasion by the Normans of Sicily, who brought a character claiming to be the deposed Alexios II (1180–3). This ploy, echoing Guiscard's use in 1081 of the pseudo-Michael Doukas, persuaded the *hēgemones* of Dyrrachium to capitulate before the mountain passes could be blocked or a naval force mustered. Norman forces were able to advance by land and sea, and converged upon Thessaloniki, where a brief but bloody struggle ensued. The city's archbishop, Eustathios, composed an account which devotes long passages to the deaths of citizens, some by the sword, others trampled underfoot in vain attempts to seek the security of the citadel or churches. The Normans' threat to march on Constantinople precipitated the murder of Andronikos I and accession of Isaac Angelos, whose spirited counter-offensive drove the Sicilians from both Thessaloniki and, later, Dyrrachium. Less successful was Isaac II's handling of the Vlachs and Bulgarians settled in and near the Haemus.

To pay for the festivities associated with his wedding to Margaret-Maria, Isaac II Angelos determined to raise money from imperial estates.<sup>109</sup> However, demands were also made on those settled near estates in the region of Anchialos, provoking complaints brought to the emperor by the brothers Peter and Asen, who requested that Isaac grant them an imperial estate in the vicinity of the Haemus 'which would provide them with a little revenue'. Their request was denied, and consequently 'they spat out heated words, hinting at rebellion and the destruction they would wreak on their way home'.<sup>110</sup> Inspired by the sack of Thessaloniki, the brothers announced that St Demetrios had abandoned the Byzantines and claimed him as their own. Support for their rebellion cohered around St Demetrios, and Vlachs and Bulgarians launched assaults on Byzantine settlements, seizing captives and cattle in abundance. Isaac launched a counter-offensive, and recovered much ground. However, thereafter he entrusted the struggle to a series

<sup>106</sup> Obolensky (1988a), pp. 124–7. <sup>107</sup> Makk (1989), pp. 115–19.

<sup>108</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 368; tr. Magoulias, p. 203. See also above, p. 649.

<sup>109</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 368; tr. Magoulias, p. 203; Magdalino (1993a), pp. 134–5.

<sup>110</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 369; tr. Magoulias, p. 204.

of disloyal generals, each of whom launched a bid for the throne rather than prosecuting the war. The Vlachs and Bulgarians were able to forge an alliance with the Cumans and consolidated their control of all the lands between the Haemus and lower Danube.<sup>111</sup>

In 1189 the situation deteriorated still further for Isaac II when Frederick Barbarossa determined to lead the German contingent in the Third Crusade across the Balkans. The passage was long and arduous, exacerbated by mutual suspicion and violence. The Germans believed Isaac had struck a deal with their enemy and target, Saladin. En route Barbarossa was approached by the Serbian *veliki župan*, Stefan Nemanja, and his brothers, who offered to support Frederick's march and provide aid against the Byzantines, and in return sought Frederick's promise to act as guarantor of recent Serbian conquests.<sup>112</sup> Similarly, Peter and Asen sent envoys to the Germans, and when Barbarossa had arrived at Adrianople, they offered 40,000 Vlach and Cuman archers for an assault on Constantinople.<sup>113</sup> Barbarossa's ongoing negotiations with the Balkan peoples provoked Isaac's unease. The German emperor was regarded as an authority who might lend legitimacy to the regimes of autonomous rulers who had until recently owed loyalty to the Byzantine emperor, effectively recognising their permanent detachment from the eastern empire.

The Germans did not sack Constantinople, and Barbarossa died before reaching the Holy Land. In the aftermath of the crusade, in autumn 1190, Isaac II returned to the Haemus, whence the Vlachs with their Cuman allies launched unremitting assaults on imperial lands. Isaac was unable to engage them in pitched battle, and as he withdrew led his army into an ambush in a narrow defile, where many of his troops were crushed by rocks thrown down upon them. The emperor barely escaped and rumours of his death circulated widely as the Vlachs and Bulgarians made unprecedented advances.<sup>114</sup> Whereas previously their assaults had been concentrated on villages and fields, now they advanced against 'lofty-towered cities. They sacked Anchialos, took Varna by force, and advanced on . . . Sofia, where they razed the greater part of the city.'<sup>115</sup>

In the following year the Byzantines recouped some territory, notably Varna and Anchialos. Isaac himself led a campaign against the Vlachs and Cumans from Philippopolis, and from there continued on to confront Stefan Nemanja. After an indecisive battle, Isaac concluded a peace treaty with the *veliki župan*, allowing him to keep much land that he had captured. A contemporary reference to this can be found in an oration of George

<sup>111</sup> Vászary (2005), pp. 13–56. <sup>112</sup> Ansbert, *History of Frederick's expedition*, p. 30.

<sup>113</sup> Ansbert, *History of Frederick's expedition*, p. 58.

<sup>114</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, pp. 429–32; tr. Magoulías, pp. 236–7.

<sup>115</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 434; tr. Magoulías, p. 238.

Tornikios, alluding to a marriage between Eudocia, Isaac's niece, and Stefan, the eldest son of Stefan Nemanja.<sup>116</sup> Then, late in 1192, a dispute broke out between Peter and Asen. The former had chosen to reside in Preslav, the imperial capital of his chosen namesake, Tsar Peter of Bulgaria, while Asen was based in T'rnovo.<sup>117</sup> It is likely that Isaac had persuaded Peter to enter into an arrangement, facilitating an imperial campaign against Asen in spring 1193. The emperor did not take the field himself, but preferred to remain in Constantinople where 'he delighted in ribaldries and lewd songs and consorted with laughter-stirring dwarves'.<sup>118</sup> The campaigns against Asen were entrusted to the emperor's young cousin, Constantine Angelos who, like so many before, sought to seize the throne.<sup>119</sup> He failed, was blinded, and the Vlacho-Bulgarians set out with their Cuman allies against Philippopolis, Sofia, and even Adrianople, laying waste the lands en route. Once again the Byzantines had lost the initiative because of the independent ambitions of a general. The imperial campaign of 1194 was equally unsuccessful, and Isaac raised conscript and mercenary forces for a grand campaign to crush the Vlacho-Bulgarians in 1195. However, before this could happen Isaac was blinded and replaced by his brother Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203).

The period 1190–95 was one of lost or scorned opportunities for the Byzantines. Isaac II Angelos seems to have acted rationally in the aftermath of the Third Crusade, accepting that the empire had, for a time at least, to abandon claims to lands beyond the Velika Morava. His alliance with Béla III, and consequent negotiations with Stefan Nemanja, allowed Isaac to concentrate his limited resources on combatting the Vlachs and Bulgarians. In 1193, by winning over Peter, Isaac isolated Asen and weakened considerably his ability to launch raids south of the mountains. However, Isaac's commanders scorned the initiative, placing personal ambition above the good of the empire. More threatening still was the fact that, after Isaac's death, the nature of Vlacho-Bulgarian raids changed. Whereas before 1195 they were content to plunder lands south of the Haemus and around the Black Sea ports, which remained in Byzantine hands, from 1196 the Vlacho-Bulgarians began to contemplate permanent possession of both *kastra* and cities. Moreover, for the first time the new rulers began to strike their own coins. These so-called 'Bulgarian imitative' coins have been found in considerable numbers north of the Haemus in hoards buried between 1195 and 1204.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>116</sup> George Tornikios, 'Oratio ad Isaacium Angelum Imperatorem', in *Fontes rerum Byzantinorum*, ed. Regel and Novosadskij, p. 277.

<sup>117</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 470; tr. Magoulias, p. 258.

<sup>118</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 441; tr. Magoulias, p. 242.

<sup>119</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 435; tr. Magoulias, p. 239.

<sup>120</sup> Hendy (1969), pp. 218–22.

After 1196 Byzantine forces were no longer willing to march through the Haemus passes. The empire's frontiers now ran roughly across the Haemus as far as the river Vardar, or in places the Strymon, and the Velika Morava, which together marked the effective western limit of Byzantine authority. And beyond that limit, in Serbia and Bulgaria, the emperor was regarded increasingly with contempt. This is nowhere better illustrated than in the case of Eudocia. By 1198 Eudocia's father, Alexios, was emperor and her husband Stefan had replaced his father as *veliki župan*. Yet so far had Serbian sentiment shifted that Stefan 'stripped [his wife of] her woman's robe, leaving her only with her undergarment, which was cut around so that it barely covered her private parts, and dismissed her thus to go forth as if she were a harlot'.<sup>121</sup> With her, Stefan rejected Byzantine suzerainty. The Byzantine emperor was held in similar disdain north of the Haemus, where Kalojan, who succeeded his brothers Peter and Asen in 1197, sought recognition for his realm from Rome. In a series of letters exchanged with Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) from 1197 to 1204, Kalojan was willing to accept the title 'king (*rex*) of the Bulgarians and Vlachs' and an archbishop's pallium for his chief cleric, Basil of T'rnovo. Thus he rejected an approach from Constantinople offering both imperial and patriarchal titles, having determined that it was better to be a king by papal authority than an emperor by Byzantine (see below, pp. 782–3).<sup>122</sup>

#### CONCLUSION: THE WANING OF IMPERIAL POWER IN THE BALKANS

At the death of Basil II, Byzantium was the most powerful polity in the eastern Mediterranean. Imperial advances in the Balkans, as in the east, had been consolidated by the construction of fortifications and imposition of garrisons, but stability was ensured by securing the allegiance of peripheral potentates, who lived in fear of imperial retribution should they err, and enjoyed the prestige and prizes of office when they remained loyal.<sup>123</sup> As the eleventh century proceeded, troops were withdrawn from the periphery, and fear of retribution was allowed to dissipate. Moreover, a thirst for gold to service the state economy led bureaucrats in Constantinople to tax subject peoples too harshly, provoking rebellions by the Bulgarians. Authority was recovered, but on each occasion with greater difficulty.

From the middle of the twelfth century the Balkan peoples, courted and threatened from both sides, were offered unprecedented choices. The Dalmatians welcomed the return of Byzantine patronage, which was lavish

<sup>121</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 531; tr. Magoulas, p. 292.

<sup>122</sup> Prinzing (2002), pp. 163–74; Stephenson (2000), pp. 309–15.

<sup>123</sup> Holmes (2005), pp. 368–91, 475–87.

compared to that of the Venetians or Hungarians, but the Serbs made overtures on various occasions to the Hungarian and Sicilian Norman kings and the German emperor, showing an informed preference for a more distant suzerain. Byzantine efforts to maintain authority in the Balkan periphery involved balancing a multitude of internal and external interests, forces and factors. Manuel I Komnenos' policy became increasingly elaborate and expensive, and his agents roamed ever more widely. After Manuel's death in 1180, the empire was without an emperor able to maintain this delicate balance, and unwilling to commit substantial resources to the periphery. The empire endured a series of short reigns punctuated by rebellions. Increasingly, Balkan potentates saw no reason to tie their own interests to those of eastern emperors who were unable even to control their own kin. The Vlachs, Bulgarians and Serbs all rebelled and resisted attempts to restore Byzantine suzerainty. The titles and stipends offered by Constantinople, which had seduced all in the 1020s and 1030s, lacked magnetism in the 1180s and 1190s. After the sack of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204, the emperor in Constantinople would never again enjoy political control across the Balkan peninsula.



CHAPTER 19  
RAIDERS AND NEIGHBOURS: THE TURKS  
(1040–1304)

D. A. KOROBEINIKOV

I, Gregory, the priest over the enfeebled people of the Armenians, at the time of our persecutions by the nation of the Ishmaelites who had appeared from eastern lands [wrote this colophon on the Gospels]. We came from Mount Ararat, from the village, which is called Arkuri, following our God-loving king Sennacherim, to dwell in this city of Sebasteia where the Forty Martyrs shed their blood in the battle with bitter-blowing wind and ice-cold water. And there, after five years my many talented and greatly honoured father, the priest Anania passed away, in the royal city of Constantinople<sup>1</sup> . . . And [so] we remained [in Sebasteia], two brothers, George and Gregory . . .<sup>2</sup>

This colophon, written in 1066, offers us insight into an Armenian monastery on Byzantine territory. Gregory, the copyist of the Gospel Book, moved to Sebasteia after 1021, when Basil II (976–1025) granted the city to Sennacherim-John Artsruni, in exchange for his native kingdom of Vaspurakan (see above, p. 360). Gregory's colophon is his testament, bequeathing his most valuable possession, the Gospels, to his spiritual son.

The colophon was written at a difficult period for Byzantine Asia Minor. Although primarily concerned with spiritual themes, Gregory mentions 'our persecutions by the nation of the Ishmaelites'. The question arises: who were these 'Ishmaelites'?

THE TURKS' FIRST APPEARANCE

As so often in Byzantine history, a population movement which came to threaten the empire had its origins far beyond its borders. In the mid-sixth century the great Eurasian steppes were occupied by a new people, who spoke Turkic and called themselves Turks, or more precisely Kōk Turks ('Blue or Celestial Turks'). They established a Turkic khaganate sometime between 546 and 552 and apart from a short interruption in the later seventh century, this continued in existence until 744/5, when the Uighurs killed the last Turk khagan, Pai-mei, and sent his head to the Chinese court.

<sup>1</sup> The colophon contains a gap.

<sup>2</sup> Mat'evosyan (ed.), *Hishatakaranner*, no. 124, p. 105. See figs. 52a and 52b.

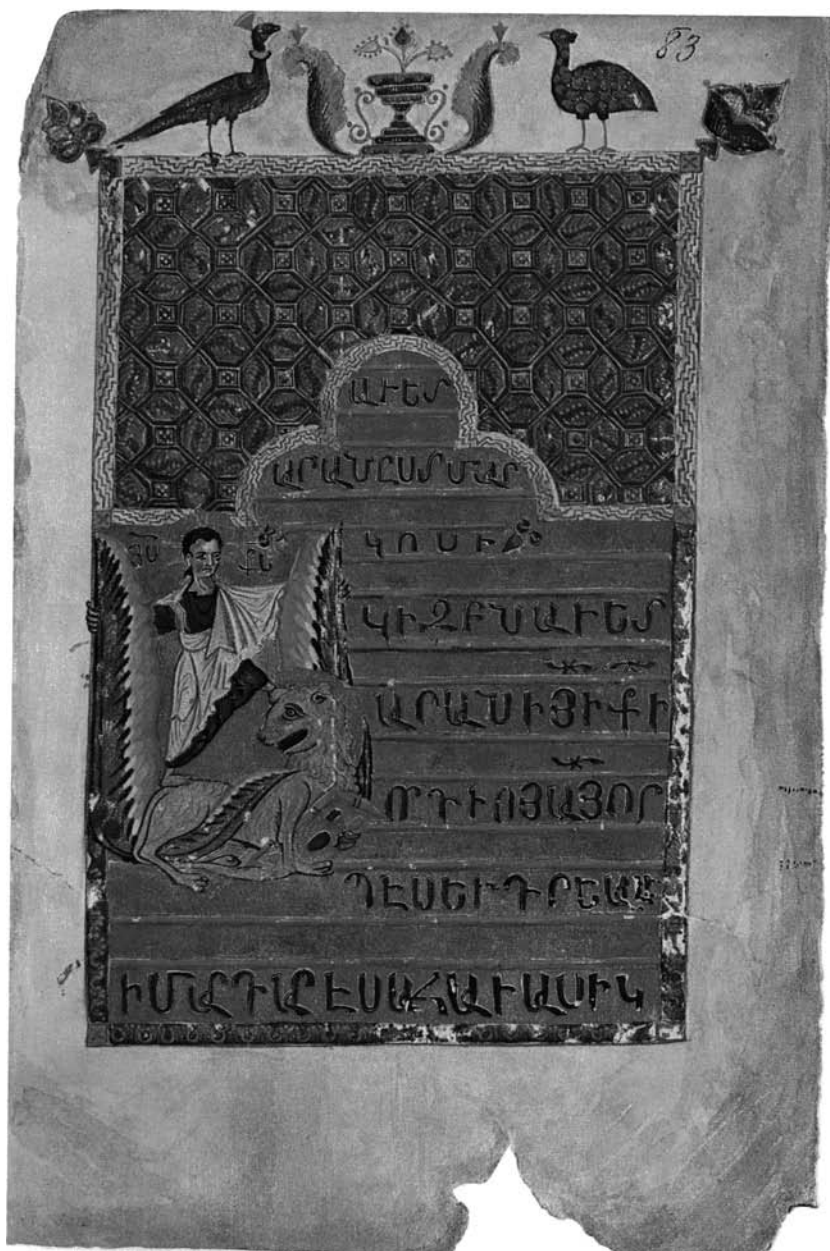


Figure 52a Title page of the Armenian Gospel Book of 1066, Sebasteia

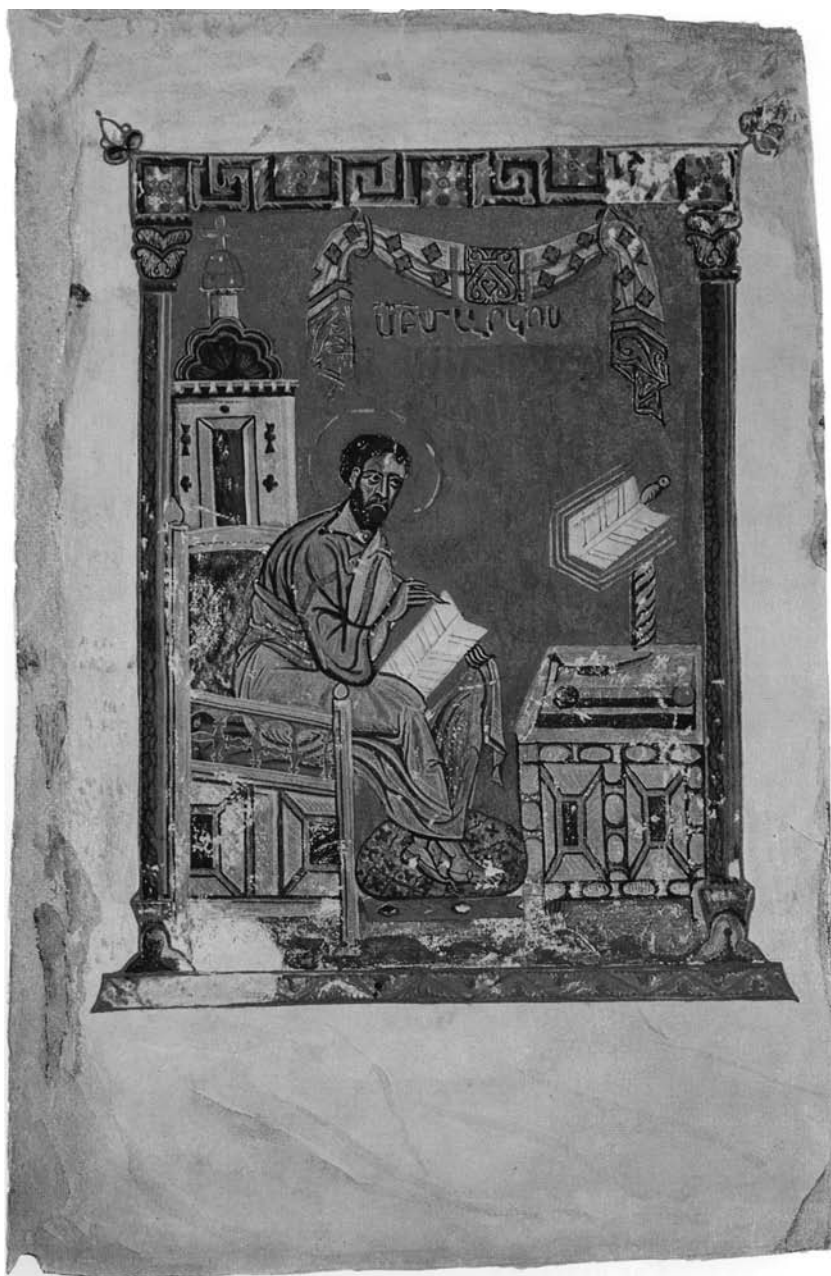


Figure 52b Miniature of St Mark writing his gospel from the Armenian Gospel Book of 1066



Map 31 Central Asia, the Abbasid caliphate and the emergence of the Seljuqs

The Turkic khaganate became the breeding-ground for other powerful Turkic tribal confederations. The most notorious were the Uighurs, who established their own khaganate over the remnants of the Kök Turk empire from 745 to 840, and, further west, the Qarluqs and the Oghuz. Like the Uighurs, the Qarluqs rebelled against their Kök Turk masters in 744/5. They then migrated west from near the headwaters of the Irtysh to the lands between Lake Balkhash and Lake Issyk-Kul. To the north and west of them, in the steppes between the Jaxartes and the Aral Sea, were the pastures of the Oghuz tribes, who were likewise former members of the Turkic khaganate. Their ruler bore the title of *yabghu* and was based at Yenikent.

The Arabs and the Muslim successor states in Central Asia at first managed to maintain their defences against these nomadic peoples along the Jaxartes river. The Samanids (875–1005), the last Iranian dynasty in Central Asia, built a formidable line of fortresses in Fergana and Shash. The Islamisation of the Turkic peoples along the Jaxartes resulted from their close ties with the Muslims of Transoxiana.<sup>3</sup> But in 999 this period of stability ended. The Qarakhanids, who belonged to the Qarluq confederation, concluded an alliance with Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (998–1030) and destroyed the Samanids. The victors divided the spoils: Mahmud took Transoxiana, Khorasan and all the territories to the west of the Oxus, including Khwarizm. The Qarakhanids became masters of Sogdiana, Fergana, Bukhara, Samarkand and the lands to the east of the Oxus.

The Iranian barrier in Central Asia had now collapsed, opening up the central Muslim lands to the Turkish hordes. The instability in Central Asia had serious repercussions for Armenia, Arran and al-Jazira, all close to the Byzantine borders. Because the central Iranian plateau – and notably the Dasht-i Kavir (Great Kavir), the greatest salt desert in the world – prevented any migration *en masse* to the south, the nomads took the easier route westwards, along the Caspian's southern shore to the rich pastures of Azerbaijan and the plain of Mughan (see above, p. 132). A horde which had recently moved from Central Asia attacked Sennacherim-John Artsruni's kingdom. The Armenians lost the battle, which probably took place either in 1016 or early 1017;<sup>4</sup> and Sennacherim-John exchanged his kingdom for safer lands in the depths of Asia Minor, under the protection of the emperor. Subsequent events only served to confirm the king's wisdom: in 1021 a new horde of Turks devastated the country of Nig, between Shirak and Lake Sevan. Such were the first signs of the new enemy-to-come.

#### THE SELJUQ INVASION

However, it was another Turkic group – a branch of the Oghuz named after the founder of their dynasty, Saljuq – who posed the most serious

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy (ed.) (2002), p. 41a.

<sup>4</sup> Seibt (1978), cols. 49–56. See also above, p. 360.

threat to the Byzantines. The Turks, as we have seen, did not appear in the Middle East as a *deus ex machina*. By the beginning of the tenth century, the Oghuz occupied the lands along the river Jaxartes and between the Aral and Caspian seas, as far as the northern borders of Khorasan. Their lifestyle was similar to that of other Turkic peoples, but their language differed, having dominant voicing consonants and distinctive grammatical features, notably in its system of declension. They formed a complex hierarchy of tribes, whose common ancestor was a legendary Oghuz khagan, and their short-lived 'state' under their own *yabghu* was neither centralised nor organised as a single political or military unit.

The dynasty's founder, Saljuq, son of Duqaq, was a military commander (*subaşı*) of the Oghuz *yabghu*. At the beginning of the eleventh century he lived in Jand, an important emporium on the Jaxartes, where he had fled from the anger of the *yabghu* who had opposed his conversion to Islam. There, Saljuq began to organise Turkic units of his own. It is important to note that the Oghuz Turks did not unite around Saljuq on a tribal basis. Zahir al-Din Nishapuri, one of the main early Seljuq chroniclers, writing in the twelfth century, listed the five 'pillars' of Seljuq power: 'They [the Seljuqs] were an illustrious family, [which ruled over] a great number [of possessions], with countless riches, well-equipped [military] units ('*iddat*'), tribes (*khail*) and retainers (*hashamī*).'<sup>5</sup> It was on this basis that the Seljuqs, as one of the richest, most militarily successful clans, came to be recognised as leaders by other Oghuz tribes and finally, in the mid-eleventh century, managed to establish the first great Turkic Muslim state. The nucleus of Seljuq military power, especially at the beginning of their conquests, was their kinsmen, retainers, slaves (*ghilman*) and servants. The early Seljuq army consisted of three types of unit: the '*askar*', cavalry under the command of the sultan himself; the *jund*, auxiliary cavalry of the sultans' retainers, relatives, subordinates or tribal chieftains; and the *mushat*, or infantry. The other nomadic Oghuz made up part of the *jund*, but they were extremely unreliable allies. As we shall see, this helps explain why the conquest of Asia Minor continued even when the Byzantine empire and the Great Seljuq sultanate were formally at peace.

Saljuq had three sons: Mika'il, Musa and Isra'il/Arslan. Mika'il was killed while still a young man, but he left capable sons, two of whom, Tughril-beg (c. 1037–63) and Chaghri-beg, became the founders of the Seljuq state.<sup>6</sup> After breaking away from the *yabghu*, the Seljuqs moved to the Zarafshan valley near Samarkand, becoming subordinate firstly to the Samanids, and then, from 999, to the Qarakhanids. In 1025 'Ali-Tegin, the Qarakhanid ruler of Bukhara, was defeated by Mahmud of Ghazna; Isra'il/Arslan was taken prisoner by the Ghaznavids and imprisoned in India, where he died.

<sup>5</sup> Zahir al-Din Nishapuri, *Saljuq'namah*, I.i, ed. Afshar, p. 10; tr. Luther, p. 29; ed. Morton, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> On Tughril-beg, see *EL*, X, pp. 553–4 (C. E. Bosworth); on Chaghri-beg: *EL*, II, pp. 4–5 (C. Cahen).

The Seljuqs asked Mahmud for new lands, and he granted them the northern borders of Khorasan. However, they proved to be unruly subjects and started to raid Ghaznavid territories; in 1027, Mahmud defeated and scattered them. Without a leader, the Seljuqs fled, some reaching Persian Iraq and Azerbaijan in 1029; these were the first Seljuq Turks to appear in the vicinity of the Byzantine borders in Armenia.

Under pressure from Shah-Malik of Jand, Tughril-beg moved his people – who formed a separate grouping from Isra'il/Arslan's – from their pasturing grounds in Khwarizm to the northern borders of Khorasan in 1034; Shah-Malik was probably an Oghuz *yabghu* and certainly an ally of Sultan Mas'ud I of Ghazna (1030–41). Tughril-beg thus had to seek Mas'ud I's permission for his Turks to live near Nasa and Farava in Khorasan, in the fertile valleys west of Merv, that separated the province from the sands of Qara Qum. The sultan, preoccupied with trying to conquer India, half-heartedly agreed. However, when Tughril-beg boldly claimed lordship over Merv, one of the richest cities of Khorasan, Mas'ud's patience snapped. Open warfare between the Seljuqs and the Ghaznavids ended in the defeat of the latter at the decisive battle at Dandanqan on 23 May 1040. Mas'ud escaped to Ghazna, only to be killed the following year on his way back to India; his state survived, mostly in Afghanistan and northern India, but its Iranian lands, Khorasan and Sistan, were lost forever.

Tughril-beg was proclaimed amir of Khorasan on the battlefield. Possession of Khorasan gave the Seljuqs an excellent opportunity to conquer the other Ghaznavid territories in Iran. Rayy soon fell, becoming a springboard for further conquests, as did Hamadhan in 1043. The newly founded polity was never centralised in the manner of the Ghaznavids or the Samanids. It was, rather, based on the military presence of the Turks in various provinces of Iran, Iraq and later Syria. The Seljuq sultan ruled his vast dominions with the help of his relatives, whom he rewarded with rights, revenues and offices, such as the military command of certain regions. One such region was southern Azerbaijan, which the Seljuq leaders began to occupy from the 1040s onwards, finishing the conquest of the entire province in 1055; and Isra'il's son Qutlumush was granted the provinces of Gurgan, Damghan and Qumis by his cousin Tughril-beg. As the Seljuqs pushed along the southern Caspian shore and through Azerbaijan, their next targets would inevitably be Armenia and Asia Minor.<sup>7</sup>

Once the Seljuqs moved into Azerbaijan and Arran, Turkish incursions into Anatolia gathered pace; indeed, the first was launched from Urmia by the Oghuz Turks in 1038, even before Tughril-beg's arrival in the region. But the most devastating invasions came between the mid-1040s and the early 1050s. In 1045 the Turkish army, probably led by Qutlumush, defeated

<sup>7</sup> On reasons for the Seljuqs' interest in Caucasia, see now also Peacock (2005).

Stephen Leichoudes, the governor of Vaspurakan. In 1047 another member of the Seljuq clan, Hasan the Deaf, governor of Herat and Sijistan, invaded Vaspurakan, but was defeated by Katakalon Kekaumenos, the governor of Ani. In September 1048, in response to Hasan's defeat, the Seljuq commander Ibrahim Inal took Artsn, devastated the area around Theodosiopolis and Basean, and won a resounding victory over the Byzantine armies.

The invasion of 1054, led by Tughril-beg himself, engulfed a vast area from Theodosiopolis to Lake Van. But the Byzantines resisted, and Tughril-beg did not dare besiege Theodosiopolis, his primary target. Empress Theodora (1055–6) sent an embassy to the sultan and bought off his claims to Byzantine territory with rich gifts. Tughril-beg's name was proclaimed in the Friday prayer (*khutba*) in the mosque of Constantinople between April 1055 and March of the following year, and this represented a form of recognition by the Byzantines that Tughril-beg was now the secular protector and guarantor of the Muslim faithful in Constantinople.<sup>8</sup> A temporary halt to incursions by the sultan and his closest relatives was brought about by this peace agreement, and also by Tughril-beg's preoccupation with Baghdad, which he seized in 1055 and again four years later. But the treaty could not stop repeated raiding by other Turks in the mid- to late 1050s. In the winter of 1057–8 Melitene was taken by a chieftain named Dinar, and Sebasteia, home to our colophon's author Gregory, fell on 6 August 1059. The leaders of these Turkish raids included Samukh, Amr K'ap'r (whose name derives from *amīr-i kabīr*, meaning 'great amir'), Gichachichi and a commander-in-chief (*sipāh-sālār*) of Khorasan.<sup>9</sup> The latter is noteworthy for his raids on Paghin and Arghni in 1062/3 and the area around Edessa in 1065/6.

Tughril-beg died in 1063. His nephew, Alp Arslan (1063–73) became sultan and resumed an aggressive policy towards Byzantium, culminating in the capture of Ani by the sultan himself on 16 August 1064. Through capturing Ani, the Turks secured the left bank of the Araxes, along their chief invasion route into Byzantine territory. One of the reasons for the Turks' success was the direction from which they raided; in the north, ranging along the Araxes from Vaspurakan as far as Theodosiopolis, and also along the Aratsani (eastern Euphrates) in the south. Byzantine defences were traditionally strong in Syria and southern Armenia, where they had withstood the Arabs for centuries. But the Turks came from the Caucasus, where the empire least expected any serious threat. The Byzantine cities

<sup>8</sup> al-Maqrizi, *al-Suluk*, I, p. 32. On the mosque in Constantinople, first reliably attested for the tenth century, see Reinert (1998), pp. 127–8, 137–40.

<sup>9</sup> *Chōrosan tis selarios* or *Chōrosalaris*: ME, II.12, ed. Melik'-Adamean and Ter-Mik'ayeleian, pp. 133–5; tr. Dostourian, pp. 94–6; Skyl. Con., pp. 112–13; Attal., ed. Bekker, pp. 78–9; ed. and Spanish tr. Pérez Martín, pp. 59–60. The name 'Gichachichi', with the duplicated syllable 'chi', may have contained a nickname (in Old Turkic) *kiçig*, *kiçigin*, 'the small one'.





Map 32 The coming of the Turks: Asia Minor c. 1040–c. 1100

were unprepared for the task of withstanding Turkish attacks; Sebasteia, for example, had no city walls at all. After the fall of Ani, Oghuz hordes could penetrate Byzantine lands with relative impunity and as a result, the Turkish invasions became lengthier and bolder: in 1066/7 they pillaged Caesarea, reaching Cilicia and the environs of Antioch. In the following year, a certain Afshin al-Turki took Neocaesarea and Amorion, and in the winter and spring of 1070–1 he reached Chonai in western Anatolia. Byzantine fortification lines in Armenia were broken.

Nevertheless, one should treat with caution the blood-curdling descriptions of the Turkish invasions found in the Byzantine and Armenian sources. For these incursions had yet to break Byzantine power in Armenia, and extensive areas were more or less unscathed; although the Turks penetrated deeply, they went for the easiest pickings – rich, unprotected towns and cities. Equally, the Byzantines were not sitting idly by; for example, the city walls of Melitene were restored after Dinar's raid of 1057/8.

One set of contemporary sources which are untouched by the rhetorical or didactic pretensions of the larger historical works show an astonishing lack of interest in the Turks. These are the Armenian colophons. Our scribe Gregory asked his teacher Isaac to bring precious bindings from Constantinople to Sebasteia in 1066, even as the Turks were threatening the highways. Another colophon, dated to the following year, is particularly interesting for the almost idyllic picture it paints of a monastery mediating between rival lords over a property at Langnut.<sup>10</sup> What is really striking is the fact that, although Langnut lay in the province of Asharunik' on the Araxes, a border zone raided almost every year by the Turks, the colophon fails to mention them.

These colophons have a double significance. Firstly, they show that the Turkish invasions were neither an ethnic 'avalanche', nor a carefully orchestrated conquest. The Turkish hordes, whose chief weapon was their speed and mobility, destroyed everybody and everything in their path; but many places not on their direct route escaped devastation. Secondly, people did not realise the full scale of the danger at the time. All the sources which describe the 'horrifying' Turkic invasions in the 1050s and 1060s were composed after the battle of Manzikert.

#### THE BATTLE OF MANZIKERT (1071)

On 1 January 1068, at the invitation of the widowed Empress Eudocia Makrembolitissa, Romanos IV Diogenes (1068–71) was crowned emperor (see above, p. 608). Two months later he set out for Membij in Syria, which he captured. Romanos' next campaign took place between spring

<sup>10</sup> Mat'evosyan (ed.), *Hishatakaranner*, no. 125, p. 106.

1069 and the winter of 1069/70. Although he drove the enemy from Larissa in Cappadocia, he did not manage to prevent the Turks from plundering Ikonion (Konya). The main battle, however, took place in 1071. In the spring of 1070 the emperor sent the *kouropalatēs* Manuel Komnenos, nephew of the late emperor Isaac I Komnenos (1057–59), as *stratēgos autokratōr* of the Byzantine eastern army. Manuel had to defend the theme of Chaldia, which was being threatened by a certain Arisghi, brother-in-law of Sultan Alp Arslan. An important battle took place at Sebasteia in the autumn of 1070. The Byzantines were defeated; but then Manuel Komnenos persuaded Arisghi, who was at odds with the sultan, to join the emperor's side.

Meanwhile in August–September, Alp Arslan took Arjish (Archesh) and Manzikert, moving on to Mayyafariqin, Amida and then Edessa, which he besieged but did not manage to take. By April 1071 Alp Arslan was besieging Aleppo. His primary aim, however, was to campaign against the Fatimid forces in Syria. At this juncture a Byzantine embassy arrived, offering Membij in exchange for Arjish and Manzikert. The sultan, who needed to secure his northern flank, agreed to a peace treaty on condition that the emperor paid a yearly tribute. But in the meantime Afshin al-Turki had penetrated deep into the territory of Byzantine Asia Minor (see above, p. 701) taking Chonai and ravaging the environs of Tzamandos. It was at this moment when news of Afshin's audacious raid arrived in Constantinople that Romanos IV decided to declare open war.

In July 1071, the Byzantine army moved across the River Sangarios to Caesarea and the emperor arrived at Theodosioupolis; at this point the sultan was in Vostan, near Narek. By mid-August Romanos had retaken Manzikert. Alp Arslan believed that Diogenes had broken the truce; he abandoned plans to go to Syria and hastened back towards the Byzantine army. However, he offered to sign a peace treaty with Romanos once again. The emperor refused. The battle ended in humiliating defeat for the Byzantines, with Romanos IV being captured and brought before Alp Arslan on 26 August 1071.

The causes of the Byzantine defeat were manifold and complex. The first was Romanos' misjudgement of Alp Arslan's strategy. Had Romanos known that the sultan intended to concentrate on Syria instead of attacking the Byzantine borders, and that he faced serious financial difficulties in paying his own soldiers, the battle could have been averted. Secondly, the Turks employed superior tactics; they were mostly horsemen armed with bows and arrows, capable of striking the enemy while themselves staying out of range, thus rendering the Byzantine army's close formations a disadvantage. Not only did Byzantine tactics fail against the Turks; the action of the imperial army depended far too much on the instructions of its commander-in-chief. Romanos realised too late that the sultan was approaching, and divided his forces by sending large contingents in

the direction of Akhlāt. Finally, the emperor was betrayed by the *proedros* Andronikos Doukas, whose detachment withdrew when the outcome of the battle was still uncertain (see above, p. 608).

Given the crushing nature of the defeat, the terms of the peace treaty were comparatively moderate. Reparations came to a total of one and a half million dinars: an immediate payment of 300,000 dinars, with the balance to be paid as an annual tribute of 60,000 dinars, implying that the peace treaty was expected to last for twenty years.<sup>11</sup> Romanos was also required to cede four cities in northern Syria and Armenia to Alp Arslan – Edessa, Membij, Antioch and Manzikert – before the sultan would release him. Alp Arslan's intentions remained the same as they had been before the battle: he wanted the empire to be his peaceful neighbour and to keep his flanks in Syria secure for his further advance against the Fatimid caliph in Egypt.

Although in the event the Byzantines only ceded Manzikert, these four cities were the key Byzantine strongholds in northern Syria and Armenia. And although the peace treaty in theory gave the empire a twenty-year respite from attacks by the sultan's army, it could not stop the incursions of the *other* Turks. The bitter experience of the three decades before the battle of Manzikert had shown that the Byzantines' defence of the region relied on a strong field army, working in liaison with the large fortresses' garrisons. After 1071 the main field army was no longer an operational military unit, although the empire still possessed battle-worthy detachments.<sup>12</sup> Had there been a strong government, the army could still have been restored to a level comparable with the enemy's. Instead, the empire plunged into civil war.

#### THE LOSS OF ASIA MINOR, 1071–1081

Romanos IV Diogenes was released after 3 September 1071. He wrote to his wife, the empress Eudocia, informing her of what had happened. While the letter was still on its way, a *coup d'état* took place in Constantinople. In October 1071 Michael VII Doukas (1071–8) was proclaimed emperor; the son of Constantine X (1059–67), Michael had the support of his uncle, the caesar John. Eudocia was compelled by them to become a nun. Civil war became inevitable (see above, p. 609).

Romanos IV, who enjoyed support in eastern Anatolia, was defeated twice: the first time near Amaseia, and then in Cilicia. He was captured and so cruelly blinded on 29 June 1072 that he died a few weeks later. One

<sup>11</sup> 1,500,000 dinars – 300,000 dinars = 1,200,000 dinars: 60,000 dinars per year = 20 years. According to Ibn al-Athir, the treaty was concluded for fifty years: Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, ed. al-Qadi, VIII, p. 389; tr. Richards, p. 172. Another variant is given by Bar Hebraeus, who states that the total sum of reparations of 1,000,000 dinars was to be paid as an annual tribute of 360,000 dinars: Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography*, ed. Bedjan, p. 249; tr. Wallis Budge, I, p. 222.

<sup>12</sup> Cheynet (1980), pp. 421–34.

of Romanos' commanders, Philaretos Brachamios, refused to recognise Michael VII and sought to create a polity of his own, centred on Mshar, and later on Germanikeia. Meanwhile Romanos' death nullified the peace treaty struck between him and Alp Arslan, who himself perished in Transoxiana shortly afterwards. All our sources agree that it was Romanos' death which gave the Turks the opportunity to invade Byzantine territories and, more importantly, to remain permanently in Anatolia.<sup>13</sup>

In 1073 Michael VII sent Isaac Komnenos against the Turks; Isaac was the new domestic of the Schools of the East, and elder brother of the future emperor Alexios Komnenos. Their expedition ended in disaster; the western mercenaries under the command of Russell Balliol rebelled and abandoned the Byzantine army. Meanwhile Isaac was defeated and taken captive by the Turks near Caesarea; Alexios managed to escape and get as far as Ankara (Ankyra), where he was rejoined by Isaac, who had been ransomed by the Byzantine cities. However, Ankara itself was by no means secure, as the Turks were ravaging the surrounding countryside. Near Nikomedeia the young Komnenoi and their small detachment were attacked by a larger group of some 200 Turks. The brothers barely escaped to Constantinople. This episode vividly illustrates conditions in Asia Minor two years after the battle of Manzikert: the countryside lay open to the Turks, while the fortified towns were still in Byzantine hands. Yet even without a strong field army, the Byzantine defence system disintegrated only slowly.

The Turks managed to make their first, quite small, territorial acquisitions on Byzantine soil only after 1075. The territories conquered were the Pontos and Bithynia, and the loss was as a result of Russell Balliol's revolt in 1073–5. After breaking away from Isaac Komnenos' army, Russell's own detachment of 400 men went to Melitene, where he repulsed the Turkish hordes, then turned to Sebasteia and managed to occupy the theme of the Armeniakoi from the autumn of 1073 onwards. The small and ineffectual Byzantine army under the command of the caesar John Doukas could do nothing to stop him, and Russell reached Chrysopolis in 1074 with an army by then numbering 3,000. Under these circumstances, Michael VII had no choice but to ask the Turks for help. In June 1074 he sent an embassy to the Seljuq sultan Malik Shah (1073–92)<sup>14</sup> but, as time was pressing, the emperor also sought help from the leader of a roving Oghuz band nearby, the tribe known as the *döğer*. This band was led by Artuq, founder of the Artuqid dynasty which later based itself in Diyar Bakr (Amida). Artuq heeded the emperor's plea, and in a battle at Mount Sophon some time in the second part of 1074 he defeated and took prisoner both John Doukas

<sup>13</sup> See, for example: Skyl. Con., pp. 156–7; MS, XV.4, ed. and French tr. Chabot, III, p. 172 (French translation), IV, p. 579 (Syriac text).

<sup>14</sup> Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zaman*, ed. Sevim, p. 170.

and Russell Balliol. Michael VII ransomed the caesar John, while Russell was redeemed by his wife who had survived the battle in the fortress of Metabole nearby. Then Artuq left Asia Minor, while Russell withdrew to the theme of Armeniakoi.

According to Michael Attaleiates, at this moment

the emperor, . . . enraged against him [Russell], preferred that the Turks should occupy and rule the land of the Romans, rather than that this Latin should withdraw to the previous place [the theme of Armeniakoi].<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, the young Alexios Komnenos is said to have remarked to Tutaq, commander-in-chief of the Seljuq army:

Your sultan and my emperor are mutual friends. However, this barbarian, Russell, raises his hands against them and he has become the most terrible enemy of both. On the one hand, he makes incursions and little by little subdues some parts of the [land of the] Romans; on the other, he seizes [lands] in Persia, which might otherwise have remained Persia's.<sup>16</sup>

Both statements refer to the situation in Anatolia in the second half of 1075, and indicate that in accordance with the treaty of June 1074 – whereby Michael VII and Malik Shah became 'friends' – the Byzantines recognised the Seljuqs' acquisitions east of the Armeniakoi theme, in return for their assistance against Russell.

Important details of how the Byzantines employed the Turks against Russell Balliol are to be found in the Georgian *Royal Annals*, which also describe how the Turkish advance into the Pontos was contained with Georgian help. In 1074 Gregory Pakourianos left his post of commander-in-chief (*zorvari*) of the imperial forces in the east<sup>17</sup> and returned to Constantinople. Gregory gave all the lands under his control (Theodosioupolis, Olti, Kars, Vanand, Karnip'ori<sup>18</sup> and a portion of Tao) to King George II (1072–89) of Georgia. At first, this tactical withdrawal worked well enough: Georgian garrisons were established in the former Byzantine strongholds and Georgian troops cleared the territory of the Turkish war bands in 1075. Although the Turks soon occupied Theodosioupolis, Olti and then Kars, some time passed before they subdued the territory completely. They only made their first full-scale invasion into Georgia in 1080.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Attal., ed. Bekker, p. 199; ed. and Spanish tr. Pérez Martín, p. 146; see also Nikephoros Bryennios, *Histoire*, II.17, ed. and French tr. Gautier, pp. 178–9.

<sup>16</sup> *Al.*, I.2.2, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, p. 13; ed. and French tr. Leib, I, pp. 11–12; tr. Sewter, p. 33; see also Nikephoros Bryennios, *Histoire*, II.21–2, ed. and French tr. Gautier, pp. 186–9.

<sup>17</sup> *Zorvari* was a Georgian version of the Armenian title *zawrawor*, the latter being the translation of the Byzantine title *stratēgos autokratōr*.

<sup>18</sup> Between Kars and the river Araxes.

<sup>19</sup> *Georgian royal annals*, ed. Qauxč'išvilis, I, pp. 317–20; ed. and tr. Brosset, I.1, pp. 199–200, 236–7 (Georgian text), I.2, p. 199, n. 2, pp. 345–8 (French tr.); tr. Thomson, pp. 307–11.

Byzantine policy was realistic and flexible. The withdrawal of Gregory Pakourianos' army was caused by Byzantium's desperate need for troops during Russell's revolt and by a fresh influx of Turks into the Pontos in 1073–5. With Russell at their rear, the Byzantines had little hope of standing up to the Turks. It was Georgian military support that restricted the Turks' migration into the Byzantine Pontic provinces in 1075, when Russell's revolt was suppressed with Turkish help.

The Byzantine eastern border zone with its formidable fortifications and huge cities did not collapse as soon as the Turks occupied Theodosiopolis. Sebasteia and its environs, or at least a portion of Sennacherim-John Artsruni's possessions, may have remained in the hands of his sons Atom and Abusahl, who were still alive as late as 1079–80. Maria, the daughter of Gagik-Abas II (1029–64) of Kars, held her father's possessions in Tzamandos in 1077. The Byzantines themselves stood their ground in the strategically important region of Choma, Polybotos and Kedrea as late as 1081.<sup>20</sup> We also read in an Armenian colophon that in 1079 Ch'ortowanel Mamikonean, 'the great prince of Taron and all the lands of the Armenians', gave with the consent of the emperor his ancestral village of Berdak to the monastery (or church) of the Holy Apostles.<sup>21</sup> If this Berdak can be identified as Sewuk Berdak (Maurokastron) on the headwaters of the Araxes, the colophon suggests that an Armenian prince recognising imperial authority retained territory south of Theodosiopolis at the end of the 1070s.

The Turks in the Pontos – hemmed in by Byzantine fortresses to the north, west and south, and by the Georgians to their east – did not pose much of a threat to Byzantine power in Asia Minor. Far more dangerous was another invasion led by Suleiman ibn Qutlumush (1081–6) from Syria in 1074–5.<sup>22</sup> According to Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, Suleiman 'was reported to have come from the Turkmen of [the confederation of] al-Nawakiyya who dwelt in Syria'.<sup>23</sup> Already in 1070, some of the al-Nawakiyya had gone to Asia Minor, under the leadership of Arisghī (see above, p. 702), where first Romanos IV and then Michael VII settled them in western Anatolia; but most made for Syria, which they occupied in 1071–2.

In 1073, northern Syria was caught up in the struggle between the Fatimid caliphate of al-Mustansir (1036–94) and Atsiz, a kinsman or at least a fellow tribesman of Artuq. Atsiz was commander of the largest Turkish band that had been ravaging Syria from 1064 onwards; the al-Nawakiyya Turkmen were another such band. The ensuing chaos led masses of Turks to swarm

<sup>20</sup> Cheynet (1998b). <sup>21</sup> Mat'evosyan (ed.), *Hishatakaranner*, no. 133, pp. 111–12.

<sup>22</sup> *Tarīḥi takvīmler*, ed. Turan, p. 64; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zaman*, ed. Sevim, p. 173.

<sup>23</sup> Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zaman*, ed. Sevim, p. 243. The name al-Nawakiyya comes from the Persian word *nawak* 'a small arrow', usually used for shooting birds.

into Syria, many of them antagonistic not only to the Fatimids but also to the Seljuq sultan Malik Shah. Despite being themselves of the Seljuq clan, Suleiman ibn Qutlumush and his brother Mansur/Mas'ud<sup>24</sup> were among those Turks who – like the al-Nawakiyya – were hostile to the ruling dynasty of the Grand Seljuqs. Their father Qutlumush, the invader of Vaspurakan in 1045, had rebelled against his cousin Alp Arslan and died in battle near Rayy sometime before 23 January 1064.

Although Atsiz lacked the illustrious pedigree of Suleiman, with Malik Shah's support he grew from strength to strength. Not without reason he became suspicious of the sons of Qutlumush, and open struggle between them ended in victory for Atsiz near Tiberias in 1075. Suleiman and Mansur were then driven off from Antioch by the *doux* Isaac Komnenos and forced to leave Syria for Asia Minor. Suleiman's horde advanced quickly along the Byzantine military road, taking Ikonion and the fortress of Kabala en route.<sup>25</sup> His arrival at Nicaea in the summer or autumn of 1075 transformed the situation in Asia Minor to the Turks' advantage. According to Attaleiates, the Turkish incursions spread as far as the Bosphorus at this time.<sup>26</sup>

Suleiman's chance came in October 1077, when Nikephoros Botaneiates – later Emperor Nikephoros III (1078–81) – began his rebellion against Michael VII (see above, p. 610). Arisghi and his al-Nawakiyya Turks at once supported Nikephoros in Phrygia. Suleiman, in command of another grouping of the al-Nawakiyya near Kotyaeion, followed suit at the beginning of 1078. He recognised the new emperor as his suzerain and even helped Nikephoros Botaneiates defeat the rebellion of Nikephoros Bryennios in the spring of 1078. But the main problem for the new emperor was Suleiman's proximity to the Bosphorus; his horde roamed the fertile lands of Bithynia, raiding them relentlessly. Neither the expedition of the amir Bursuq, whom Malik Shah had sent in pursuit of Suleiman in 1078, nor the attempts of Nikephoros III himself to restrict his 'allies' could stop the devastating raids. Although, with the exception of Ikonion, the Turks had yet to take any Byzantine cities, they dominated the heart of western Asia Minor. By 1078 Philaretos Brachamios had managed to become master of Edessa, Melitene and Antioch and to halt the influx of Turks from Syria. He also recognised Nikephoros III as his emperor. But even this could not tip the balance in favour of the Byzantines.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> His name was recorded by Nikephoros Bryennios, *Histoire*, IV.2, ed. and French tr. Gautier, pp. 258–9 as 'Masour'. This could have been either an honorary title *al-Mansur* ('victorious') or a proper name Mas'ud.

<sup>25</sup> *Histoire des Seldjoukides*, ed. Uzluq, p. 36.

<sup>26</sup> Attal., ed. Bekker, p. 200; ed. and Spanish tr. Pérez Martín, p. 147.

<sup>27</sup> On Philaretos, see Yarnley (1972).



## THE BYZANTINE RECONQUEST

*Alexios I Komnenos*

On 1 April 1081, the Byzantine troops who had proclaimed Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118) emperor entered Constantinople; Nikephoros III was deposed. By this time, Anatolia was a patchwork; Byzantine strongholds held out side-by-side with areas under Turkish control. It was the revolt of Nikephoros Melissenos against Nikephoros III in 1079–81 that gave the Turks access to many Byzantine cities in Phrygia and Galatia (see above, p. 610). The Byzantines still held the Mediterranean coastline of Asia Minor, south of Phokaia.<sup>28</sup> Similarly they still controlled the chief cities in Paphlagonia, while Theodore Gabras had liberated Trebizond by 1081. It was around this time, certainly by June 1081, that Suleiman felt himself strong enough to shake off nominal Byzantine suzerainty. He occupied Nicaea and Nikomedeia and proclaimed himself sultan.

Meanwhile other parts of Asia Minor became subject to new lords: the Danishmends in Sebasteia (Sivas), Caesarea (Kayseri) and Amaseia (Amasya); the Mengucheks in Keltzene, Kamacha and Tephrike (Divriği on the upper Euphrates; and the Saltuqs in Theodosioupolis (Erzurum). Of these, the emirate of the Danishmends was the mightiest. Rivalry, yet sometimes unity, between the Seljuq sultans of Rum and the mighty Danishmends characterised the internal politics of Turkish-dominated Asia Minor from the 1080s until the 1170s. Until the First Crusade, Alexios I's strategy in Asia Minor was to expel the Seljuq Turks from Bithynia; preserve the Byzantine strongholds on the sea coast; and impose imperial authority or at least overlordship, however tenuous, on the motley assortment of warlords – Turkish, Greek or Armenian – who had emerged elsewhere in the peninsula.

Despite his lack of military resources, Alexios I's eastern policy was successful, even in the first fifteen, most difficult years of his reign. Firstly he succeeded in reconquering the coastline of Bithynia from Suleiman, including Nikomedeia. A peace treaty had been signed by 17 June 1081, establishing the Drakon river as the frontier between the empire and the sultanate of Rum. In 1086, after Suleiman's death, Malik Shah offered Alexios an alliance, to be cemented by marriage between Alexios' daughter (and future historian) Anna Komnena and Malik Shah's son Bark-yaruq. Although the marriage was never concluded, with Malik Shah's permission Alexios retook Sinope and other Pontic cities from the Seljuqs. The sultan's concession was not particularly generous: both rulers were

<sup>28</sup> TT, I, pp. 52–3. The coastal cities between Phokaia and Nikomedeia seemed to have been occupied, or at least seriously threatened, by the Turks.

united in antipathy towards the Nicaean statelet, now ruled by Suleiman's successors.<sup>29</sup>

Some of the Christian lords ruling over the remnants of the Byzantine territories in Anatolia still recognised imperial authority. Philaretos remained Byzantine domestic of the East and *doux* of Antioch until December 1084 when Suleiman seized the city. Gregory Pahlavuni, the nephew of Catholicos Gregory II the Martyrophile (1066–1105), was the Byzantine *magistros*, *doux* and '*kouropalatēs* of the East' until 1099 when he was killed in the neighbourhood of Ani. Finally, in 1091 Theodore Gabras visited Constantinople and accepted the authority of the emperor.

However, Alexios I's foremost concern upon his accession was the Turkish statelets in western Anatolia. Although Suleiman had proclaimed himself sultan, his power base was far from solid, despite controlling the old Byzantine military road from Nicaea to Ikonion. The situation became even more volatile when he moved his armies back to Cilicia and thence to Syria in 1082–3. Suleiman almost destroyed Philaretos' lordship, taking Antioch and finally Melitene in 1084–5, but he was himself killed in battle against Malik Shah's brother Tutush near Aleppo in May–June 1086. However, Suleiman's departure from Anatolia and subsequent death did not halt the Turkish incursions into Mysia, Lydia and Ionia. At the end of 1083, shortly after Suleiman had withdrawn his forces to Syria, Alexios was forced to repel a series of attacks against the Byzantine cities along the Sea of Marmara by Abu al-Qasim, chief deputy to the sultan of Rum. In 1092, while the rapprochement between emperor and sultan after the death of Suleiman was still in force, Alexios I organised a counter-attack against the Turks in Nicaea; his general Tatikios marched on Nicaea to help the army of Malik Shah's amir Buzan besiege the city, while Manuel Boutoumites destroyed Abu al-Qasim's fleet near Kios in Bithynia. By the end of 1092 or early 1093, Abu al-Qasim was required to sign a peace treaty while receiving imperial hospitality in Constantinople and he accepted the Byzantine title of *sebastos* from Alexios.<sup>30</sup>

Malik Shah died on 19 November 1092 and for two years after his death a struggle raged between the new sultan, Barkyaruq (1094–1105) and his uncle Tutush. In early 1094, Buzan ordered the murder of Abu al-Qasim near Isfahan, and became Barkyaruq's commander-in-chief in Asia Minor; just before Abu al-Qasim was killed, Suleiman's son Kilij Arslan I (1092–1107) entered Nicaea. Alexios I also subdued two other over-active Turkish beys in the early 1090s: Tzachas (Çaka) of Smyrna, who occupied Klazomenai,

<sup>29</sup> *AL*, VI.9.4–5, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, pp. 187–8; ed. and French tr. Leib, II, pp. 65–6; tr. Sewter, p. 200.

<sup>30</sup> *AL*, VI.10.5–11, VI.12.1–2, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, pp. 190–2, 194; ed. and French tr. Leib, II, pp. 69–72, 74–5; tr. Sewter, pp. 202–5, 206–7; Frankopan, 'The foreign policy of the emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081–c. 1100)' (DPhil thesis, 1998), pp. 327–34.

Phokaia and Chios from 1090 to 1093 (see above, p. 611), and at the end of 1093, a certain Elchanes who, judging by his title, was Buzan's or Kilij Arslan I's deputy in Apollonias and Kyzikos. Around this time Alexios regained Nikomedeia and built some other forts looking onto the Gulf of Nikomedeia.<sup>31</sup>

Yet despite all these measures, the most the Byzantines achieved in Asia Minor between 1081 and 1096 was the temporary halting of Turkish incursions into north-west Anatolia. It was the participants of the First Crusade who destroyed the Turkish statelet in Bithynia. Not only did they besiege and take Nicaea on 19 June 1097; they also defeated the army of Kilij Arslan I at Dorylaion on 1 July 1097 (see above, p. 623). So shattering was this defeat to the Seljuqs of Rum that the sultan, who was later supported by the *malik* known as Danishmend, only managed to organise resistance on the eastern borders of his realm, in Hebraike near Heraclea-Cybistra, at the beginning of September 1097. Once again, the crusaders were victorious.

The Byzantine reconquest of western Anatolia began almost as soon as Nicaea had fallen to the Crusaders. By 28 June 1098 the Byzantine armies had cleared the Aegean coast and the provinces of Phrygia, Ionia and Lydia of the Turks and reached the river Maeander. Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea became Byzantine, and imperial troops penetrated as far as Polybotos. At the end of 1099 or early in 1100 General Manuel Boutoumites' expedition to Cilicia brought Antalya back to the Byzantines, although the road between the city and the Byzantine strongholds on the Maeander remained vulnerable to possible Turkish incursions. Antalya (Attaleia) became the springboard for further Byzantine campaigns into Cilicia, where Alexios I established a nucleus for Byzantine administration in 1101. Towards the end of his reign, the emperor succeeded in subjugating the lands around Kotyaeion in the summer of 1113, reaching Kedrea (near Amorion) and Philomelion in the autumn of 1116.

### *Two 'wings': the strategy of John II Komnenos*

When Alexios I died on 15 August 1118, he left his successor John II Komnenos (1118–43) a well-organised and prosperous state, and John continued his father's policy in Asia Minor. Like Alexios, he undertook military operations against Seljuq territory to forestall Turkish invasions and capture strategically important border fortresses. However, there was a difference. John II's military activity was largely focused on the two 'wings' of the Byzantines' territories in Asia Minor: Paphlagonia and the Pontos in the

<sup>31</sup> The title of Elchanes is usually translated as 'subject khan' and is the same as the title Ilkhan, later employed by the Mongols of Iran. See *AL*, VI.10.9–10, X.5.3, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, pp. 191–2, 296; ed. and French tr. Leib, II, pp. 71, 206; tr. Sewter, pp. 204, 308; Foss (1985–96), II, pp. 45–9, 64–9; Shepard (2005), pp. 328–33.

north; and Pisidia, Pamphylia and Cilicia in the south. Despite this, John's diplomatic and military activities were no less successful than those of his father.

Southern Asia Minor was the more important of the two 'wings': the main cities of the Seljuq sultanate of Rum were to be found there, while the lowlands of Cilicia served as a base for Byzantine support for, or military pressure on, the Crusader states in Syria. In 1119 John II took Laodicea and Sozopolis in western Asia Minor from the Turks. He then managed to secure the road to Antalya, occupying the fortresses that protected the port from its hinterland. In 1124 the emperor involved himself in the dynastic struggle between Sultan Mas'ud (1116–55) and his brother Malik 'Arab, ruler of Kastamonu and Ankara. Combining both military and diplomatic pressure, John II forced Mas'ud to become his ally, while holding the defeated Malik 'Arab as a hostage in Constantinople. In spring 1136 John undertook an expedition against the principality of Antioch, whose vassal Count Baldwin of Marash had defeated, imprisoned and then released the Rupenid prince Leo I. By the summer of 1137 John II had conquered both the highlands and the lowlands of Cilician Armenia, including the cities of Tarsus, Adana, Mopsuestia and Anazarbos (see above, p. 632). The unfortunate Leo I was once again imprisoned, this time by the Byzantine emperor, and sent to Constantinople. Although the Danishmendid Muhammad Ghazi (1134–42) soon drove the Byzantine garrisons out of the Cilician highlands, Byzantine administration persisted in Tarsus, Adana and Mopsuestia until 1183, apart from two short intervals in 1152–8 and 1173–5, when the Rupenid princes Thoros II (1148–68) and Mleh successively gained temporary control of the lowlands of Cilicia.<sup>32</sup>

John II was less successful in his northern campaigns. Although his expeditions against Kastamonu and Gangra in 1131–2 and 1134–5 achieved the temporary subjugation of both fortresses, his siege of Neocaesarea (Niksar) in 1139–40 was fruitless. John faced considerable difficulties in Asia Minor after 1130, when the sultan Mas'ud switched his allegiance from the Byzantines to Amir Ghazi Danishmendid (1104–33/4). Another ally of Amir Ghazi was Constantine Gabras, the *doux* of Trebizond, which was effectively an independent polity from 1126. John II's response was to launch military campaigns deep into Paphlagonia and the Pontos. Although he never managed to take Neocaesarea or to break the alliance between Mas'ud and the Danishmendids, John nevertheless brought the Pontic provinces to heel in 1140. The furthest-flung 'wings' of Byzantine Asia Minor – the Pontos and Cilicia – became firmly reunited with the main body of the Byzantine state in western Anatolia.

<sup>32</sup> Lilie (1993a), pp. 166–8, 176–7, 195–6, 214, n. 300.



Map 33 Byzantine Asia Minor, the Seljuqs of Rum and other Turks: coexistence in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries

*Manuel I Komnenos and the Turks: triumph, co-existence and tribulation*

The long reign of John II's successor Manuel I Komnenos (1143–80) saw the zenith of the recovery of Byzantine power in Asia Minor after 1081. For the first time, imperial diplomacy managed to bring nearly all the Turkish potentates in Anatolia into the Byzantine fold. Circumstances helped the emperor. Muhammad Ghazi died in 1142 and his death triggered the fragmentation of the Danishmend emirate: Sebasteia went to one of his brothers, Yaghibasan (1142–64); Ablastayn and Melitene to another, 'Ayn al-Dawla (1142–52); and his son, Dhu al-Nun (1142–68) became master of Caesarea. The alliance between the Seljuq sultanate of Rum and the Danishmends was finished by 1143, as Sultan Mas'ud and his successor Kilij Arslan II (1156–92) were almost always at odds with Yaghibasan, the most powerful of them.

It was Sultan Mas'ud who first tried to take advantage of John II's death, seizing Ablastayn in 1143 and besieging 'Ayn al-Dawla's capital, Melitene. Two years later, shortly after *atabey* Zengi (1127–46) of Aleppo had seized Edessa from the crusaders, the sultan captured the Cilician fortress of Prakana, whose ruler Tigran had acknowledged Byzantine overlordship. Mas'ud then attacked Germanikeia, one of the remnants of the ever-shrinking county of Edessa. Some time after January 1146 Manuel I launched a full-scale campaign against the Seljuqs; by this stage Yaghibasan had become a subject ally (*hypospondos* and *doulos*) of the emperor, fearful that his emirate might be the next target for the mighty sultan's armies.<sup>33</sup> The Byzantines organised a counter-attack against Konya (Ikonion), which they besieged. A peace treaty concluded in the first half of 1147 restored the status quo on the border, although Ablastayn was to remain in Seljuq hands under the heir-apparent Kilij Arslan. Sultan and emperor joined forces against Thoros II, who was then threatening Byzantine Cilicia; between 1153 and 1155, at Manuel's request and with the support of Yaghibasan, Mas'ud tried to force Thoros to return the cities he had recently conquered in Cilicia to the Byzantines.

There is no doubting that the Seljuqs were a formidable foe and the Second Crusade in 1147–8 only showed their strength. They inflicted a severe defeat on the German emperor Conrad III (1138–52) near Dorylaion in October 1147, forcing the rest of his army to join Louis VII (1137–80) of France; Louis had chosen a safer route to Antalya, passing through Byzantine territory and then on to Antioch by sea. The empire and the sultanate had widely different attitudes towards the crusaders; for Mas'ud, they were mortal enemies, while for Manuel they were involuntary allies, whom he supported as long as it was in the empire's interests.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Kinn., II.5, ed. Meineke, p. 39; tr. Brand, p. 39; Oikonomides (1983), pp. 191–2.

<sup>34</sup> See Magdalino (1993a), pp. 5, 41–53.

Byzantine diplomatic and military pressure steadily increased in Asia Minor, despite Manuel I's preoccupation with western affairs between 1147 and 1159. By 1156 the Seljuqs had reconquered Ankara and Gangra from Yaghibasan, who had taken Ablastayn. However, Sultan Kilij Arslan II did not manage to establish effective control over Turkish-occupied Paphlagonia, which came into the hands of his younger brother Shahinshah. Thus after Kilij Arslan II's accession in 1156 there were no fewer than five Turkish states in central Anatolia: the sultanate of Rum itself, the three Danishmend emirates of Sebasteia, Caesarea and Melitene, and the Paphlagonian appanage of Shahinshah. A peace treaty struck between Kilij Arslan II and Yaghibasan in 1156 was short-lived; although they colluded in raiding Byzantine lands thereafter, they were nevertheless rivals for control of the other three Turkish statelets. In 1158 Manuel forced the sultan to return the conquered Byzantine border fortresses of Pounoura and Sibylla, despite being heavily involved around this time with campaigning against both William I (1154–66) of Sicily and Reynald de Châtillon (1153–60), prince of Antioch.

Manuel I's campaign against Antioch in 1158–9 was a vivid demonstration of residual Byzantine power: he defeated both Kilij Arslan II and Thoros II en route to Cilicia – which reverted to being a Byzantine province – before forcing Reynald to become his vassal. But Kilij Arslan remained hostile, for his state was now surrounded by the territories of Byzantium and her allies, and while Manuel was on his way back from Cilicia he attacked the Byzantine rearguard near Kotyaeion. Most probably in order to contain Yaghibasan, Kilij Arslan also attempted to negotiate a marriage alliance with 'Izz al-Din Saltuq II (1132–68), the master of Theodosiupolis, only to be thwarted when Yaghibasan kidnapped Kilij's bride, who was later married to Dhu al-Nun Danishmendid of Caesarea (see above, p. 642).

The final round in this series of Byzantine initiatives took place in the winter of 1160–1. Manuel I formed a grand coalition with King Baldwin III (1143–63) of Jerusalem, Reynald de Châtillon, Thoros II, Yaghibasan and Kilij Arslan II's brother, Shahinshah, claimant to the Seljuq throne. After he had been defeated in 1160 by the armies of both John Kontostephanos<sup>35</sup> and Yaghibasan,<sup>36</sup> Kilij Arslan swore to be the empire's military ally (*symmachos*); the sultan also swore that he would become Manuel's friend (*philos*), retainer (*oikeios*) and son.<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile Manuel's ally George III (1156–84) of Georgia had defeated the joint forces of Kilij Arslan's supporters Saltuq II of Theodosiupolis, and his son-in-law the Nasir al-Din (Miran) Sukman II,

<sup>35</sup> Kinn., IV.24, ed. Meineke, p. 200; tr. Brand, p. 152.

<sup>36</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 118; tr. Magoulias, p. 67; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, ed. al-Qadi, IX, p. 477.

<sup>37</sup> Kinn., IV.24, ed. Meineke, p. 201; tr. Brand, p. 152; NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 123; tr. Magoulias, p. 70.

lord of Akhlat. At the end of 1161 both Sukman and Kilij Arslan travelled to Constantinople, where the sultan signed a peace treaty.<sup>38</sup>

This was a triumph for Manuel's policy in Asia Minor, ensuring the safety of Byzantium's borders and allowing Manuel to concentrate on Hungarian affairs.<sup>39</sup> Yet this stability in Anatolia lasted for only fifteen years, as one of its essential elements – the emirate of the Danishmends – suffered a sharp decline after Yaghibasan's death in 1164. Both Manuel and Kilij Arslan had foreseen this: in 1162–3 they negotiated an agreement on how the emirate should be conquered and its lands divided; Sebasteia was to become Byzantine again.

When Yaghibasan died his widow, Kilij Arslan II's sister, became ruler of Sebasteia and married Isma'il ibn Ibrahim, Yaghibasan's nephew; oddly enough, Yaghibasan's three legitimate sons did not inherit the city. In autumn 1164 Kilij Arslan attacked the emirate with Byzantine help, but Isma'il survived. Some five years later in 1169, during Manuel's great naval expedition to Egypt (see above, p. 642) and when the empire had no forces to spare, Kilij Arslan launched a surprise attack on the Danishmends in Caesarea and Tzamandos. Their ruler, Dhu al-Nun, was forced to flee to the powerful *atabey* Nur al-Din (1146–74) of Damascus, and Caesarea became a Seljuq possession. In the same year Kilij Arslan forced Shahinshah to accept his sovereignty.

Manuel did not respond to the sultan's actions. The rationale behind his policy in Asia Minor was in tension with the other goals of his foreign policy, seeing that the Danishmend emirates were under Nur al-Din's protection, and so any Byzantine support for the Danishmends would require the cooperation of Damascus. But Nur al-Din was also the mortal enemy of the crusader states, as whose protector Manuel sought to present himself. In 1164 at the battle of Harim, Nur al-Din had defeated the combined forces of Constantine Coloman, Byzantine governor in Cilicia, Bohemond III (1163–1201) of Antioch and Raymond III (1152–87) of Tripoli.<sup>40</sup> Under these circumstances, Manuel allowed his ally Kilij Arslan to enlarge the sultanate at the Danishmends' expense.

Indeed the primary objective of both rulers – Sebasteia – remained unconquered. In 1172 Isma'il and his wife were killed in a *coup d'état* and Kilij Arslan II immediately invaded the emirate; but Nur al-Din ordered him to stop and his *protégé* Dhu al-Nun entered the city. However, in the

<sup>38</sup> ME (continuation), 44, 47, ed. Melik'-Adamean and Ter-Mik'aylean, pp. 425–6, 428; tr. Dostourian, pp. 277, 279. Matthew of Edessa mistakenly calls Miran (Sukman II) the brother of Nur al-Din; but see also Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat*, ed. Dahhan, II, p. 254: Miran was Nur al-Din's cousin. See also above, pp. 642–3.

<sup>39</sup> See above, pp. 684–5. On the forms of co-existence between the Byzantines and the Turks in Asia Minor, see also Lilie (1991), pp. 37–49.

<sup>40</sup> Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat*, ed. Dahhan, II, p. 318–22; Lilie (1993a), pp. 190–3.



following year Nur al-Din formed a grand coalition against Byzantium; his allies were Kilij Arslan, Shahinshah of Ankara and the Rupenid prince Mleh, who conquered Adana and Tarsus. Although the sultan did not quite dare proclaim open war against Byzantium, the Byzantine–Seljuq alliance was almost dead. Nur al-Din himself died on 15 May 1174, removing the final obstacle to Kilij Arslan II's conquest of the emirate. He occupied Sebasteia and other Danishmend centres, while driving Shahinshah out of Ankara, and both Dhu al-Nun and Shahinshah fled to Byzantium.

Only then did Manuel realise the scale of the danger. Instead of being able to exploit the divisions among the Turkish states, he now faced a sultanate that had united almost all the Turks in Asia Minor beneath its banner. The emperor acted quickly. In 1175 he sent out two expeditions: one to Amaseia, led by the *sebastos* Michael Gabras, and the other to Seljuq-controlled Paphlagonia, headed by Shahinshah. Both ended in defeat: the Amaseians refused to let Gabras into their city, while the Seljuqs destroyed Shahinshah's army. A further military mission to Neocaesarea, this time led by Andronikos Vatatzes and Dhu al-Nun, also ended in humiliation, for the citizens of Neocaesarea refused to cooperate. Manuel's diplomacy had failed, in that the empire had no allies in Asia Minor, and court orators' lauding of his refortification of Dorylaion could not redeem this.<sup>41</sup>

Manuel's last hope lay in his own army; in the past, the Seljuqs had been no match for it. In spring 1176 the emperor marched to Dorylaion, intending to attack Konya, and he rejected Kilij Arslan's plea for peace. But the situation had changed: the sultan now possessed far greater military resources and he summoned all his troops, including those from the newly conquered lands. On 17 September 1176 the Seljuqs trapped the Byzantine army en route to Konya, in a defile near Myriokephalon, and the imperial army was defeated after a hard-fought battle, with heavy casualties on both sides.

It is easy to list the mistakes of Manuel I that led to the diplomatic and military debacle of 1176: his preoccupation with relations with the crusader states; his long-lasting conflict with Nur al-Din; his Balkan campaigns; and his general absorption in western affairs at the expense of the east after 1161. But the main factor boosting the sultan's chances was the dissolution of the Danishmend emirate, and here Manuel could do very little. John II's expeditions some fifty years before show how difficult it was to reconquer territory from the Turks (see above, p. 711), and several generations after 1081 the central Anatolian lands were going their own way: one in which the Greek inhabitants cooperated with the Turks. This cooperation was first and foremost economic, but it helps to explain the Amaseians' and Neocaesareans' similar decisions in 1176. Myriokephalon did not extinguish

<sup>41</sup> Stone (2003a), p. 195.

Byzantine hopes for a military reconquest of Asia Minor – the imperial army was still the strongest in Anatolia – but it was a political watershed. The sultanate was now as powerful as the empire and an equilibrium was established in Asia Minor after 1176 that neither side could overturn.

Given the large number of Greeks (*rumi*) living within the sultanate, an orthodox church with strong links to Constantinople and the presence of Byzantine aristocrats at the Seljuq court,<sup>42</sup> Byzantine diplomacy still stood a good chance of ensuring a friendly sultan. This policy was not entirely new and in fact dated back to the reign of Alexios I, but the personal, ‘father–son’ relationship between emperor and sultan became more significant after 1176.

#### BYZANTINE–SELJUQ RELATIONS 1176–1232: THE TIES OF RULING FAMILIES

According to a letter from Manuel I Komnenos to Henry II (1154–89) of England, after the battle of Myriokephalon Sultan Kilij Arslan

sent to beg our imperial majesty supplicantly, employing the language of entreaty, suing for peace, and promising to fulfil every wish of our imperial majesty, to give us his service against all men, to release all the prisoners who were detained in his kingdom, and in every way to conform to our desires.<sup>43</sup>

In reality Manuel agreed to demolish the fortresses of Dorylaion and Soublaion and to become a Seljuq tributary,<sup>44</sup> although it should be noted that even before 1176, Manuel had paid sums to Kilij Arslan as part of his special relationship with the Seljuqs. The friendship (*philia*) between Manuel and Kilij Arslan continued until Manuel’s death in 1180. The sultan’s failure to exploit his victory at Myriokephalon and Byzantium’s gradual weakening after 1180 are not to be explained entirely in military terms.<sup>45</sup> Kilij Arslan decided to divide the sultanate – most probably in 1187 – between his nine sons, a brother and a nephew. However, soon afterwards he handed the whole realm over to his eldest son, Qutb al-Din, upon which Kilij Arslan’s other sons ceased to recognise his authority. Seeking undisputed power, Qutb al-Din arrested his father, but the old sultan escaped and settled in Sozopolis in the ‘realm’ of his youngest son Kay-Khusraw I (1192–6, 1205–11). Kilij Arslan recognised Kay-Khusraw as his heir before his death in 1192, and that same year Kay-Khusraw entered Konya.

After Qutb al-Din’s death in 1195, his brother Rukn al-Din of Tokat gradually occupied almost all the sultanate’s lands. Kay-Khusraw I was forced

<sup>42</sup> Turan (1953); Balivet (1994), pp. 47–9. <sup>43</sup> Vasiliev (1929–30), p. 239.

<sup>44</sup> NC, ed. van Dieten, I, p. 189; tr. Magoulias, p. 107; *Histoire des Seldjoukides*, ed. Uzluk, p. 39.

<sup>45</sup> The military campaigning did not finish in 1176, and Manuel I managed to repulse the Seljuq raid against Claudiopolis at the end of 1179.

to leave his capital in September 1196. After a long journey trekking across Cilician Armenia, Ablastayn and the Pontos, the ex-sultan sailed to Constantinople in 1200, where he was received with great honour by Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203). Kay-Khusraw was wedded to the daughter of Manuel Maurozomes, a member of the Komnenian elite, and was even baptised and adopted by the emperor as his son. He was still in Constantinople when the Fourth Crusaders arrived on 23 June 1203 and he helped his adoptive father, Alexios III, to flee the capital on the night of 17–18 July 1203.

When the crusaders finally took Constantinople in April 1204, the empire broke up into its constituent parts. In Asia Minor, 'Theodore, who was called Morotheodore [i.e. 'silly Theodore']',<sup>46</sup> ruled over the city of Philadelphia; another, Sabbas by name,<sup>47</sup> ruled Sampson and its surrounding territory; and David, brother of Alexios, who had taken over Trebizond and was also known as Grand Komnenos, subdued the whole of Paphlagonia . . .<sup>48</sup> Others who seized this opportunity to establish local power bases included Leo Gabalas of Rhodes and, on the upper Maeander, Nikephoros Kontostephanos and Kay-Khusraw I's father-in-law Manuel Maurozomes (from 1205). One of the most successful was Theodore I Laskaris (1205–21), founder of what emerged as the Nicaean state; he managed to unite all the Byzantine territories in Anatolia, save those conquered by the Latins or occupied by the empire of Trebizond.

Of all the emperors recognised as legitimate in or just before 1204, none managed to establish himself in Asia Minor after the fall of Constantinople.<sup>49</sup> In 1203–4 Alexios III was in Adrianople, and then he moved to Mosynopolis in Thrace (see below, p. 734). It was his son-in-law, Theodore I Laskaris, who acted as the emperor's chief deputy in Anatolia, where at first his imperial connections offered Theodore little advantage; what he really needed was military help so as to vanquish his rivals.

When help arrived it came in the form of the Seljuqs. In June 1204 Rukn al-Din died and his young son Kilij Arslan III (1204–5) succeeded him as sultan. That summer Kay-Khusraw I and Manuel Maurozomes left the environs of Constantinople and hastened to the sultanate of Rum. They passed through Nicaea, where Theodore and Kay-Khusraw concluded an agreement. With the sums advanced by Theodore, Kay-Khusraw was able to depose Kilij Arslan III in March 1205; in return, the sultan gave Theodore a military force to help him subdue his main rivals – Theodore Mangaphas, Sabbas Asidinos and probably also Nikephoros Kontostephanos – and to reconquer some of the lands occupied by the Latins. Only two Greek rivals remained: Manuel Maurozomes, now himself at large in Laodicea, and the

<sup>46</sup> Theodore Mangaphas of Philadelphia. See above, p. 656.      <sup>47</sup> Sabbas Asidenos.

<sup>48</sup> GA, ch. 7, rev. edn. Wirth, I, p. 12; tr. Macrides, p. 120. See also below, p. 731.

<sup>49</sup> On the various emperors, see above, pp. 662–3.

Grand Komnenos David in Paphlagonia. Despite receiving support from his son-in-law, Kay-Khusraw I, by 1207 Maurozomes had been defeated and imprisoned by Theodore while his lands were absorbed by the sultanate.

Relations between the empire of Nicaea and the Seljuq sultanate should be seen in terms of the family ties between them. While Kay-Khusraw I was married to Maurozomes' daughter, Theodore I Laskaris' wife Anna was the daughter of Alexios III, to whom Kay-Khusraw was indebted. The sultan certainly tried to take advantage of the Byzantine empire's disintegration but, strikingly, his direct assaults were reserved for the lands of other, peripheral rulers. These included Trebizond – capital of the Grand Komnenos Alexios I (1204–22), which Kay-Khusraw attacked in 1205 – and Antalya, which he captured on 5 March 1207.

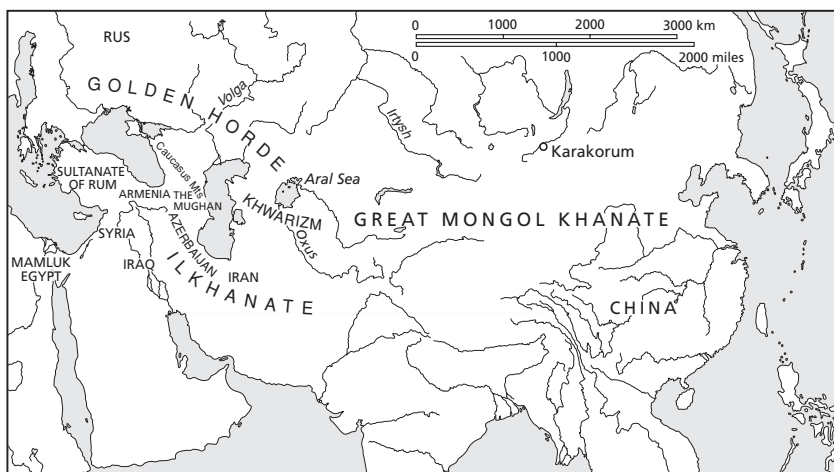
For the Seljuqs, the situation after 1204 was unique: for the first time their sultanate faced several Greek states in Asia Minor, instead of a single, centralised empire. And yet the sultan, constrained by his family ties, did not exploit the situation to the full. What set Theodore I Laskaris and Kay-Khusraw I against each other was Maurozomes' imprisonment at Theodore's hands, Theodore's coronation as emperor in 1208 and, finally, the appearance of Alexios III Angelos in the sultanate of Rum around 1210.<sup>50</sup> In 1211 the sultan declared open war. In a battle at Antioch-on-the-Maeander some time after 15 June 1211 the Nicaean army was almost defeated, but Theodore managed to kill Kay-Khusraw, and the sultan's eldest son Kay-Kawus I (1211–19) signed an 'inviolable alliance' with him.

Thereafter the Seljuqs did not dare threaten the empire of Nicaea directly. In fact in 1214 the Seljuqs and the Nicaeans simultaneously attacked their common enemy, the empire of Trebizond, whose ruler, the Grand Komnenos Alexios I, was forced to cede western Paphlagonia to Theodore and eastern Paphlagonia, with Sinope as its centre, to Kay-Kawus. The sultanate of Rum became the Nicaean empire's only eastern neighbour. The former rivals pursued different courses: the sultanate, which reached its apogee during the long reign of Kay-Qubad I (1219–37) expanded eastwards; for his part, John III Vatatzes (1221–54) of Nicaea was largely preoccupied with military operations in the Balkans. Yet the Nicaean–Seljuq joint domination of Asia Minor was about to be shattered by the Mongol invasions.

#### THE COMING OF THE MONGOLS

The Mongol state was founded by Genghis Khan (1206–27) after he succeeded in uniting the Mongol tribes in 1206. He soon began to wage

<sup>50</sup> Alexios III was captured by Boniface of Montferrat when the latter was on his way from Corinth to Thessaloniki in November 1204 and Boniface sent the ex-emperor to Montferrat. Around 1209–10 Michael I Angelos Doukas (1205–c. 1215) of Epiros ransomed Alexios III, who by 1211 had left Epiros for Antalya.



Map 34 The coming of the Mongols

war against his neighbours: the Jurchen emperors in northern China, the Tangut state in north-western China and finally the Khwarizmshahs in central Asia. In 1231 the Mongols destroyed the remnants of the state of the last Khwarizmshah to rule over Iran, Iraq and Azerbaijan, Jalal al-Din Mankburni (1220–31), and this brought them to the borders of the sultanate of Rum. Shortly afterwards, in 1231–2, Sebasteia's hinterland came under attack from Chormaghun, commander-in-chief of the Mongol army in Azerbaijan and Armenia. Kay-Qubad I immediately agreed to pay tribute to the Mongols and a Mongol embassy had arrived in Rum by early September 1236. Before any agreement could be ratified, Kay-Qubad I died on 30 May 1237, but his successor Kay-Khusraw II (1237–46) was swift to send word of his submission to the great khan Ögedei (1229–41): 'I, too, commit myself to the way of agreement and obedience.'<sup>51</sup>

Kay-Khusraw II's deeds did not match his words of compliance, and he failed to establish contact with Chormaghun, nor did he visit the court of the great khan in person. However, the situation changed once again with Ögedei's death in 1241. In the following year, after a lengthy campaign in eastern Europe, Genghis Khan's grandson Batu (1239–55) established a new state, the Golden Horde, and took command of the Mongol forces below the Caucasus range. In 1241–2 a new general, Baiju, was made commander-in-chief of the Mongol troops in Armenia, although Chormaghun nominally preserved his position, despite being struck dumb (or deaf) in battle. Baiju immediately attacked the sultanate. Kay-Khusraw II gathered a large army and called on his allies (including the empires of

<sup>51</sup> Ibn Bibi, *Mukhtasar-i Saljuqnamah*, ed. Houtsma, p. 205; German tr. Duda, p. 196.

Trebizond and Nicaea) for help. It was in vain: Baiju completely defeated him in the battle of Köse Dağ on 26 June 1243. While Kay-Khusraw II fled westwards to the Nicaean border, his vizier Muhaddhab al-Din, moving under his own steam, went first to Baiju and then to Chormaghun. The vizier signed an agreement obliging the sultanate to pay tribute and committing it to becoming a Mongol vassal-state. Batu confirmed these terms during the winter of 1243–4.

The submission of Rum to the Mongols created new problems for John III Vatatzes: the sultanate, together with Cilician Armenia and Trebizond, now became part of the *pax mongolica*. In Asia Minor, the empire of Nicaea was the only state remaining outside Mongol control, and thus it became the next likely target of the Mongol armies. To prevent this, the emperor had to maintain the sultanate of Rum as a buffer zone between the empire and the Mongols.

The enmity between Batu of the Golden Horde and the great khan Güyüg (1246–8) as well as the inner struggles in the Great Mongol khanate before the enthronement of Möngke (1251–9) alleviated the immediate threat to the Nicaean borders. Kay-Khusraw II died in 1246; his elder son, Kay-Kawus II (1246–56, 1257–61), who enjoyed Nicaean support, nominally recognised the supremacy of Batu but refused to go and pay court to the great khan in person. In order to reduce Batu's influence, Güyüg dismissed Baiju and appointed a new general, Eljigidei. He also ordered Kilij Arslan IV to share the throne with his brother Kay-Kawus II.

Although Batu managed to reinstall Baiju in 1251, the position of the Golden Horde in the Caucasus continued to deteriorate. In the same year the great khan Möngke made his brother Hulagu (1258–65), the future Ilkhan, ruler over Iran, Syria, Egypt, Rum, Azerbaijan and Armenia (of these, Egypt and southern Syria had yet to be conquered). Batu, who claimed part of these lands for himself, forbade Hulagu to cross the Oxus. Only after Batu's death in 1255 did Hulagu begin his campaign against the Isma'ili state of the Assassins in northern Iran and the Abbasid caliphate.

Kay-Kawus II, who had imprisoned his brother Kilij Arslan IV by 1256, did not want to exchange nominal submission to the Golden Horde for stricter control at the hands of Hulagu, the future Ilkhan. Besides, Hulagu wanted the plain of Mughan for himself, and ordered Baiju to leave. In August 1256 Baiju arrived unexpectedly at Theodosiupolis (by now called Erzurum). Terrified by the prospect of permanent Mongol settlement in his realm, Kay-Kawus II refused to allow Baiju to remain in the sultanate of Rum and started preparing for war. There was not enough time for Theodore II Laskaris (1254–8) to send him support, but at this very moment Michael Palaiologos – *megas konostaulos* of Nicaea and future emperor – turned up in Konya. He was a refugee who appeared dangerous in Theodore II's eyes because of his noble ancestry, which included links with both

the Komnenoi and the Angeloi. It is not entirely clear whether Michael sought refuge in the sultanate simply to avoid possible arrest or whether he really was plotting for the throne of Nicaea. What is certain is that Kay-Kawus II immediately used him against the Mongols; Michael headed the detachment of the Greeks of Rum, fighting under Byzantine banners. However, by 14 October 1256 Baiju had defeated the sultan at Sultanhanı and Kay-Kawus fled to the empire of Nicaea; Michael Palaiologos, who escaped to Kastamonu, did the same at the beginning of 1257, when he was pardoned by Theodore II Laskaris.

In this dangerous situation the Mongols were in a strong position to attack the empire of Nicaea; but Nicaean diplomacy rose to the occasion. Between January and March 1257, with Baiju's army still at the borders, a Mongol embassy arrived in Nicaea, sent by the Ilkhan Hulagu. Theodore II gave the envoys a magnificent reception.<sup>52</sup> Hulagu, preoccupied with his struggle against the Abbasids, agreed to restore Kay-Kawus II to the throne, on condition that he would share the sultanate with Kilij Arslan IV. By May 1257 Kay-Kawus II was back in power at Konya.

It was a triumph for Nicaean diplomacy, launching a *rapprochement* between Nicaea and the Ilkhans, while the Nicaean alliance with the Seljuqs remained as strong as ever. Kay-Kawus II, who ruled the western part of the sultanate, even appointed one of the Nicaean military commanders, his friend Michael Palaiologos, as a *beylerbey* (commander-in-chief) at the beginning of 1258.<sup>53</sup> No doubt he did so in order to ensure Nicaean military support. Yet even when united, the Nicaean and Seljuq armies were no match for the Mongols. Imperial *Realpolitik* increasingly required friendly relations with the Mongols of Iran, and it was Michael Palaiologos who first perceived this fact of political life. In 1261 the Mongols finally drove the rebellious Kay-Kawus II out of Rum, but Palaiologos – now Michael VIII (1258–82) – no longer supported his former friend. He detained the sultan in Constantinople; Kay-Kawus II was only liberated three years later, in the autumn or winter of 1264, through the good offices of his brother-in-law Berke (1257–66) of the Golden Horde.

After its restoration in 1261, the Byzantine empire managed to preserve a balance between the Golden Horde and the Ilkhan state. On the one hand, Michael joined the alliance which Mamluk Egypt and the Golden Horde had forged at the end of 1260, united by their mutual animosity towards the Ilkhans. On the other, he successfully negotiated a marriage treaty with the Ilkhan in 1265, marrying his own illegitimate daughter Maria to Hulagu's successor Abaqa (1265–82). The Ilkhans' desire to avoid having to mount a military campaign in Asia Minor helps explain their tolerance of Byzantine

<sup>52</sup> GP, II.25, ed. and French tr. Failler, I, pp. 186–9.

<sup>53</sup> Cahen (2001), p. 189; Korobeinikov, 'Byzantium and the Turks' (DPhil thesis, 2003), pp. 46–72.

neutrality in an otherwise hostile environment. Besides, both states had a common enemy: the nomadic Turks.

#### THE NEW OLD ENEMY

The Seljuq state in Rum was multi-ethnic: its subjects were Greeks, Syrians, Armenians, Turks, Kurds, Arabs and Persians. Of these, the Turks were for the most part nomads; the Greek and Armenian populations were partly rural and partly urban, as were the Syrians and Arabs in the south-east of Asia Minor. As for the Persian townsfolk, they only moved into Anatolia after the Seljuq conquest. Although the Seljuq aristocracy was predominantly Turkish by origin, the ruling dynasty adopted Iranian names such as Kay-Kawus, Kay-Qubad, and Kay-Khusraw, which were derived from the names of the legendary shahs of the Kayanid dynasty in Iran (see above, pp. 139–40). This was no accident. The vast bureaucratic apparatus, strongly influenced by both Persian language and culture, was the chief instrument with which the sultans ruled their immense Anatolian realm.

When the Mongols finally subdued Rum in 1261, they weakened the sultan's power as much as they could. Between the 1260s and the 1290s semi-dependent Rum lords dominated the region, most powerful of whom was the *parwanah* Mu'in al-Din, the uncrowned head of state from 1260 until 1277.<sup>54</sup> The question of governance was further complicated by Mongol infiltration into the Seljuqs' state apparatus. Deprived of effective control over their finances, army and households, the sultans soon became Mongol puppets.

The Mongol conquests also shifted the ethnic balance in Asia Minor. Under their onslaught, many Turkish nomads had fled from central Asia to Anatolia, but now the Mongol troops also occupied the best pastures of the Anatolian plateau. From the 1260s the number of the Turks who migrated to the Byzantine borders increased sharply. The Turks began to form sizable permanent tribal confederations. The largest of these seems to have been the Turks of Laodicea (Denizli), whose ruler, Mehmed-bey, dared to resist Hulagu in 1262. Although he was killed on the orders of the Ilkhan, his confederation survived until around 1284. Other Turkmen confederations included the Ağaçeri, literally 'men of the forest', who controlled the lands between Melitene and Germanikeia, stretching as far as Cilician Armenia; the confederations of Germiyan and Karaman, based respectively in Kotyaeion (Kütahya) and to the south-east of Konya; the Turks of Kastamonu, close to the southern shores of the Black Sea; and, finally, the Turks of the Pontos, of whom the most prominent was the

<sup>54</sup> *Parwanah* was a Persian term, literally meaning butterfly or moth, but used to denote the sultan's personal assistant who delivered his master's orders to ministers of the sultanate.



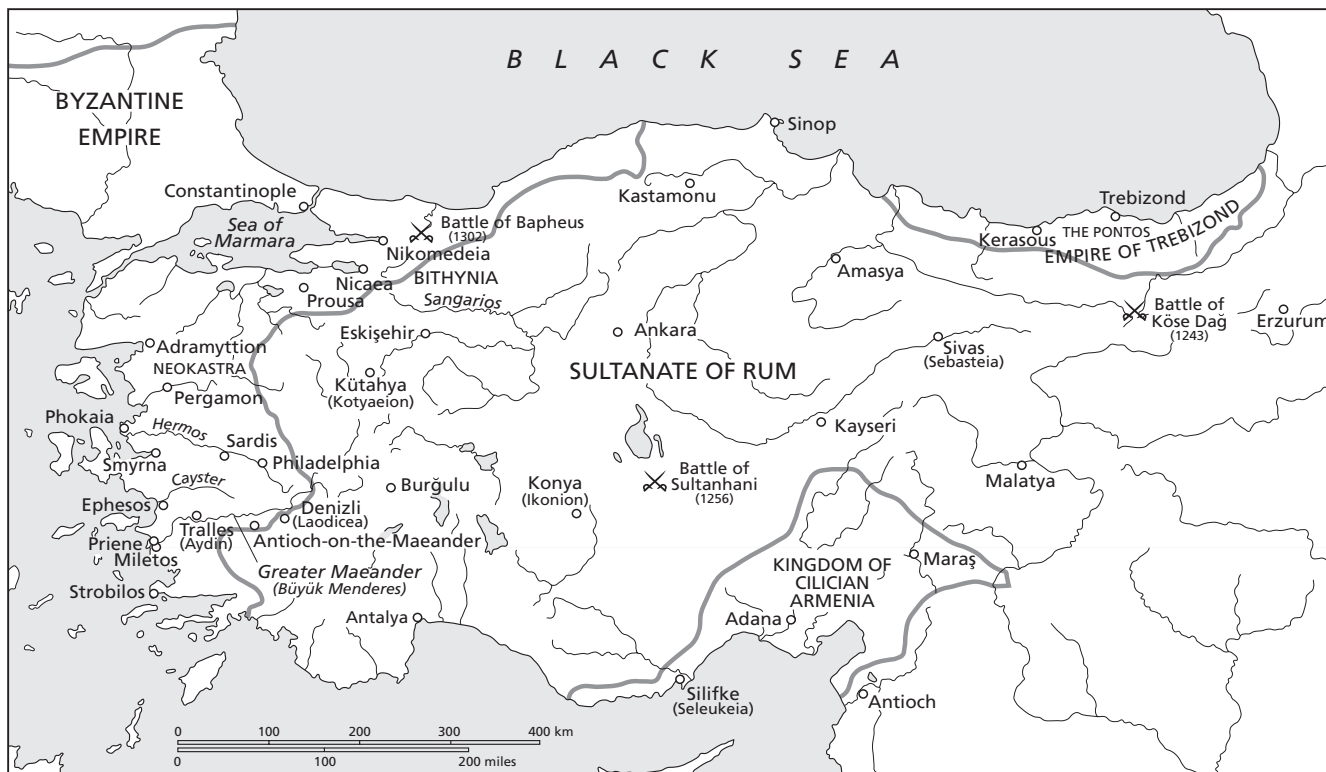
tribe of *çepni*. Of these confederations at least three – those of Kütahya, Kastamonu and Denizli – occupied lands close to the Byzantine border. Military pressure on the Byzantines increased as the Turks, whose territory the Mongols ravaged, tried to compensate by taking over Byzantine lands for themselves.

The defence of the Nicaean empire, which was an improved variant of the Komnenian military system, relied on three elements: the provincial garrisons or *themata*, situated in the frontier towns and castles; the nomads of Turkish and Cuman origin who were allowed to settle on Nicaean soil; and, finally, the *akritai*, smallholding soldiers installed in the frontier zone (see below, p. 739). Although important during the period of the Nicaean empire, from the 1260s onwards the *akritai* were no match for the Turks, whose powerful confederations were strong enough to resist even the Mongol *tümen*s with some success. The only appropriate response on the part of the Byzantines was to embark on military reform.

Such reform was implemented by Michael VIII Palaiologos. He carried out a cadastral survey of the borderlands in 1264–5 and, as a consequence, converted into a *pronoia* that part of each individual's landed property which was estimated to have an annual revenue of 40 *hyperpera*. This reform changed the status of the *akritai*: those who held state land free of tax, and who had formed irregular military units during the reign of the Laskarids, now became mobile *themata* troops, easily mobilised for a variety of military campaigns.

Michael VIII's second innovation was to maintain closer supervision of the professional Byzantine army along the border, both the *tagmata* and the *themata*. For example, in 1263–4 the Turks of Denizli, who had been defeated by the Mongols in 1262, penetrated as far as Tralles (Aydin). Michael's brother, John the despot, moved his army to Asia Minor from the Balkans, restoring order on the Anatolian frontier in 1264–7 and concluding a peace treaty with the Turks.

The Byzantines managed to maintain their defence system more or less intact up to the 1290s. In the early 1280s Michael VIII succeeded in driving out the Turks who had recently encroached on Byzantine territory, despite being preoccupied at the time with his relations with the west. The Turkish invasion of 1279 had been a direct consequence of their great revolt against the Mongols in 1277–9. The rebels proclaimed as their leader a certain Cimri, maintaining that he was the son of the exiled Kay-Kawus II, Sultan 'Ala' al-Din Siyawush: Kay-Kawus was still remembered for his opposition to the Mongols. The Mongols retaliated mercilessly, devastating not only the epicentre of the revolt, Pamphylia, but also those territories close to the Byzantine border, from Konya to Denizli (Laodicea). The large confederation of the Turks of Denizli was totally dispersed, to be replaced by new confederations, in particular the 'emirate' of the Menteşe. Our Byzantine



Map 35 Asia Minor c. 1265

sources record the ensuing invasion that engulfed the lands between the rivers Maeander and Cayster. Michael's response was swift and decisive: he sent his son and co-emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos to the Maeander in 1280, while he himself secured the northern reaches of the Byzantine frontier in a series of military expeditions along the river Sangarios in 1280–2.

Under Michael VIII, Byzantium held onto its Anatolian territories, with the loss of only Strobilos, Stadiotrachia and Antioch-on-the-Maeander. But under Michael's successor, Andronikos II (1282–1328), Byzantine strategy towards the east became non-interventionist (see also below, pp. 806, 808). The Byzantine army – the most vital element in the defence of Asia Minor – does not seem to have been militarily active in the region at all between 1284 and 1295, despite the loss of Tralles in 1284 and a series of turbulent Turkish revolts against the Mongols. The emperor adopted the old Laskarid strategy of rebuilding fortresses and supplying their garrisons with money and soldiers.

Very soon, however, Andronikos ran short of money. He tried to solve his financial problems at the army's expense: in 1284–5 a special 10 per cent tax was imposed on the *pronoia* holders. The emperor went even further than his father in debasing the coinage (see below, p. 809). At the end of the winter of 1292–3 the Turks had crossed the Byzantine border and devastated the theme of Neokastra. The emperor appointed Alexios Philanthropenos as commander-in-chief. Philanthropenos managed to restore the status quo on the border but, unfortunately, he himself rebelled at the end of 1295. Although Andronikos managed to capture and blind Philanthropenos, his army, now in profound crisis, disintegrated. The soldiers, who had suffered greatly as a result of the emperor's financial measures, no longer trusted him. After a severe winter in 1298–9 the Turks crossed the Byzantine borders along the Maeander. Facing ineffective and disorganised Byzantine resistance, by 1302 they had occupied the lowlands between the Maeander and the Hermos rivers and within two years the whole coastline of western Anatolia stretching as far north as Adramyttion was in Turkish hands, save for Phokaia, a Genoese possession. The northern sector of the Byzantine border defences was also breached after the imperial army was defeated at the battle of Bapheus on 27 July 1302 at the hands of Osman, one of the more determined and effective of the Turkish beys in Bithynia. Later attempts by Andronikos to use foreign mercenaries, the Catalans, ended in disaster: the Catalans rebelled and threatened the very existence of the empire in 1305–11 (see below, pp. 811, 835).

#### CONCLUSION

As we have seen, a strong vein of mutual toleration characterised relations between the Byzantine and the Turkish ruling families in the twelfth and

thirteenth centuries. Individual careerists and exiles moved between their respective courts in quest of advancement or asylum, and the Seljuq sultan generally showed little inclination to try and take full advantage of those occasions when the Byzantine administration in western Asia Minor was in disarray. It was, above all, the coming of the Mongols – their erosion of the power of the Rum sultanate to the advantage of individual warlords and their savage measures against local populations in eastern Asia Minor – that prompted the migration of sizable numbers of Turks westwards, swamping the Byzantine defences. Andronikos II's administrative deficiencies and general disregard for Asia Minor further aggravated the situation. But, as so often in Byzantine history, the mainsprings of action lay far beyond the empire's borders or means of control.

The Turkish conquest of 1302–5 was more than a simple nomadic invasion, seeing that sedentary and transhumant elements had long co-existed in the border zone. After the Turks' conquest of what was left of Byzantine Asia Minor, not only did nomads settle in their newly conquered lands, but these lands also soon became the target of Muslim immigration from the depths of central and eastern Asia Minor, leaving the dwindling Greek communities little chance of survival. This rapid change in the ethnic balance meant there was no hope of Byzantium recovering its lost provinces in western Asia Minor. When the Catalans finally departed, they left an empire that was devastated and bankrupt. Byzantium's former possessions in western Anatolia were divided between various Turkish warlords, who managed to establish successful principalities along the coasts of the Aegean and the Sea of Marmara. One such Bithynian *beylik* – that of Osman – would become the cradle of a new formation: the Ottoman Turks.



PART III

THE BYZANTINE LANDS IN THE LATER  
MIDDLE AGES 1204–1492



# AFTER THE FOURTH CRUSADE: THE GREEK RUMP STATES AND THE RECOVERY OF BYZANTIUM

MICHAEL ANGOLD

## INTRODUCTION

It was almost unthinkable that the ‘queen of cities’ should fall. It was in the words of Byzantine contemporaries a ‘cosmic cataclysm’. The Byzantine ruling class was disorientated and uprooted. The Constantinopolitan elite sought refuge where they could. Among the common people there was at first a sense of jubilation at their discomfiture: the proud had been humbled. Such was the demoralisation that at all levels of society submission to the conquering crusaders seemed a natural solution. Many leading Byzantines threw in their lot with the Latins. The logothete of the Drome Demetrios Tornikes continued to serve them in this capacity. He was the head of one of the great bureaucratic families which had dominated Constantinople before 1204. In the provinces leading families made deals with the conquerors. Theodore Branas governed the city of Adrianople – the key to Thrace – on behalf of the Venetians. Michael Angelos Doukas – a member of the Byzantine imperial house – took service with Boniface of Montferrat, now ruler of Thessaloniki. The cooperation of the local *archontes* smoothed Geoffrey I of Villehardouin’s conquest of the Peloponnese.

The crusaders elected a Latin emperor and created a Latin patriarch of Constantinople. There seemed every possibility that Byzantium would be refashioned in a Latin image. For exactly a year the Latins carried all before them. Then in April 1205 their success came abruptly to an end. They had alienated and underestimated the Bulgarians, who crushed them at the battle of Adrianople. Many of the crusade leaders were killed. The Latin emperor Baldwin of Flanders was led away into captivity, never again to be seen alive.

This defeat revealed how insecure the Latins were in their newly conquered lands. It gave heart to the three Byzantine successor states that were emerging in exile. The most remote was centred on the city of Trebizond, where Alexios and David Komnenos, grandsons of the tyrant Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–5), established themselves early in 1204. David then pushed westwards to secure control of Paphlagonia, which had been held by his grandfather. This brought him into conflict with Theodore Laskaris,





Map 36 The Greek-speaking rump states 1204–1261

who was organising resistance to the Latins from Nicaea. Laskaris was the son-in-law and heir presumptive of Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203). He had escaped from Constantinople in September 1203, soon after his father-in-law had abandoned the capital to the young Alexios Angelos and the soldiers of the Fourth Crusade. Laskaris secured control of the Bithynian cities in his father-in-law's name. By the summer of 1205 it had become clear that Alexios III Angelos was a Latin prisoner. Theodore I Laskaris (1205–21) therefore had himself acclaimed emperor, the better to deal with his various rivals, of whom David Komnenos was the most dangerous. Meanwhile, the foundations of a third Byzantine successor state were being laid in Epiros behind the Pindos mountains by Michael I Angelos Doukas (1204–15) who had quickly abandoned his Latin allegiance.

The Latin defeat at Adrianople allowed the Greeks to ponder the true meaning of the Latin conquest. The horror of the sack of Constantinople began to sink in. Sanctuaries were desecrated, nuns raped and boys of noble family sold into slavery among the Saracens. The atrocity stories that now started to circulate had only a single theme: the crusader sack of Constantinople was a calculated insult to orthodoxy. At the hospital of St Sampson the Latins turned the marble altar screen with its scenes from sacred history into a cover for the common latrine; at the shrine of the Archangel Michael at Anaplous a cardinal smeared the icons of saints with chalk and then threw icons and relics into the sea.<sup>1</sup> But how were the sufferings of Constantinople to be avenged? The orthodox church was effectively without leadership. The patriarch John Kamateros does not cut an impressive figure. He had escaped from Constantinople to the relative security of the Thracian town of Didymoteichon, and had refused an invitation to move to Nicaea, where resistance to the Latins was strongest. When he died in June 1206, it was imperative that a new orthodox patriarch be elected. Otherwise, the patriarchate of Constantinople would pass by default to the Latins. The people and clergy of Constantinople hoped that Pope Innocent III would approve the election of a new orthodox patriarch. They cited the example of the crusader states, where the patriarchal sees of Antioch and Jerusalem had been divided between an orthodox and a Latin incumbent. This initiative appears to have been blocked by the Latin authorities in Constantinople.<sup>2</sup>

The orthodox clergy of Constantinople therefore turned to Theodore Laskaris at Nicaea. He gave his support to the election of a new orthodox patriarch of Constantinople. Michael IV Autoreianos (1208–14) was duly ordained patriarch at Nicaea on 20 March 1208. His first official act was to

<sup>1</sup> Cotelierius, *Ecclesiae graecae monumenta*, III, pp. 511–13.

<sup>2</sup> Gill (1973). In general, see now Angold (2003a).

crown and anoint Laskaris emperor on Easter Day. Thus was a Byzantine empire re-created in exile in Nicaea.<sup>3</sup>

#### AFTERMATH OF THE SACK OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Members of the old elite gravitated to the new capital. The historian Niketas Choniates was one of them. He picked up the threads of old acquaintances. He commiserated with Archbishop Constantine Mesopotamites of Thessaloniki, who had fallen into pirate hands but was now safe in Epiros.<sup>4</sup> He hoped to persuade his brother Michael, the archbishop of Athens, to come to Nicaea. Theodore Laskaris had a ship ready to whisk him away from 'windy Keos' where he had found refuge. The archbishop refused the invitation, preferring to remain within easy reach of his Athenian flock.<sup>5</sup> At Nicaea Niketas Choniates found time to complete his great history, in which he tried to explain why the disaster of 1204 should have overtaken Constantinople. He also looked to the future. He compiled his *Treasury of orthodoxy*, which was designed to counter heresy. The defence of orthodoxy became central to the ideology of exile which he elaborated as court orator for Theodore Laskaris. Exile was punishment for the sins of the past. The parallel with the Israelites was much in Niketas' mind. He compared the waters of Nicaea's Lake Askania to the waters of Babylon. In exile the Byzantines, like the Israelites, would atone for their sins and would recover divine favour. The New Jerusalem would be theirs again. Their immediate task was to preserve the purity of orthodoxy in the face of the Latin threat.<sup>6</sup>

The ideology of exile would at first be virulently anti-Latin in contrast to the more restrained attitudes that prevailed before 1204. The impressions created by the sack of Constantinople were reinforced by the intransigence displayed by the Latin church in subsequent discussions between representatives of the two churches. These discussions only underlined the contempt felt by the Latins for the Greeks. The papal legate Pelagius provided further confirmation of Latin arrogance towards the orthodox church. In 1214 he closed the orthodox churches in Constantinople and persecuted Greek monks who refused to recognise papal primacy. As a counter-blast to his activities, Constantine Stilbes, the metropolitan of Kyzikos, produced his *Against the Latins*. This is one of the key documents of anti-Latin polemic. It marked a decisive shift from reasoned debate to justified prejudice. Stilbes had little to say about theological differences. Instead, he concentrated on

<sup>3</sup> Heisenberg, 'Neue Quellen zur Geschichte. II', pp. 5–12. Gounarides (1985) prefers 1207 to the traditional date of 1208. The balance of probabilities still favours 1208 as the date of the election of a new orthodox patriarch at Nicaea and of the coronation of Theodore I Laskaris.

<sup>4</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Orationes*, pp. 204–6.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Choniates, *Epistulae*, pp. 122–7, 129–31.

<sup>6</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Orationes*, pp. 170–200.

two issues: papal primacy and holy war. These were interlinked. They had perverted Latin Christianity and had produced the tragedy of 1204. To take papal primacy first, Stilbes charged that the Latins did not simply regard the pope as the successor of St Peter. It was not even that they identified the two. It was worse than this: they deified the pope and insisted that all Christians submit to his authority. The perversion of papal authority was apparent in the issuing of indulgences. Stilbes was the first Byzantine theologian to draw attention to this Latin practice. What horrified him was not so much that past sins were pardoned, but those that were still to be committed. It was the same with oaths: the pope was capable of releasing Latins not only from those that had already been sworn, but also from those yet to be taken. Papal authority thus undermined the moral order that Christianity was supposed to uphold. It was also used to promote warfare.<sup>7</sup>

The Byzantines had considered, but always rejected, the notion of holy war. They followed Basil of Caesarea's teaching that in all circumstances the taking of human life was wrong. The notion of the crusade disturbed the Byzantines. It was mostly clearly expressed in Anna Komnena's story about the fighting priest. She concluded, 'thus the race is no less devoted to religion than to war'.<sup>8</sup> It was Stilbes who fused this disquiet into an outright condemnation of the Latin church's devotion to war. He accused the Latin church of teaching that men dying in battle went to paradise. This might not have been official doctrine, but beliefs of this kind circulated among crusaders. Latin bishops were supposed to sprinkle naked youths with holy water and in this way to turn them into invincible warriors. Stilbes seems to be garbling the Latin church's role in the making of a knight. Again he was not so far off the mark.

The sack of Constantinople confirmed Stilbes' portrayal of the Latin faith as one perverted by papal primacy and its espousal of war as an instrument of expansion. The crusaders had desecrated the churches of Constantinople and had profaned St Sophia itself. Latin priests and bishops had played an active role in the assault on the City. A bishop had been in the vanguard holding aloft a cross. The Latin clergy had done nothing to prevent the excesses of the crusaders; if anything, they encouraged them. They had desecrated the holy images. Stilbes closed his tract with a demonstration that because of its addiction to war, the Latin church had lapsed into heresy. Stilbes fixed in the Byzantine mind an image of the Latins that would never be erased. Some years later in 1231 when there was talk of a compromise with the Latin authorities on the island of Cyprus, the orthodox clergy and people of Constantinople sent a delegation to Nicaea. They protested

<sup>7</sup> Constantine Stilbes, *Against the Latins*, pp. 61–91.

<sup>8</sup> *AL*, X.8.8, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, I, p. 307; ed. and French tr. Leib, II, p. 218; tr. Sewter, p. 317. See also Kolbaba (2000), pp. 27–8, 72, 199.

that this was to ignore their sufferings at the hands of the Latins: they had been imprisoned; they had had their beards pulled out. Any deal with the Latins would mean 'a betrayal of the faith handed down from their fathers'. The members of the delegation insisted that an obsession with war had driven the Latins 'raving mad', priests and laity alike. They would take any concession on the part of the Greeks as a sign of weakness and surrender.<sup>9</sup> The events of 1204 brought the Latins into sharper focus. It was part of the way that the Byzantine identity was reconstructed in an anti-Latin sense during the period of exile. The new patriarch Michael Autoreianos even offered spiritual rewards to those Byzantines laying down their lives in the fight against the Latins.<sup>10</sup>

Having laid the foundations of a Byzantine empire in exile Theodore I Laskaris found himself under threat from an unexpected quarter. In 1211 his imperial claims were challenged by his father-in-law Alexios III Angelos, who had the backing of the Seljuq Turks. Laskaris engaged the Seljuq armies at the Pisidian border town of Antioch-on-the-Maeander. The battle started to go against him, so he sought out the Seljuq sultan and killed him in single combat. The Seljuq forces melted away and Alexios III was led off to end his days in a Nicaean monastery. The manner of Laskaris' triumph did wonders for his prestige, but it was a pyrrhic victory. He had lost his best troops – paradoxically, Latin mercenaries. The Latin emperor Henry of Hainault invaded from the north and swept all before him. Laskaris had to cede to the Latins the north-western corner of Asia Minor (see also below, p. 763), placing a wedge between his territories in the north around Nicaea and those in the south around Smyrna, and making communications difficult. The death of David Komnenos in 1212 provided some compensation. It allowed Theodore I Laskaris to annex Paphlagonia, effectively cutting off the empire of Trebizond from the mainstream of Byzantine history. It became instead a 'Greek emirate', and its history involves that of Anatolia and the Black Sea rather than the late Byzantine empire's.

#### THE RISE OF NICAEA

Theodore I Laskaris died in 1221. His death was followed by civil strife, out of which his son-in-law John III Vatatzes (1221–54) emerged as victor. Later generations remembered Theodore with gratitude, but although he had re-created Byzantium in exile, his success was limited. This contrasted with the fortunes of Theodore Angelos (1215–30, styling himself as Komnenos Doukas) who had taken over the leadership of resistance to the Latins in Epiros. Theodore was a younger cousin of the emperor Alexios III Angelos. In 1217 he was able to waylay a Latin army advancing down

<sup>9</sup> *MB*, II, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Autoreianos, *Acts*, pp. 117–19.

the Egnatian Way from the Adriatic coast. It was commanded by Peter of Courtenay, the new Latin emperor. The Latins were defeated and Peter of Courtenay disappeared for ever. This Latin defeat bears comparison with that suffered at Adrianople at the hands of the Bulgarians (see above, p. 731 and below, p. 784), and it prepared the way for Theodore Angelos' occupation of Thessaloniki in the autumn of 1224, setting the seal on his military achievements. Angelos had made himself the most powerful ruler in the southern Balkans. He pushed eastwards and by 1228 was within striking distance of Constantinople. To enhance his claims he had himself proclaimed and crowned emperor. Although the existence of rival emperors was nothing new, there were now two Byzantine emperors in exile with claims on Constantinople.

In the background there remained the formidable strength of the Bulgarian tsar Ivan II Asen (1218–41) (see also pp. 788–92). Although he had nominally submitted to papal authority, he too had designs on Latin Constantinople and there were plans afoot for the betrothal of his daughter to the young Latin emperor, Baldwin II; had they been implemented, he would have become regent (see below, pp. 788, 790).

These competing ambitions helped ensure the survival for another thirty years or more of the Latin empire of Constantinople, which was reduced to little more than the City and its immediate hinterland. In the end, it was the so-called Nicaean empire that would emerge as victor. This outcome was far from obvious in 1228, when the forces of Theodore Angelos drove those of the Nicaean emperor John III Vatatzes out of the key Thracian city of Adrianople. It became less unlikely two years later when Angelos invaded Bulgaria. After his defeat and capture by Ivan Asen at the battle of Klokotnitsa (see also p. 790), Angelos was blinded and spent the next seven years in a Bulgarian prison. His Balkan territories as far west as the Adriatic fell into the hands of his captor, with only Thessaloniki, Thessaly and Epiros eluding Bulgarian conquest: these were divided among members of the Angelos dynasty.

Once Ivan Asen had consolidated his new territories, he entered into an alliance with his potential rival, the Nicaean emperor John III Vatatzes, against the Latins of Constantinople. The initiative came from the Nicaean emperor. He was by far the weaker party, but he deployed one tempting bargaining counter: he could offer patriarchal status to the church of Bulgaria. The alliance was sealed by the betrothal of the heir apparent to the Nicaean throne to a daughter of the Bulgarian tsar. There was an ineffective siege of Constantinople in 1235 before the allies broke up acrimoniously. The only positive result was that the Nicaeans gained a permanent foothold in Thrace, providing their emperor John Vatatzes with a base for intervention in the Balkans. After the death of Ivan Asen he took advantage of the ensuing uncertainty to annex much of the southern Balkans. His

campaign culminated in December 1246 with his triumphant entry into the city of Thessaloniki. The recovery of Constantinople now seemed a distinct possibility.

Contemporaries conceded that John Vatatzes' great virtue was patience. This, in its turn, was a reflection of the underlying strengths of the Nicaean empire, which Vatatzes knew how to enhance and exploit. He could afford to be patient. He could also afford to keep armies in the field and to maintain an impressive fleet, something that had proved too costly for Byzantine emperors before 1204. This was an indication of the soundness of his fiscal administration. Paradoxically, the loss of Constantinople made for more efficient government. In the years before 1204 it had become bloated and inefficient. In exile, administration had to be simplified. There was no place for the old departments of state (*logothesia*). Central government was reduced to little more than a household administration. The financial side was concentrated in the imperial wardrobe (*vestiarion*). The whole administration was run for much of Vatatzes' reign by one minister, Demetrios Tornikes. On his death in 1247 his duties were split between four secretaries, who in all probability had been his subordinates.

The simplification of central government dramatically reduced its costs, shifting the burden of administration onto the provincial authorities. This was possible because in western Asia Minor the organisation of themes had survived the fall of Constantinople intact and the tax-raising machinery was still in place. However, the main taxes acquired new names. *Synōnē* – land tax – and *kapnikon* – hearth tax – were replaced by *sitarkia* and *agapē*. The meaning of this change of names remains unclear; it may only have been a matter of adopting local terminology, and it does not seem to have entailed any radical reform of the taxation system. Taxpayers continued to be divided according to their means into the same fiscal categories as before: *zeugaratoi*, *boidatoi*, *aktēmones* and *aporoi*. The only major fiscal innovation of the period of exile was the expedient known as *epiteleia*, which attached a fiscal value to property. It had three main purposes: it was a way of transferring fiscal obligations from one taxpayer to another; it could be used to safeguard fiscal privileges; and payment of *epiteleia* could be cited as proof of property rights. It acted as a lubricant of the fiscal system at a time when there was a significant growth of privileged property, and its importance is evident from the way it was retained until the demise of the Byzantine empire.<sup>11</sup>

The efficacy of the Byzantine fiscal system depended on maintenance of a cadastral register. John Vatatzes instituted a revision of the cadastral register for his Anatolian provinces early in his reign. This was in keeping with his careful supervision of fiscal administration. He learned on one

<sup>11</sup> Angold (1975a), pp. 202–36.

occasion that two of his receivers were carrying out their duties improperly. He had one beaten so severely that he died. The other had the sense to flee to Trebizond.<sup>12</sup> On another occasion, a local official made a wrong tax assessment. To teach him a lesson the emperor forced him to pay the sum wrongly assessed.

The simplification of government inevitably meant some devolution of authority. The most obvious form this took was the creation of new immunities and *pronoiai*, which entitled the holder to some or all of the state revenues from a particular area. The period of exile saw a decisive growth of privileged property. In these circumstances stringent control over fiscal administration was essential to protect remaining imperial rights and revenues. Some decline of revenue was inevitable, but the emperors of Nicaea were able to compensate for this by building up the imperial demesne.<sup>13</sup> They were able to exploit the confused situation following the fall of Constantinople to appropriate properties without clear title of ownership. They took over, for example, many of the estates in western Anatolia belonging to the monasteries of Constantinople. John Vatatzes insisted on careful management of the imperial demesne, which was undoubtedly a lucrative source of revenue. All the signs are that the period of exile was a time of agrarian prosperity in western Asia Minor. Grain and other foodstuffs could be exported to the Seljuqs of Rum. Later descriptions of the wealth of the Nicaean empire owed something to nostalgia, but seem essentially correct.

John Vatatzes is one of the few medieval rulers credited by contemporaries with an economic policy. He is supposed to have adopted a policy of autarchy. This took the form of a sumptuary law that his subjects should wear clothes made of home-produced cloth.<sup>14</sup> Here was an attempt to stem the tide of imported western and Muslim materials, and this measure seems to have been a response to the sudden appearance of huge quantities of western cloth on the markets of the eastern Mediterranean from the late twelfth century onwards. John Vatatzes' sumptuary law was not likely to make very much difference in the long run, but in the short term he seems to have been able to protect his territories from Italian commercial penetration. Despite the respectable number of Italian, particularly Venetian, commercial documents surviving from the period, there are few indications of Italian trade with the ports of the Nicaean empire. Vatatzes' autarchic policy was intended as an assertion of Byzantine independence. It may have been practical for a time because western Asia Minor was relatively remote from the major trade routes of the Mediterranean. Autarchy had

<sup>12</sup> GP, X.9, ed. and French tr. Failler, IV, pp. 324–5.

<sup>13</sup> NG, II.6, ed. Schopen and Bekker, I, pp. 42–3; German tr. van Dieten, I, p. 84.

<sup>14</sup> NG, II.6, ed. Schopen and Bekker, I, pp. 43–4; German tr. van Dieten, I, p. 85; see also Xanatalatos (1939).



some political value: it allowed Vatatzes to pose as an emperor who had the well-being of his subjects at heart. This was one of his strengths as emperor.

Another was the presence at Nicaea of the orthodox patriarchate of Constantinople. John Vatatzes was fortunate in the patriarch, Germanos II (1223–40), who supported him loyally in the difficulties he encountered at the beginning of his reign.<sup>15</sup> There was a series of conspiracies against him involving leading court families. The most serious was the work of brothers of the late emperor Theodore I Laskaris. They engineered a Latin invasion of the Nicaean empire, but to no avail. John Vatatzes won a resounding victory over the Latins at Poimananon in 1224 and followed it up by driving the Latins out of Asia Minor. Vatatzes rewarded the patriarch for his loyalty during this critical period by acceding to his request and issuing a chrysobull protecting episcopal property during a vacancy.<sup>16</sup>

The major achievement of Patriarch Germanos II was to restore the moral standing of the orthodox patriarchate, which had been bruised by its ignominious role in the years leading up to 1204. He connected the depravity of Constantinople before its fall with its ethnically mixed population, describing its population as 'the sordid droppings of prostitutes and adulterous connections, offspring of servant girls bought for cash, sprung willy nilly from the Rhos or the descendants of Hagar and the rest of the racial stew'.<sup>17</sup> Exile provided the opportunity to 'purify the dialect of the tribe' and to create a healthier society. The patriarch reveals something of the motivation behind the growth of a Byzantine proto-nationalism, which otherwise tends to be seen in terms of a nostalgia for a Hellenic past.

This growing nationalism's greatest strength came from its identification with orthodoxy. The defence of orthodoxy was Germanos II's main concern. He renewed the attack on the Bogomil heresy, which had recovered some of its support in the turmoil following the fall of Constantinople (see above, p. 617). But of more immediate importance to the patriarch was the condition of the orthodox communities at Constantinople and in Cyprus which were suffering under Latin rule. Germanos sought to strengthen them in their faith. By ministering to the orthodox beyond the political frontiers of the Nicaean empire he was able to underscore the fact that, although Constantinople might have fallen into Latin hands, orthodoxy still stood, albeit with its centre now at Nicaea. To some this might have seemed an idle boast. The Greeks of the Peloponnese acquiesced in the rule of their Frankish princes, who had the sense to guarantee the rights of orthodox parish priests. Bulgaria still nominally submitted to papal authority. The Serbian grand *župan* Stefan 'the first-crowned' obtained a royal crown

<sup>15</sup> For his collected works and an account of his career, see Lagopates, *Germanos*.

<sup>16</sup> Germanos II, 'Bref inédit', ed. Nicole, pp. 74–80. <sup>17</sup> Lagopates, *Germanos*, p. 282, lines 23–6.

from the papacy in 1217. To avert the possibility that Serbia would drift into the orbit of the Latin church, the patriarch at Nicaea recognised the autocephalous status of the Serbian archbishopric.<sup>18</sup> Germanos II had to face the danger that the orthodox church would fragment along political lines, leaving it an easier prey for the Latin church.

Such considerations bedevilled Germanos II's relations with the orthodox bishops of Epiros, whose primary loyalty was to their ruler Theodore Angelos. The latter's assumption of imperial honours in 1227–8 produced a schism between the orthodox patriarchate at Nicaea and the church in Theodore Angelos' territories. Germanos II refused to accept the validity of Theodore Angelos' imperial coronation. This was performed by Demetrios Chomatenos, the archbishop of Ohrid (1216/17–c. 1236), whose church enjoyed autocephalous status and who increasingly assumed a patriarchal role. Chomatenos' tribunal became a court of appeal for cases throughout Angelos' territories, although this stance became harder to justify after the break-up of Angelos' empire in the wake of his capture by the Bulgarians at the battle of Klokotnitsa in 1230. Two years later this orthodox schism ended when the Epirot bishops recognised the authority of the patriarch at Nicaea. Germanos was vindicated. In 1238 he made a progress around the churches of Epiros which took him as far as Arta.

Germanos' intransigence in his dealings with the Epirot bishops contrasted with the line he took over the Bulgarian church. In 1235 he granted it patriarchal status, but always safeguarding the primacy of honour due to the orthodox patriarch. This concession was made as part of an alliance between the Bulgarian tsar Ivan II Asen and the Nicaean emperor John Vatatzes. It was largely a political move (see below, p. 792). The patriarch was doing the emperor's bidding, though he might have found some consolation in the thought that the alternative was worse: the Bulgarian church would in all likelihood have returned to its Roman allegiance. This would have been a negation of Germanos' endeavours over the preceding three years to bring the Bulgarian church back into the orthodox communion.

#### NEGOTIATIONS ON CHURCH UNION

Germanos II bowed to one of the facts of Byzantine political life: emperors were always likely to use orthodoxy as a weapon or a bargaining counter in their foreign policy. The emperors of Nicaea continued the practice. In 1207 Theodore I Laskaris turned to Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) for recognition as the leader of the orthodox community. This was done in conjunction with a request that the pope should authorise the election of a new orthodox patriarch of Constantinople. Innocent ignored both

<sup>18</sup> Obolensky (1988a), pp. 146–52. See also below, p. 785.

requests. Theodore therefore went ahead with plans for the creation of a new patriarch at Nicaea. Innocent despatched his legate, Cardinal Pelagius, in 1214; his main task was to discipline the Greek church, but he also entered into negotiations with the Nicaean emperor. There was a series of inconclusive debates about a reunion of the churches, first at Constantinople and then at Heraclea Pontica, where Theodore Laskaris was encamped. Laskaris used these as a cover for the completion of a peace treaty with the Latin emperor Henry of Hainault. The lesson was an old one: that there were political advantages to be gained from negotiating over the union of churches. Laskaris tried again in 1219. By this time he had married a Latin princess and had plans to marry one of his daughters to the heir to the Latin empire of Constantinople. The Latin patriarchate was vacant. Laskaris proposed summoning a council that would consider the possibility of the reunion of the churches, as a first step towards the peaceful recovery of Constantinople, but the emperor's complicated manoeuvre was frustrated by opposition from within the orthodox church.

It would have been unrealistic to expect anything concrete to emerge from negotiations over the reunion of the churches, given the hatred engendered by the conquest of Constantinople; this hatred intensified with the subsequent Latin discrimination against the orthodox under their rule. However, a new force was about to make itself felt. By 1220 the Franciscans had established a house at Constantinople and by 1228 the Dominicans too.<sup>19</sup> They introduced a spirit of reasoned dialogue to which the Greeks responded. Patriarch Germanos II first came into contact with the friars in 1232. In that year a party of Franciscans was travelling overland through Asia Minor and was seized by the Seljuq authorities. With the emperor's help, Germanos was able to ransom them and had them brought to Nicaea. He was struck by the Franciscans' poverty and by their humility – so unlike other Latin churchmen – and was also impressed by their desire for peace and reconciliation between Latin and Greek.

It seemed that there was a new spirit abroad in the Latin church which would make possible a reunion of the churches by methods and on terms that were acceptable to the orthodox church. Germanos II induced the Franciscans to act as intermediaries with the papal curia. They were to sound out the possibilities for preliminary discussions that might pave the way for holding a general council of the church, which was the appropriate arena for a reunion of the churches. Some eighteen months later a delegation made up of two Franciscans and two Dominicans set out from Rome for Nicaea, where they were welcomed in January 1234 by emperor and patriarch. The friars' remit went no further than an exchange of views with the patriarch, in which they had much the better of the argument. Their knowledge of

<sup>19</sup> Wolff (1944).

Greek patristics made them formidable opponents. One of them read out in Greek the anathema pronounced by Cyril of Alexandria: against those denying that the spirit through which Christ performed his miracles was his own spirit. The friars argued that this supported the Latin position on the procession of the Holy Spirit: that it proceeded from the Father and the Son (*filioque*). Germanos wound up the proceedings on the grounds that nothing more could usefully be done until the orthodox patriarchs of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria arrived to participate in a council. The friars departed; they had not received papal authorisation to take part in a council with representatives of the orthodox church, but they held out the prospect that the reunion of the churches would lead to the restoration of the orthodox patriarchate to Constantinople. They requested to be kept informed of future developments.

Germanos II therefore invited the friars to take part in the council that was assembling at the imperial residence of Nymphaion near Smyrna. They sounded out opinion in Latin Constantinople. To accept the invitation would mean exceeding their instructions, but the situation at Constantinople was so desperate that any contact with the Nicaean court was to be welcomed. The friars therefore journeyed to Nymphaion, but they were simply playing for time. They had no authority to negotiate, but they did make one damaging admission. They insisted that the Latin conquest of Constantinople had never received papal approval. It was the work of 'laymen, sinners and excommunicates presuming on their authority'. The implication was that the pope might one day abandon his support for the Latin empire of Constantinople. But the friars refused to accept that the onus for the sack of Constantinople should fall on the Latins alone. The Greeks had to take their share of the blame for the way they had treated Latins. The friars raised the old accusations that the Greeks washed altars after they had been used by Latins; that they forced Latins to renounce their sacraments as the price of attending orthodox services. The council broke up amidst displays of bad temper. The friars fled for their lives. The Nicaeans resumed the blockade of Constantinople.<sup>20</sup>

Though this episode produced no concrete results and only seemed to confirm the gulf that separated Greek and Latin, it was nevertheless important. Byzantine emperors and patriarchs remained susceptible to the appeal of the friars. Their ideals seemed so different from those of the church militant – the face that the Latin church normally presented to the outside world. Those friars operating out of Constantinople as often as not knew Greek and were well-versed in Greek patristics. They were willing to debate with representatives of the orthodox church on their own

<sup>20</sup> Golubovich, 'Disputatio Latinorum', pp. 428–65; Canart, 'Nicéphore Blemmyde'; Roncaglia (1954), pp. 43–84; Gill (1979a), pp. 64–72; Chadwick (2003), pp. 238–45.

terms. Their knowledge of orthodox theology, even their appreciation of Byzantine art, made them seem more sympathetic than perhaps they were. Francis of Assisi was, indeed, to become one of the few western medieval saints to acquire a popular following in the Greek world. Their presence at Constantinople meant that there was always a temptation to enter into negotiations with the Latin church.

The friars were not exclusively in the service of the papacy. Elias of Cortona, the minister general of the Franciscans, was close to Emperor Frederick II (1215–50). He was sent on a mission to Constantinople to broker a peace between the Latin empire and John Vatatzes, who presented him with many gifts and relics. These negotiations laid the foundations for a formal alliance between Frederick and Vatatzes, and this was sealed in 1242/3 by the marriage of the Nicaean emperor to Frederick's bastard daughter, Costanza Lancia.<sup>21</sup> The main advantage Vatatzes derived from this alliance was prestige, and it was under cover of the alliance that he accomplished his major conquests in the southern Balkans, culminating in the occupation of Thessaloniki in 1246. Thereafter the alliance seemed to offer little in the way of concrete reward. The recovery of Constantinople looked as remote as ever, and Vatatzes began to consider other possibilities. His sister-in-law was married to the Hungarian king. She tried to interest him in an understanding with Pope Innocent IV (1243–54), but her efforts only bore fruit when Vatatzes learnt that John of Parma had been made minister general of the Franciscans in July 1247. Why this appointment should have had such an effect on John Vatatzes is not immediately clear. It may have had something to do with Vatatzes' choice of two Franciscans from Constantinople to act as his intermediaries with the papal curia. They may have been able to convince the Nicaean emperor that their new minister general favoured an understanding with the orthodox church.

John of Parma received his commission from Pope Innocent IV on 28 May 1249. His task was to negotiate the return of the Greeks 'in obedience and devotion to the Roman church . . . from which they have for so long withdrawn themselves'. He was given very precise instructions. Orthodox teaching on the procession of the Holy Spirit must conform to that of the Roman church. To this end John of Parma was empowered to convoke in the pope's name a church council for discussions with the orthodox church. He reached the Nicaean court by the autumn of 1249 at the outside. Preliminary discussions must necessarily have focused on one difficult question: under whose auspices was a council to be held? In his instructions to John of

<sup>21</sup> Borsari (1951); Merendino (1975). Brezeanu (1974) has redated the marriage of John Vatatzes and Costanza Lancia to 1241/2. The document he relies on is to be dated to 1243 and not, as he supposed, 1242. This means that the marriage can now be safely ascribed to 1242/3 and not 1244, the traditional date for this marriage. See also Martin (2002).

Parma, Innocent IV made the following claim: 'some Greek theologians – as is true – assert that the Roman pontiff, who alone has the authority to convoke a council, is able to effect an agreement between our creed and that of the Greeks – once a council has assembled – on the basis of his authority and that of the council.' Underlying such an assertion there must have been some concession made by the Nicaean emissaries, to the effect that any agreement over the creed reached by a council of the orthodox church must then receive papal approval. The claim that the pope alone has authority to call a council can only have been a papal gloss on the orthodox position. It would not have been acceptable to representatives of the orthodox church.

A council assembled at Nymphaion in the spring of 1250 under the presidency of the Nicaean emperor. The question of the procession of the Holy Spirit was duly debated. John of Parma argued that God the Father operates through the Son and the Son through the Spirit. He then put forward as its corollary the following proposition: just as the Son is from the Father, so the Spirit is from the Son. This left the Greek representatives stunned. They turned for help to their most expert theologian Nikephoros Blemmydes, who was present but had held aloof from the proceedings. Blemmydes protested that there was no scriptural authority for the Son operating through the Spirit. The Son operated in the Spirit, which was quite another matter. Blemmydes' intervention does not seem to have spoiled the irenic atmosphere that prevailed, to judge by the letter sent at the close of the council by the orthodox patriarch Manuel II to Innocent IV. The patriarch claimed that there had been a free and open discussion of the outstanding issues. The official Latin minutes of the council show that the Greeks were apparently willing to make unprecedented concessions over Roman claims to primacy and to accept papal authority over the general council with certain safeguards. In return, the Greeks – somewhat naively – requested the return of Constantinople and the removal of the Latin emperor and patriarch. A Nicaean delegation was despatched to the papal curia with full powers to continue the debate on these issues.

Innocent IV gave his reply early in 1252. He approved the Greek concessions on papal primacy and authority over the council. The addition of the *filioque* to the creed remained a problem. The Greek delegates refused to countenance it unless it could be supported by scriptural authority or some *divinum oraculum*. Innocent IV did not think this reasonable, but in a spirit of reconciliation allowed the orthodox church to omit the *filioque*, pending the final decision of a general council. Innocent IV was unable to offer anything concrete over the return of Constantinople to the Greeks. Negotiations continued, but the pope made his intentions crystal clear by appointing to the Latin patriarchate of Constantinople which had been vacant. There was also vague talk at the papal curia of organising a crusade

to aid the Latin empire. The almost simultaneous deaths in 1254 of pope, Nicaean emperor and patriarch put an end to this round of negotiations over the union of churches, but they had been doomed to deadlock ever since the death of Frederick II in December 1250.<sup>22</sup>

John Vatatzes understood that it was in his interests to play off western empire against papacy. To this end he strove to keep alive his alliance with Frederick II, while negotiating with the papacy over the reunion of churches. He continued to supply his father-in-law with troops until the latter's death. Frederick remonstrated with his son-in-law: did he not realise that the pope was trying to drive a wedge between them? Had not this pope excommunicated the Greeks as schismatics, when the true blame for the schism lay with Rome? Frederick was nevertheless, at first, willing to put ships at the disposal of the Nicaean delegation that was making its way to the papal curia. They were playing a complicated diplomatic game. Vatatzes found his continued alliance with Frederick II a useful means of constraining the papacy. Frederick's death in December 1250 meant that the papacy was no longer under such pressure to accommodate the Nicaean emperor.

It has become usual in recent years to emphasise the importance of this episode of Nicaean diplomacy. It is presented as the moment when a reunion of churches on terms acceptable to both sides was most likely to have come about, and that is how it was later seen by Michael VIII Palaiologos (1258–82), who used it as a precedent to justify his unionist policy. Unlike Michael VIII, John Vatatzes seems not to have encountered opposition to rapprochement with the papacy, despite the concessions over papal primacy that he was willing to make. This is all the more surprising in light of the bitter feelings often expressed about the Latins. The loss of Constantinople should have warned against any dealings with the west. The ideal was that in exile the Byzantines would rebuild their strength, but the reality was that the lands of the old Byzantine empire were permeated by western interests, a fact confirmed by the conquest of Constantinople in 1204. While the Nicaean empire was limited to western Asia Minor it was possible to preserve an isolationist stance. However, the moment Vatatzes felt confident enough to aim at the conquest of Constantinople, he had to come to terms with western hegemony. Conditions seemed propitious because of the conflict between western empire and papacy, which Vatatzes sought to exploit. In principle, this was little different from the line of policy pursued by Manuel I Komnenos (1143–80), but Vatatzes was operating, in comparison, from a position of weakness.

This is clearest in his dealings with Frederick II. In the earlier exchanges of letters dating from the 1230s, Frederick fails to accord Vatatzes the

<sup>22</sup> Franchi (1981); Gill (1979a), pp. 88–95.

imperial titles. After the marriage of his daughter to Vatatzes he addresses him as emperor of the Greeks, a title that Manuel I Komnenos would have found insulting. It was an unequal alliance, with Vatatzes as the junior partner. Frederick's interest in the Byzantine world is hard to unravel. He inherited his father Henry VI's ambitions, which included hegemony over Byzantium, although this is unlikely to have been one of his major concerns. But any ruler of Sicily had an interest in Corfu and the Ionian islands. George Bardanes, the orthodox bishop of Corfu, had the task of diverting this interest. In a letter written to Frederick in about 1236, he queried the value that such an insignificant possession could have for so great a ruler. He indicated that his lord Manuel Angelos (1230–7), the ruler of Thessaloniki and a younger brother of Theodore Angelos, was willing to recognise Frederick's suzerainty.<sup>23</sup>

It was around this time that a rumour circulated in the west to the effect that Manuel Angelos, John Vatatzes and the Bulgarian tsar Ivan II Asen had offered Frederick homage in return for an alliance against the Latin empire of Constantinople. Homage is unlikely to have been strictly accurate, just a western gloss on an unequal partnership. There were plans at this time for Vatatzes to make a state visit to Frederick's court.<sup>24</sup> By 1238 Vatatzes was sending troops to Italy to help Frederick, and he continued to do so until the latter's death. Frederick's ascendancy extended to the other petty rulers of the Greek east. At the very end of his reign he wrote to the ruler of Epiros insisting that he allow Nicaean troops to pass through his territories on their way to Italy. This episode illustrates the dilemma of the Byzantine states in exile: their interests necessitated recourse to the papacy and the Hohenstaufen, yet the ideology of exile condemned any contact with the Latins. Vatatzes managed to avoid the consequences of this contradiction, but they would come back to haunt Michael VIII.

After Frederick II's death the kingdom of Sicily eventually passed to his bastard son Manfred of Hohenstaufen. He strove to retain Frederick's hegemony over the various Greek rulers, but instead found himself being dragged into the struggle between Nicaea and Epiros. Michael II Angelos Doukas (1230–67), the ruler of Epiros, understood that only with Latin aid would he be able to capitalise on the internal divisions that opened up at the Nicaean court following John Vatatzes' death in November 1254. The new Nicaean emperor was Vatatzes' son Theodore II Laskaris (1254–8), who adopted – perhaps in imitation of Frederick II – a more autocratic stance towards his aristocracy. His chief opponent was Michael Palaiologos, the future emperor, who held the position of grand constable, giving him

<sup>23</sup> Hoeck and Loenertz (1965), pp. 216–18.

<sup>24</sup> Wellas (1983), pp. 130–41; however Longo (1985–6) argues that the John Vatatzes in question was not the emperor, but the governor of Corfu.



command of the Latin mercenaries in Nicaean service. Rather than face a charge of treason, Palaiologos preferred to seek refuge among the Seljuq Turks (see also above, pp. 721–2). He returned to the Nicaean court shortly before Theodore Laskaris' death in August 1258. Thereupon Palaiologos organised a coup with the help of the Latin mercenaries under his command. He respected the constitutional niceties, in the sense that he claimed to rule in the name of Theodore's son John IV Laskaris (1258–61), the legitimate heir to the Nicaean throne. But this was merely a cover for usurpation, which took him inexorably from regent to co-emperor and finally to sole emperor.

This dynastic interlude gave Michael II Angelos Doukas his opportunity. He was able to draw both the Frankish prince of Achaia,<sup>25</sup> William II of Villehardouin (1246–78), and Manfred into an anti-Nicaean coalition. The allied forces met the Nicaean army in the late summer of 1259 at Pelagonia on the Egnatian Way and were completely defeated. The prince together with the flower of the chivalry of the Frankish Peloponnese fell into Nicaean hands. This victory left Michael VIII Palaiologos as the dominant force in the Balkans. It could only be a matter of time before his armies recovered Constantinople. This duly occurred in July 1261 when a small Nicaean force slipped into Constantinople while the Latin garrison was temporarily absent. On 15 August 1261 Michael VIII entered the City in triumph. It was a return to the Promised Land.<sup>26</sup>

#### THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF A BYZANTINE GOVERNMENT IN EXILE

What, then, was the historical importance of the period of exile?<sup>27</sup> Later generations remembered it as a heroic period. In retrospect it seemed a time of hope, when the body politic was purged of the corruption that characterised Byzantium before 1204, when imperial autocracy was curbed and a more equitable society came into being. The emperor was no longer above society but responsible to it. The historian George Pachymeres illustrated this with a single anecdote. Emperor John Vatatzes caught his son Theodore Laskaris out hunting dressed in cloth of gold. He rebuked the young prince: 'Did he not realise that these vestments of gold and silk were the "blood of the Romans" and should be employed for their

<sup>25</sup> The term Morea may be used to describe (a) the physical territory of the Peloponnese in the later middle ages; (b) the Frankish principality in the Peloponnese formed soon after the fall of Constantinople in 1204, which peaked under William II of Villehardouin and which is also known as the principality of Achaia; (c) the area of the Peloponnese that came under imperial Byzantine dominion again in the fourteenth and earlier fifteenth centuries and was, from 1349, a 'despotate', ruled by a member of the imperial family, usually the emperor's son (the 'despot'). For the sake of clarity, we have opted to style the Frankish principality Achaia in this volume and to use Morea to denote the later Byzantine despotate and, occasionally, the physical territory of the Peloponnese.

<sup>26</sup> Geanakoplos (1953). <sup>27</sup> Ahrweiler (1975b).

benefit, because they were their property?' They were not to be wasted on frivolous pursuits.<sup>28</sup> Public utility was the justification for imperial authority.

Expulsion from Constantinople compelled a reassessment of the limits of imperial authority. Without the validation of the capital emperors needed the moral support of the orthodox church more than ever. This was symbolised by the introduction during the period of exile of the patriarch's anointing with myrrh as a regular feature of the coronation *ordo*. Its meaning was made clear by Patriarch Joseph I (1266–75, 1282–3). In his will he refused to accord Michael VIII Palaiologos the epithet 'holy', much to the latter's indignation. The emperor insisted that it was his by virtue of his unction with myrrh. The patriarch was dismissing him as unworthy of the imperial office. In other words, the rite of unction conferred moral authority on the emperor, but it also left the emperor more vulnerable to ecclesiastical censure<sup>29</sup> – a situation reminiscent of experiences in the west over several centuries.

During the period of exile orthodox patriarchs continued to pay lip service to imperial tutelage. Germanos II's defence of the rights of the patriarchate over the church in Epiros was couched in the traditional terms of 'one church, one empire'. But George Bardanes, the spokesman for the people of Epiros, was far more realistic. He made it clear that the church in Epiros would gladly recognise the authority of the patriarch at Nicaea, but not that of the emperor. He did not understand why imperial authority was necessary to a unit based on common adherence to the orthodox faith. Why was co-existence not possible? 'Let each come to an understanding on these terms and "let each enjoy the Sparta which it has been allotted", not stupidly gazing on the ends of the earth, but being satisfied with one's own territory, fearing God, and honouring in a spirit of brotherly love the appropriate ruler.'<sup>30</sup> It seemed a reasonable plea: the unity of the Byzantine world after 1204 was essentially religious and cultural and no longer dependent upon imperial authority. Political unity was irrelevant or would have to wait until Constantinople was recovered.

It was a point of view that also had its adherents at the Nicaean court. Its leading intellectual and theologian Nikephoros Blemmydes defended the political independence of the Greek ruler of Rhodes; the only unity that mattered was that provided by orthodoxy. He was outraged when in 1256 Theodore II Laskaris compelled the patriarch of the day to place the territories of Michael II of Epiros under interdict.<sup>31</sup> This was blatant exploitation of ecclesiastical power for political purposes. In a quite different

<sup>28</sup> GP, I.14, ed. and French tr. Failler, I, pp. 60–3. See now Angelov, D.G. (2007), pp. 204–52, 260–85.

<sup>29</sup> GP, VI.31, ed. and French tr. Failler, II, pp. 638–9; Nicol (1976a).

<sup>30</sup> George Bardanes, *Letter*, ed. Loenertz, p. 117.

<sup>31</sup> Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Autobiography*, ed. Munitiz, pp. 40–2; tr. Munitiz, pp. 89–91.

way Theodore II Laskaris also recognised the divisions of the Byzantine world that exile had fixed. He dedicated his victories in Europe to 'our Holy Mother Anatolia'.<sup>32</sup>

The fall of Constantinople necessitated a reassessment of Byzantine identity. It could hardly be otherwise, since it was so closely bound up with the imperial and universalist pretensions of the capital. In exile the core of the Byzantine identity remained orthodoxy, but it was given a more obviously nationalist twist. In the past, the Byzantines had defined themselves against Hellenes (or pagans) and Jews, and occasionally against Armenians. From the time of the First Crusade the Latins featured more prominently, but it was only after 1204 that they became the 'other' against which the Byzantines measured themselves. This was a negative shift. More positive was the re-evaluation of the meaning of Hellene. It came to be identified with the cultural legacy of classical Greece, stripped of its pagan connotation. This had begun before 1204, but it only received coherent expression after the fall of Constantinople. It is set out most clearly in a letter of Emperor John III Vatatzes to Pope Gregory IX (1227–41). He claimed that his imperial authority had a double validity. On the one hand, it could be traced back to Constantine the Great and, on the other, it was founded in Hellenic wisdom. Orthodoxy and imperial authority fused with a cultural tradition to produce a shift in the Byzantine identity.<sup>33</sup>

This shift inspired the achievements of Byzantine scholars during the period of exile. They were able to recover the intellectual heritage of Byzantium which was threatened by the fall of Constantinople to the Latins. John Vatatzes organised a palace school, which preserved the traditions of higher education.<sup>34</sup> But the most eloquent testimony to Hellenic wisdom's power to inspire comes in the shape of the autobiography of the future patriarch Gregory of Cyprus. He describes how bitterly he resented the Latin conquerors of his native island. They made it virtually impossible for him to get a proper education. Hearing of the fame of Nicaea as a centre of Hellenic education, he ran away from home and made his way to Nicaea. Whatever his disappointments, he treats his search for Hellenic illumination as a form of conversion.<sup>35</sup>

Cultivation of Hellenic wisdom defined the Byzantine elite culturally against the Latins. In 1254 there was a disputation between Nicaean scholars and members of a Hohenstaufen embassy. Theodore II Laskaris presided. He adjudged victory to the Nicaeans and thought it reflected great credit on the Hellenes. Consciousness of a Hellenic past became an integral part of the Byzantine identity, but its expression was the preserve of an intellectual

<sup>32</sup> Theodore II Laskaris, *Epistulae*, ed. Festa, p. 281. <sup>33</sup> Grumel (1930), pp. 452–4; Angold (1975b).

<sup>34</sup> Constantinides (1982), pp. 5–27; Constantinides (2003), pp. 42–50.

<sup>35</sup> Gregory of Cyprus, *Autobiography*. On the vitality of literary culture at Nicaea and in the early Palaiologan court, see Constantinides (2003); Angelov, D. G. (2003); Gaul (forthcoming).

elite. There was surprisingly little friction between Hellenism and orthodoxy despite their apparent incompatibility. Patriarch Germanos II could compare John Vatatzes' victories over the Latins to Marathon and Salamis. This illustrates how Hellenism gave orthodoxy during the period of exile a more obviously Greek complexion. The orthodox patriarchate did not hesitate to abandon its rights over the orthodox church in both Serbia and Bulgaria and came close to doing so in Russia. This was in contrast to the stubborn and eventually successful defence of its authority over the church in Epiros. Whatever claims Patriarch Germanos may have continued to make to universal authority, his stance over the Epirot church indicates a more obviously nationalist understanding of orthodoxy: it was the faith of the Greeks.

Although the recovery of Constantinople from the hated Latins was always the goal, Constantinople itself became less and less relevant to the sense of identity that evolved during the period of exile. Political loyalties became more localised. A sense of common purpose was provided by the orthodox church and of cultural unity by the Hellenic tradition. At the same time a rather different structure of government and society was crystallising. Many of its features can be traced back before 1204, but they were held in check by the power and tradition of Constantinople. Its fall produced of necessity a simplification of the machinery of government. Even the tradition of Roman law weakened, allowing the introduction of the ordeal.<sup>36</sup> There was a devolution of authority. This took the form of a marked growth of immunities and *pronoiai*, but it can also be seen in the widespread grant of urban privileges. Power became increasingly localised.

Michael VIII ignored these changes at his peril. He was proud to be hailed as the 'new Constantine', but his autocratic style of government created many difficulties.<sup>37</sup> His attempt to restore the old ideological and institutional foundations of the Byzantine empire went counter to the changes that had occurred during the period of exile. The restored Byzantine empire was not able to escape the legacy of exile. It remained a conglomeration of independent or semi-independent political units. Except very briefly, Epiros was never persuaded to return under the direct authority of Constantinople, while Asia Minor was never reconciled to Palaiologan rule. Still more seriously, Michael VIII's efforts to impose union with the Latin church alienated all sections of orthodox society. This reflected a shift in attitudes that occurred over the period of exile. An emperor could no longer use the orthodox faith as a diplomatic bargaining counter with the Latin west without provoking bitter opposition. The church could now count on popular support. This had not been the case before 1204.

<sup>36</sup> Angold (1980).

<sup>37</sup> Macrides (1980); Macrides (1994b).

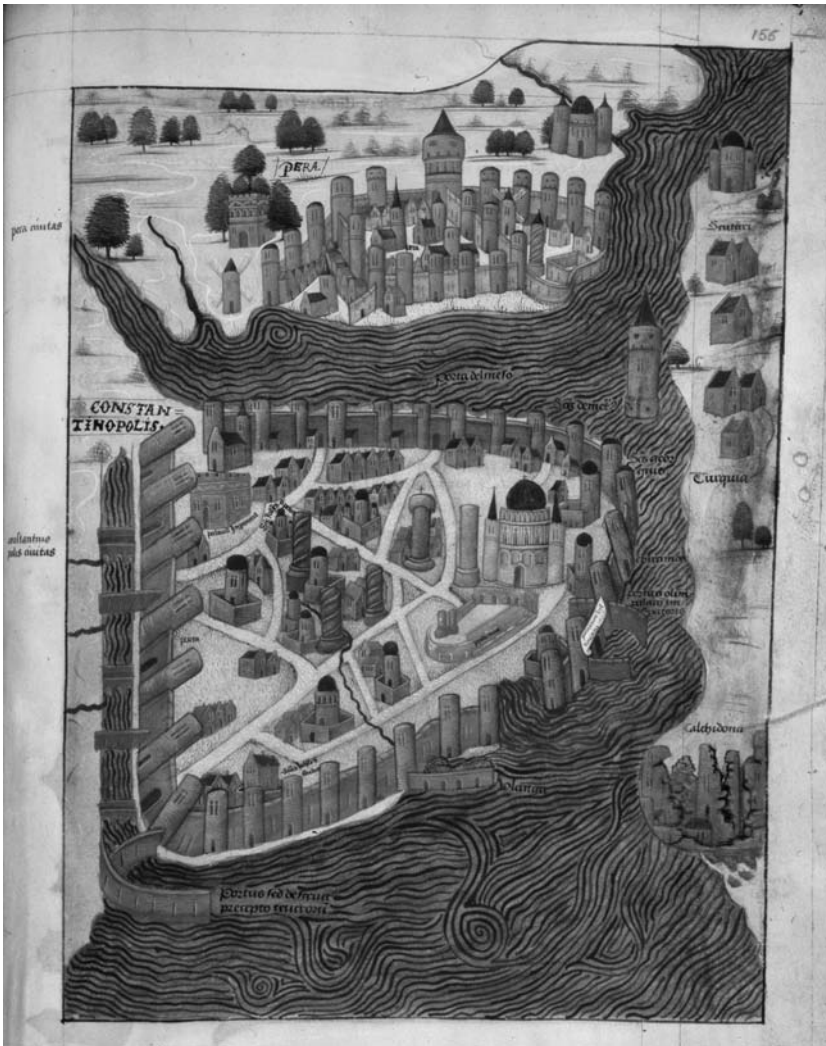


Figure 53 Copy c. 1480 of an earlier fifteenth-century picture-map showing Constantinople and the Bosphorus; this gives a general impression of how the City looked in the later middle ages

Michael VIII's attempt to restore imperial authority to its former eminence only left Byzantine society hopelessly divided. To bewail the recovery of Constantinople, as one Nicaean official did in the summer of 1261, was to show uncanny prescience.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> GP, II.28, ed. and French tr. Failler, I, pp. 204–5; Talbot (1993). See also below, p. 804.

## THE EMPIRE RESTORED AND THE REIGN OF MICHAEL VIII

These changes would in the long run work against Michael VIII Palaiologos' efforts to restore the Byzantine empire, but failure hardly seemed possible as the emperor took formal possession of Constantinople on 15 August 1261. Early successes suggested that the Byzantine empire would soon be returned to its pre-1204 boundaries. Michael VIII quickly obtained a foothold in the Peloponnese. William II of Villehardouin, prince of Achaia, had fallen into Byzantine hands, along with many of his barons, at the battle of Pelagonia in 1259. He now agreed to come to terms. He ceded to Michael the fortresses of Monemvasia, Mistra and Maina (see below, p. 768). The recovery of the Greek lands beckoned. In 1264 Michael II Angelos Doukas, the ruler of Epiros, accepted the hegemony of the new emperor of Constantinople. Substantial gains had been made in the previous year at the expense of the Bulgarians. Philippopolis, gateway to the Balkans, was recovered together with the ports of the Black Sea coast. Michael VIII then secured control of the Dobrudja, the region at the mouth of the Danube, where he established Turkish colonists. They had come over to Byzantium with the last Seljuq sultan of Rum, Kay-Kawos II, who had fled to Michael in April 1261. Even if it meant accepting baptism, the sultan found this preferable to remaining under the Mongol yoke. Such a spectacular defection gave Michael VIII reason to hope for further gains in Asia Minor. The recovery of Constantinople also put the Venetians on the defensive. They were driven from Constantinople and replaced by the Genoese, who were Byzantine allies. However, the Genoese in their turn were temporarily banned from the capital in 1264, as Michael VIII had no intention of allowing the Italians a dominant position in Constantinople. He built up the Byzantine fleet, which for the last time would be a major force in the waters of the Aegean.<sup>39</sup>

The tragedy of Michael VIII Palaiologos' reign was that he was never able to capitalise on these early successes. He failed to drive the Venetians from their Aegean bases in Crete and Euboea. The Franks of the Peloponnese stubbornly refused to cede any more territory to his armies. The Greek rulers of Epiros and Thessaly threw off their Byzantine allegiance. Opposition to Byzantine rule was stiffened by the appearance of a new figure on the scene, Charles of Anjou, youngest brother of the French king Louis IX (1226–70). Charles' victory at Benevento over Manfred of Hohenstaufen in 1266 established him as papally approved ruler of the kingdom of Sicily and heir to ambitions in the east. In 1267 he entered into separate treaties with William II of Villehardouin, prince of Achaia, and with Baldwin II, the dispossessed Latin emperor of Constantinople. He took the former under his protection, securing succession to the principality of Achaia for his son

<sup>39</sup> Geanakoplos (1959), pp. 119–85.

Philip through a dynastic marriage. He promised the Latin emperor that within seven years he would launch an expedition to recover Constantinople on his behalf. The petty rulers of the Balkans and Greek lands – orthodox and catholic alike – turned to him for support against the pretensions of Michael VIII. The Albanians seized the Byzantine base of Dyrrachium (Durrës), at the head of the Egnatian Way, and in February 1272 recognised Charles of Anjou as their king. Charles thus secured the key positions along the Albanian coast. It was a serious setback for Michael VIII.

The Byzantine emperor sought to counter the Angevin threat in various ways. He strengthened the sea walls of Constantinople. The lesson of the Fourth Crusade was its vulnerability to an attack from the sea. Michael VIII therefore wooed Venice to prevent it from joining the Angevin camp. He finally induced the Venetians to make a treaty with Byzantium rather than with Charles of Anjou in 1268: the Venetians recovered control of their old quarter in Constantinople. However, Byzantium's major diplomatic offensive was directed towards the papacy. Michael employed the age-old ploy of offering a reunion of the churches. The papacy was at first unconvinced of the sincerity or utility of the offer, but this changed in 1271 when Gregory X (1271–6) became pope. He was not interested in supporting Charles of Anjou's designs on Constantinople. His purpose was instead to rescue the crusader states from the Mamluk menace. An alliance with Byzantium might have its uses, but the pope insisted that it must be cemented by reunion on Rome's terms. Essentially, this meant Byzantine recognition of papal supremacy. It was a price that, in the circumstances, Michael VIII thought worth paying. In 1274 he despatched a Byzantine delegation to Lyons where a council of the church was gathering. Without any serious debate of the issues Michael accepted a reunion on papal terms. He cited as a precedent for his actions the negotiations with the papacy initiated by John III Vatatzes.<sup>40</sup> These had produced little, if any, protest, perhaps because they were never brought to a conclusion. But Michael's unionist policies would earn him the hatred of all sections of Byzantine society. Why were people so unwilling to accept his reassurance that almost nothing worthwhile had been conceded? Why did the orthodox church refuse to approach the question of union in a spirit of *oikonomia*?<sup>41</sup>

The answers to these questions reveal that it was not only Charles of Anjou's ambitions that thwarted Michael VIII's plans to restore the Byzantine empire. Michael's unionist policy confirmed the tyrannical nature of his rule. His usurpation of the throne was not easily forgotten. On Christmas Day 1261 he had had the legitimate heir to the imperial throne, John IV Laskaris, blinded and exiled to a fortress on the Sea of Marmara. Patriarch

<sup>40</sup> GP, V.12, ed. and French tr. Failler, II, pp. 478–9.

<sup>41</sup> Nicol (1993), pp. 41–57; Hussey (1986), pp. 220–35; Chadwick (2003), pp. 246–57.

Arsenios protested. He was responsible for protecting the rights of John Laskaris, which the usurper had solemnly sworn before God to uphold. The patriarch therefore excommunicated Michael. It took three years before the emperor could rid himself of Arsenios, but his dismissal only produced a schism within the orthodox church, weakening the authority of subsequent patriarchs. Arsenios gave his support to an uprising around Nicaea in favour of John Laskaris. Michael VIII may have suppressed it with some ease, but thereafter he found the Anatolian provinces increasingly alienated from Constantinopolitan rule. The historian George Pachymeres singled this out as the underlying cause of their subsequent fall to renewed Turkish pressure.<sup>42</sup>

Michael VIII's unionist policy reinforced the growing distrust of his rule. He refused to listen to the reasonable objections of Patriarch Joseph I. As soon as it became clear that the emperor intended to do the pope's bidding, the patriarch retired to a monastery rather than be party to the reunion of the churches. This produced another schism within the orthodox church, when Michael VIII pressed ahead with his designs. Efforts to win support for the union were crude and largely counterproductive. The story goes that when the members of the Byzantine delegation to Lyons returned to Constantinople they were greeted with cries of 'You have become Franks!'<sup>43</sup> It catches a sense of betrayal that spread throughout Byzantine society.

This was confirmed by the harsh way in which Michael VIII and his new patriarch, John Bekkos (1275–82), implemented the union. In 1276 the patriarch convened a council which not only confirmed the union, but placed all who opposed it under ban of excommunication. The next year the emperor and his son publicly swore to recognise the supremacy of the papacy and read out a profession of faith that included the Roman addition of the *filioque*.

Michael's opponents seized on his unionist policy to justify their actions. The Greek rulers of Epiros and Thessaly used it as a pretext for refusing to submit to his authority. John of Thessaly held an anti-unionist council in 1275/6 which attracted many of Michael's opponents within the church. This was blatant exploitation of the unionist issue for political ends. Less easy to explain is the opposition to church union of some of Michael VIII's closest relatives and political associates. Even his favourite sister, the nun Eulogia, turned against him and fled to Bulgaria. Such was the hostility to the union within the imperial family that Michael was compelled to imprison many of his relatives. The papal emissary was taken down to see them languishing in the dungeons of the Great Palace. Michael hoped that their misery would convince the papacy of his sincerity over the union.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> GP, I, 3–6, ed. and French tr. Failler, I, pp. 26–35. See also p. 805.

<sup>43</sup> Geanakoplos (1959), p. 271. See also Geanakoplos (1976), pp. 156–70.

<sup>44</sup> Loenertz (1965).



This opposition from within the imperial family was prompted in the first place by concern for orthodoxy, which was being needlessly compromised by the emperor; but it ran deeper than this. Michael VIII was seen to be using the unionist issue as a way of imposing his arbitrary power over Byzantine church and society. Like all Byzantine emperors, Michael was faced by the conundrum of imperial authority. In theory, he wielded absolute power; in practice, it was limited by obligations to the church and the ruling class, and to society at large. Michael came to power as the leader of an aristocratic faction. He ensured that the chief offices of state went to his close relatives. He also widened his basis of support through a series of shrewd marriages that linked his family to other great houses.<sup>45</sup> At first, his style of government was conciliatory. At the same time as donations to the army and monasteries, he clamped down on the dishonesty and oppression of provincial governors and military commanders. He improved the quality of justice by setting up a court of appeal, the *sekrēton*, and abolished the use of the ordeal by hot iron which had become an instrument of arbitrary government. He showed exaggerated respect for the church and patriarch.<sup>46</sup> This changed once Michael became master of Constantinople. He employed the western notion of the 'law of conquest' to justify a more autocratic approach to government. He claimed that, since he had conquered Constantinople, it belonged to him exclusively, and he used this as a pretext to threaten opponents of the union with confiscation of their property, if they did not comply with his wishes. He was, after all, the 'new Constantine'.<sup>47</sup> He became increasingly remote from his natural basis of support. He made use of western adventurers, such as Benedetto Zaccaria, who received the alum concession at Phokaia near Smyrna.<sup>48</sup> He also relied heavily on trusted bureaucrats, such as the grand logothete George Akropolites, who was a leader of the Byzantine delegation to Lyons.

The humiliating concessions made by Michael VIII to the papacy brought little concrete advantage. This only increased distrust of the emperor. The papacy, for its part, continued to have doubts about Michael's sincerity, so much so that in 1281 Pope Martin IV (1281–5) had him excommunicated. This was at Charles of Anjou's behest, and provided him with the justification he needed for a new assault on Byzantium. This time Charles was able to win over Venice to his cause. Unionist diplomacy had apparently left Byzantium stranded. The Byzantine armies were able to stem the Angevin advance down the Egnatian Way with a victory at Berat in 1281. But salvation came from an unexpected quarter: on 30 March 1282 the inhabitants of Palermo rose up against their hated Angevin rulers. This

<sup>45</sup> Dölger (1950), pp. 275–9.

<sup>46</sup> GP, II.1, ed. and French tr. Failler, I, pp. 130–1; Burgmann and Magdalino (1984).

<sup>47</sup> Macrides (1980); Macrides (1994b). <sup>48</sup> Geanakoplos (1959), pp. 209–13.

was the famous revolt of the Sicilian Vespers.<sup>49</sup> With Sicily in revolt, Charles had to abandon his plans for an expedition against Constantinople.

Michael VIII saw himself as the saviour of his people. In the autobiographies that he wrote at the end of his life he took sole credit for throwing back the Angevins in Albania and for organising the Sicilian Vespers.<sup>50</sup> He was unable to comprehend his unpopularity; had he not restored the seat of church and empire to Constantinople? This could not be denied, but few would have accepted his other claim: to have ruled according to the best traditions of his family and the imperial office. It seemed much more like a betrayal. It comes as no surprise that, when Michael VIII Palaiologos died on 11 December 1282 in a small Thracian village, the orthodox church refused him a proper burial.<sup>51</sup>

Under Michael VIII Byzantium was for the very last time a major force on the world stage. His diplomatic contacts stretched from Aragon and France in the west to the Ilkhans of Persia in the east; from the Golden Horde on the Caspian to the Mamluks of Egypt.<sup>52</sup> But his efforts left Byzantium exhausted and virtually bankrupt. His legacy was one of schism, poverty and rapid decline. He was a victim of the profound changes which occurred during the period of exile. The defence of orthodoxy against the Latins gave the Byzantine identity an anti-Latin twist. Any compromise with the Latins over dogma was seen as an act of betrayal. Michael VIII was even more vulnerable to accusations of this kind because of the way Laskarid propaganda instilled the notion of the emperor as the servant of his church and people. Political power had become more diffuse. The different regions of the old Byzantine empire developed separate identities and interests. At best, the emperor of Constantinople could expect to exercise a degree of indirect authority. These problems existed before 1204, but Constantinople had – albeit with increasing difficulty – the prestige and resources to hold the empire together. The city that Michael VIII Palaiologos recovered was but a husk. It had been wasted by the years of Latin rule. He made great efforts to restore his new capital, but it was expensive and time-consuming.<sup>53</sup> Constantinople no longer dominated. 1204 had destroyed the myth of Byzantine invulnerability.

<sup>49</sup> Runciman (1958); Geanakoplos (1959), pp. 335–67.

<sup>50</sup> Michael Palaiologos, *Autobiography*, ed. and French tr. Grégoire, pp. 448–68; ed. Dmitrievsky, I, pp. 769–85.

<sup>51</sup> NG, V.7, ed. Schopen and Bekker, I, p. 153; German tr. van Dieten, I, pp. 142–3; see also GP, VI.36, ed. and French tr. Failler, II, pp. 664–7.

<sup>52</sup> Amitai-Preiss (1995), pp. 82–97. See also below, p. 805.

<sup>53</sup> Talbot (1993).

# AFTER THE FOURTH CRUSADE: THE LATIN EMPIRE OF CONSTANTINOPLE AND THE FRANKISH STATES

DAVID JACOBY

## INTRODUCTION: FRAGMENTED ROMANIA

The Latin conquest of Constantinople on 13 April 1204 heralded a new era in the history of the Byzantine lands, known in the Christian west as *Romania*. It dealt a severe blow to the military might, political organisation and prestige of the empire, furthering and hastening its disintegration – begun some twenty-five years earlier – and leading to its dismemberment. In March 1204, about a month before the fall of Constantinople, the leaders of the crusader armies and the commander of the Venetian army and fleet, Doge Enrico Dandolo, reached agreement on five major issues: electing a Latin emperor, the empire's political regime and military organisation, partitioning the lands of *Romania* (the *partitio Romaniae*) and, finally, electing a Latin patriarch of Constantinople and other ecclesiastical matters.

On 9 May 1204 Count Baldwin of Flanders was elected emperor, gaining a quarter of the empire and two imperial palaces in Constantinople. From his domain the new emperor Baldwin I (1204–5) granted many fiefs to crusader knights and mounted sergeants. He also assigned to Venice its share of three-eighths of Constantinople, land outside the City and various revenues. At this stage only Constantinople was in Latin hands. The difficulties encountered by the Latins in the conquest of the Byzantine empire, which was never completed, and the individual expeditions undertaken by various Latin knights and commoners, as well as by the Venetian state, prevented systematic implementation of the partition plan. Instead, the extensive territories occupied by the Latins in the European part of *Romania* and many islands in the Aegean became a mosaic of political entities, many of them small. Most of their rulers were linked to each other within complex webs of vassalage which changed over time (see below, pp. 765–8, 771).

Boniface of Montferrat, who had expected to be elected emperor, gained Thessaloniki from the Venetians, to whom he sold Crete. Although a vassal of Baldwin I, in 1204 Boniface established an independent kingdom extending from Thrace to the area of Corinth in central Greece. After conquering Euboea – called Negroponte by the Latins – in 1205 he granted it first to



Map 37 The Latin empire of Constantinople and the Frankish states

a French knight and, following the latter's death the same year, to three Veronese noblemen (known as the *terciers*, or *terzieri* in Italian). Thereafter, except for the years 1208–16, the island was divided into three main feudal units until its wholesale occupation by Venice in 1390. On the Greek mainland Boniface awarded several small lordships to French and Italian knights under his suzerainty in Attica and Boeotia. These regions were soon united within the duchy of Athens under Othon of La Roche, who from 1210/11 also held Argos and Nauplion in the Peloponnese from Geoffrey I of Villehardouin, the ruler of the Frankish principality of Achaia.<sup>1</sup> A few years earlier, in 1205, Geoffrey and William of Champlitte had jointly begun the conquest of the Peloponnese and laid the foundations of the principality.

In 1204 or 1205 Marco I Sanudo, nephew of the doge of Venice, established a duchy in the Aegean with its centre at Naxos, which from 1207 he held directly from the Latin emperor. In association with fellow Venetians and foreigners, and with the backing of Venice, Sanudo conquered other islands in the Cyclades in the same year, which he granted out in fief. Small lordships were also created elsewhere in the Aegean. Corfu was occupied by Venice in 1207 and awarded to ten of her citizens, yet lost around 1215 to the Greek ruler of Epiros, Michael I Angelos Doukas (1205–15). Finally, Venice extended its sway in 1207 over the two ports of Modon and Coron in southern Messenia, at the south-western tip of the Peloponnese, and between 1207 and 1211, over the island of Crete (in the face of Genoese opposition). These were the first colonies of an overseas empire, parts of which were to survive up to the time of Napoleon Bonaparte's campaign in Italy in the last years of the eighteenth century. The extreme political and territorial fragmentation of *Romania* in the wake of the Latin conquests was in sharp contrast to the earlier unity of Byzantium. It accounts to a large extent for the diversity of the political and social regimes established in Latin *Romania*, as well as for the nature and orientation of demographic currents and economic activity in the region. While the encounter between the Latins and the overwhelmingly Greek local population generated a break at the political level, it resulted in continuity and some measure of accommodation in other spheres.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The term Morea may be used to describe (a) the physical territory of the Peloponnese in the later middle ages; (b) the Frankish principality in the Peloponnese formed soon after the fall of Constantinople in 1204, which peaked under William II of Villehardouin and which is also known as the principality of Achaia; (c) the area of the Peloponnese that came under imperial Byzantine dominion again in the fourteenth and earlier fifteenth centuries and was, from 1349, a 'despotate', ruled by a member of the imperial family, usually the emperor's son (the 'despot'). For the sake of clarity, we have opted to style the Frankish principality Achaia in this volume and to use Morea to denote the later Byzantine despotate and, occasionally, the physical territory of the Peloponnese.

<sup>2</sup> For general background, political history, references to primary sources and studies on the Fourth Crusade and the Latin empire, see: Queller and Madden (1997); Longnon (1949); Wolff (1969); Setton (1976–84), I, pp. 1–105; Carile (1978); Nicol (1988), pp. 124–87; Lock (1995), pp. 36–67, 161–92; Angold

## THE COURSE OF EVENTS

The Latin empire led a tumultuous life throughout the fifty-seven years of its existence, up to its collapse in 1261. The imperial and territorial claims of its neighbouring rulers, the Vlacho-Bulgarian kingdom and the two main Byzantine successor states founded after the fall of Constantinople (one in Epiros and the other in western Anatolia, the so-called empire of Nicaea), exposed the Latin empire to almost continuous warfare. War broke out shortly after its establishment. In alliance with Greek leaders in Thrace, the ruler of the Vlacho-Bulgarian kingdom, Kalojan (1197–1207), advanced deep into Latin territory and captured Emperor Baldwin in May 1205 (see also below, p. 784). Henry of Hainault (1206–16), Baldwin's brother and successor, repulsed Kalojan's attacks. After Baldwin's death in 1206, Henry captured extensive territories to the north and succeeded in stabilising the Latin–Bulgarian borders and political relations for a few years. In Anatolia Henry faced Theodore I Laskaris (1205–21), the ruler of the Greek state centred on Nicaea: he managed to surmount his own shifting fortunes by decisively defeating Laskaris in October 1211. This resulted in the renewal of Latin rule in western Anatolia along the entire coastline stretching from Nikomedeia to Adramyttion (see also p. 737). The treaty signed between the two rulers, presumably in the following year, ensured peace between their states until 1224. Henry died in 1216, leaving an empire temporarily strengthened by his military and diplomatic skills, his conciliatory attitude toward his Greek subjects, and his use of Greek troops against his enemies.

The fate of the Latin empire was closely linked to that of the kingdom of Thessaloniki. After the sudden death of Boniface of Montferrat in battle with the Bulgarians in 1207, Henry was forced to intervene against 'Lombard' rebels; they included the *terzieri* of Negroponte, who wished to see William VIII of Montferrat crowned king of Thessaloniki. In 1209 Henry secured the orderly succession of Boniface's son and William's half-brother, the youthful Demetrios. Henry also compelled the lords of Negroponte to submit to himself directly at Thebes, as he did with Geoffrey I of Villehardouin (c. 1209–25/31), lord of Frankish Achaia, at Ravennika. However, the Latin emperor Peter of Courtenay – crowned in Rome by

(2003a), pp. 75–150, 163–92, 210–14, 225–7; Madden (2003). Hendrickx, 'Régestes des empereurs latins' has convenient, but not always reliable, summaries of documents. For a new edition of the treaties between Venice and the Latin emperors, see: *I patti con l'impero latino*, ed. Pozza. On other Frankish states: Longnon (1949); Longnon (1969); Bon (1969); Jacoby (1971), pp. 19–27, 185–95, 253–4, 271–80; Setton (1976–84), I, pp. 1–105; Lock (1995), pp. 68–104; Bredenkamp (1996). Ilieva (1991) should be used with caution. On the Venetian quarter in Constantinople, see below p. 766. On Venice in the Latin empire and the Frankish states: Thiriet (1975), pp. 74–104; Borsari (1966); Jacoby (1971), pp. 185–95, 271–80, 295–300; Jacoby (1993); below pp. 766–7, 771. The territories under exclusive Venetian rule are not treated in this chapter.

Pope Honorius III (1216–27) – was compelled to transfer effective authority in the kingdom of Thessaloniki to William VIII of Montferrat in 1217. Theodore Angelos, who styled himself as Komnenos Doukas, was the forceful ruler of Epiros (1215–30) and emperor at Thessaloniki (1224–30). He captured Peter on his way from Rome to Constantinople, taking advantage of the internal feuds in the Latin kingdom to penetrate into Macedonia and Thessaly and encircle the city of Thessaloniki, which he occupied in 1224. Two years later Theodore Angelos reached the walls of Constantinople, but Ivan II Asen (1218–41), king of the Vlachs and Bulgarians, prevented him from conquering the city which he coveted for himself. In 1230 Ivan Asen defeated Theodore Angelos and occupied large tracts of Epirot territories, as far afield as Albania. In the meantime, by 1225, the Nicaean forces of John III Vatatzes (1221–54) had reduced the Latin hold in western Anatolia to Nikomedeia and a strip of land opposite Constantinople. In 1233 the Latin emperor John of Brienne (1229–37) launched a short campaign in Anatolia, which failed to produce any lasting benefits. Two years later he faced a coalition of Vatatzes and Ivan Asen that endangered the very existence of the Latin empire, by then shrunken to the city of Constantinople itself. In 1246 Vatatzes wrested Thessaloniki from the Greek ruler of Epiros. His successor Theodore II Laskaris (1254–8) was too preoccupied with warfare against neighbours in the Balkans to move against Constantinople, and gave the City some respite (see also above, pp. 748–9).

The existence of the Latin empire was thus prolonged by temporary agreements and shifting alliances with its neighbours, and particularly by rivalries among the latter. In the long run, however, its ability to survive was seriously impaired by a chronic absence of adequate financial and military resources and the lack of a firm, permanent and general commitment from the west to assist it. Papal intervention on the empire's behalf yielded only limited and temporary results: repeated ecclesiastical negotiations with its neighbours failed to achieve their submission to the church of Rome or to reduce their pressure on the empire. Neither papal pleas for help from western rulers, nor the proclamation of military expeditions to aid the Latin empire as crusades yielded meaningful, sustained support. The hard-pressed Baldwin II (1237–61) travelled extensively in the west, first in 1237–9 and again in 1243/4–8, in desperate attempts to enlist help. During his first absence the barons of the Latin empire mortgaged the Crown of Thorns, supposedly worn by Christ, as surety for the repayment of 13,134 *hyperpyra*: this sum had been provided by the Venetian Niccolò Querini for the consolidation of a number of loans previously advanced to them. The precious relic was redeemed in 1238 by the king of France, Louis IX (1226–70), who placed it in the specially built Sainte-Chapelle in Paris. In 1248 Baldwin II owed 24,000 *hyperpera* to some Venetian merchants in

Constantinople; later, in return for another loan, he mortgaged his only son Philip of Courtenay, who spent several years in Venice in the custody of the creditors. In 1260 Baldwin was compelled to strip lead from the roofs of Constantinople's palaces to raise money for the empire's defence.

The western lay powers each pursued their own interests. Even Venice, despite having an economic stake in the Latin empire's survival, sent naval help only intermittently. In 1260 Venice became aware of the acute danger to Latin rule over Constantinople, yet it was already too late. In the course of its existence the Latin empire was also weakened from within by the growing willingness of its Greek subjects to turn to foreign rulers, particularly those of Epiros and Nicaea who appealed to their Greek identity, and even to assist invading armies. Eventually it was Michael VIII Palaiologos (1258–82) who, after seizing the throne of Nicaea in 1258, reinstated Byzantine rule in the imperial capital three years later and put an end to the Latin empire. Baldwin II escaped to the west, where his efforts to obtain support for the recovery of his state came to nought.<sup>3</sup>

#### THE LATIN EMPIRE'S MAIN COMPONENTS

The internal structure and development of the Latin empire were rather complex. Various trappings at the coronation of Emperor Baldwin I on 16 May 1204 evoked similar Byzantine ceremonies, and the Byzantine stamp can also be seen in the titles of the emperors, their officers and their dignitaries, as well as in imperial documents. The adoption of these features was partly prompted by the emperors' desire to emphasise the continuity of Byzantine imperial tradition and thereby enhance their own legitimacy. Greek officials serving in the imperial court also acquainted the conquerors with the intricacies of the Byzantine fiscal system and to a large extent ensured its survival.<sup>4</sup> Yet the nature of the political and socio-legal regime of the Latin empire, defined in the treaty of March 1204, and the operation of its government were largely moulded on western feudal patterns and in response to pressing military needs. The conquest and the ensuing distribution of fiefdoms led to the territorialisation and geographical extension of the vassalage network which had existed within the crusader host during the Fourth Crusade. Each fief-holder, however, also swore to render military service to the emperor, the supreme lord.

A novel feature of the Latin empire was the institutional and political position of Venice within its framework, as both subordinate and equal to the emperor. Venice was subordinate in two ways: firstly, as a collective

<sup>3</sup> Setton (1976–84), I, pp. 1–153; Barber, M. (1989); Angold (1989). On the Byzantine successor states, see Angold (2003a), pp. 193–217.

<sup>4</sup> Jacoby (1993), p. 143; Lock (1995), pp. 167–71, 189–91.



political entity within the feudal system of government headed by the emperor; and secondly, the individual fief-holders in its portion of the empire undertook to fulfil the same military obligations as their crusader counterparts. In fact, however, Venice played the role of an intermediary between the emperor and its own fief-holders. Its officers apportioned the fiefs among Venetians and foreigners who assumed military and fiscal obligations toward the doge and swore fealty to him; its chief representative in the empire, the *podestà* serving in Constantinople, was responsible for the collective discharge of the military service owed by the fief-holders; and, finally, the Venetians retained a separate military contingent under Venice's own command. On the other hand, Venice maintained exclusive control over other components of its portion of the empire and exercised its authority over those holding property in it. Its decisive contribution to the crusade and the conquest of Constantinople, as well as its separate military contingent, made Venice a political heavyweight with respect to the emperor, establishing virtual parity with the crusader barons in the early years of the Latin empire. In that formative political stage Venetian representatives participated in various governing bodies, whose decisions affected political, territorial, institutional and judicial developments.

The combination of subordination and parity in Venice's position was extended and amplified on a symbolic level by its *podestà*. These Venetian officials used titles and regalian elements borrowed from Byzantium alongside those utilised by the emperors themselves, in order to project a quasi-imperial standing both inside and outside the empire. The great distance from Venice, and political expediency, explain the diplomatic initiative shown by several *podestà* up to the 1230s. It is clear, though, that their policies conformed with the interests of the city of Venice and were closely aligned with it. There are no grounds, therefore, for assuming that the *podestà* adopted an autonomous political course or attempted to bolster their own status at the expense of the Venetian doges. Soon after Baldwin I was proclaimed emperor, Venice obtained the election of a Venetian as patriarch of Constantinople, in accordance with the treaty of March 1204. However, Tommaso Morosini considered himself a representative of Pope Innocent III (1198–16), rather than a Venetian citizen promoting Venice's interests in the Latin empire, which explains his tense relations with the Venetian *podestà*. The patriarchs controlled property yielding substantial revenue in the City.

Venice also took advantage of its major role as a maritime and commercial power. On several occasions Venetian ships helped the emperors in the defence of Constantinople; her subjects played a dominant role in the City's trade; and her quarter there – substantially enlarged in 1204 – was the hub of commercial activity, attracting both Venetian and foreign settlers. Venetian

settlers were also established at Raideustos and Gallipoli, ports of call on the Dardanelles belonging to Venice and administered by its representatives until 1235, when they were occupied by John III Vatatzes. In order to reinforce its position in the empire Venice increased the number of its subjects by granting Venetian nationality to Latin foreigners among her fief-holders, Latin city-dwellers, Greeks and descendants of mixed Venetian–Greek parentage known as *gasmouloi*.<sup>5</sup>

The principality of Achaia, the third major Frankish state of Latin *Romania*, survived the Latin empire by some 170 years. It took Geoffrey I of Villehardouin and his sons Geoffrey II of Villehardouin (c. 1226/31–46) and William II of Villehardouin (1246–78) until 1248 to conquer the entire Peloponnese, except for the Venetian enclaves of Modon and Coron in southern Messenia. After the fall of the kingdom of Thessaloniki in 1224 the other Frankish lords established in *Romania* rallied around Geoffrey I of Villehardouin. From 1236 the counts of Cephalonia recognised the suzerainty of the princes of Achaia. In return for his promise of help, in 1248 William obtained lifetime suzerainty over all but four of the Aegean islands from Baldwin II, an ascendancy which in fact persisted into the fourteenth century.

Some years later William II of Villehardouin would assert his new position. In 1209 the lord of Euboea, already a vassal of Boniface of Montferrat, had also acknowledged the suzerainty of Venice, yet the agreement was only ratified in 1211. His successors in the three main lordships of Euboea followed suit. This enabled Venice to intervene in the feudal affairs of the island on several occasions, notably from 1256 to 1262, when Venice supported two of these lords who refused to recognise the overlordship of William of Villehardouin. In 1258 William defeated an ally of the rebel lords, the duke of Athens Guy I of La Roche (1225–63), who subsequently acknowledged his vassallic subordination to the prince. Eventually, in 1262, the danger of a Byzantine reconquest prompted all sides to put an end to their conflicts.<sup>6</sup>

The military might of the principality of Achaia was demonstrated on several occasions; in 1236 and again in 1238, Geoffrey II of Villehardouin came to the rescue of Constantinople with his forces, and from May 1249 to May 1250 his brother and successor William joined the French king Louis IX's crusade to Egypt. However, in 1259 the troops of Michael VIII Palaiologos, then still ruling at Nicaea, inflicted a severe defeat upon William, his vassals and allies at Pelagonia in Macedonia. For about two years the

<sup>5</sup> Jacoby (1993), pp. 142–64, 194–7; Jacoby (1998); Jacoby (2001b); Jacoby (2006). Venetian naturalisation should not be mistaken for the grant of Venetian citizenship, awarded in that period only to those settled in Venice proper: see Jacoby (1993), pp. 163–4; Jacoby (1981), pp. 217–21.

<sup>6</sup> Jacoby (1971), pp. 21–5, 52, 185–96.

principality was governed by women in lieu of their captive husbands. After the Byzantine recovery of Constantinople in 1261 William agreed, as the price of his release, to cede three important strongholds in the south-eastern Peloponnese to Michael VIII; among them was Monemvasia, which had remained in Frankish hands for only around fourteen years (see also above p. 754).

After regaining a foothold in the peninsula, the following year the Byzantines proceeded to expand. To counter their mounting pressure and in return for promised assistance from the new king of Sicily, Charles I of Anjou (1266–85), William II of Villehardouin agreed in the Treaty of Viterbo (1267) that after his death, the principality of Achaia and its dependencies should be transferred to the king. This move was made with the acquiescence of William's lord, Emperor Baldwin II, who also granted Charles suzerainty over the islands of the Aegean, Corfu and all Latin possessions in Epiros. After the death of William in 1278 Charles took hold of the principality of Achaia and sent his bailiffs to govern it. In 1289 his son Charles II of Anjou (1285–1309) awarded it to William's daughter Isabel of Villehardouin on her second marriage to Florent of Hainault, and the couple took up residence in the principality. Florent established a truce with Byzantium in the same year, yet in 1295 war again broke out.

By now Byzantine rule in the Peloponnese extended from the south-eastern region, recovered by Byzantium in 1262, to Kalavryta in the north, and thus covered a large portion of the peninsula. Florent's most serious problem was the refusal of Helena, mother and regent of the young duke of Athens, Guy II of La Roche (1287–1308), to acknowledge his suzerainty. Yet after coming of age in 1296, the duke did homage to Isabel and Florent. A stronger alliance between the two parties was established in 1299 when Isabel betrothed her little daughter Matilda (Mahaut) of Hainault to Guy.

In 1294 Charles II of Anjou assigned all his eastern dependencies to his son Philip of Taranto, who thus became immediate overlord of Frankish Greece. In 1301 the widowed Isabel of Villehardouin married the count of Piedmont, Philip of Savoy (1301–7), who shortly after arriving in the principality aroused the opposition of various barons and knights with his infringements of Achaian feudal custom. The next year Philip put down a revolt of the indigenous population in the mountainous Skorta region, prompted by new taxes, and in 1303 he campaigned in Epiros in support of Charles, yet later refused to provide further assistance. Since Philip of Savoy delayed doing homage to his immediate overlord, Philip of Taranto, in 1307 Charles declared Isabel to have forfeited her fief. Four years later, Isabel was still claiming her rights and those of her daughter Matilda (Mahaut), but to no effect: Philip of Taranto (1307–13) had definitively become prince of Achaia.

LATIN SETTLEMENT IN ROMANIA: LAW,  
INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIETY

The establishment of Latin rule over extensive portions of *Romania* opened the way to western immigration and settlement in these territories on a scale much larger than before 1204. With the exception of the Venetians, the new Latin settlers initially came from the ranks of the conquerors, many of whom were knights. The Latin population was gradually reinforced in numbers and became more diversified, the majority of the newcomers hailing from Italian cities. However, our lack of adequate quantitative data makes it impossible to assess the extent of Latin immigration. About 1225 some 450 mounted warriors were dispersed throughout the principality of Achaia, yet it is not clear how many of them lived there with wives and children. In 1210 Othon of La Roche (1204–25), duke of Athens, mentioned localities in which only twelve Latins resided, a reference to feudal lords and their retinues settled in isolated mountain castles or fortified rural mansions. Some of these lords occasionally resided in the houses they owned in cities. Most Latins, however, whether knights or commoners, tended to live permanently in an urban centre, preferably protected by walls, or inside an acropolis, regardless of their previous lifestyle or occupations. Such was the case, for instance, with the crusader knights and Venetian fief-holders in the Gallipoli peninsula. To some extent this marked preference of the Latins for urban settlement in *Romania* derived from economic considerations, in particular those of merchants and craftsmen. Yet it also arose from the psychological urge of a minority group for security, keenly aware of its isolation amidst an overwhelmingly Greek population.

The largest Latin concentration in the conquered territories outside the Venetian colonial empire occurred in Constantinople between 1204 and 1261. The major economic role of the City, as well as Venice's improved position and extended quarter there, attracted primarily Venetian immigrants. In Frankish Achaia the establishment of the princely court at Andravida prompted further settlement in this locality and contributed to its urban development. Italian bankers and merchants took up temporary or permanent residence at Clarence, the port founded near Andravida in the first half of the thirteenth century, and turned it into an economic centre connecting the principality of Achaia with the kingdom of Sicily and Venice. However, Latin migration in *Romania* did not always result in permanent settlement. Some of those established in Latin *Romania* left after a while for other destinations. After the establishment of the Latin empire, knights whose pay was in arrears or who were dissatisfied with their living conditions either returned to the west or left the emperor's service to fight in his neighbours' armies. In addition, some Venetians who had kept up close ties with their kin in Venice, and retained property there, returned home after spending

many years in Constantinople or other cities. The Byzantine recovery of the imperial capital in 1261 triggered an exodus of some 3,000 Latins, the majority of whom were undoubtedly Venetian settlers.<sup>7</sup>

As already noted, the conquering knights transplanted their own political organisation and social regime to *Romania*, except in the Venetian portion of the Latin empire. Yet their encounter with the local population required significant accommodations. As in the west, the society of the territories they settled became highly stratified, with a clear distinction between the upper, knightly class and the other strata of society. This distinction was bolstered by the knights' strong class consciousness – expressed in the ceremony of dubbing – and their particular values, lifestyle, mentality and culture. Yet even within this Frankish elite there was pronounced social differentiation. Vassalage and the holding of fiefs entailing military service provided the backbone of the social and political hierarchy, yet only higher- and middle-ranking noblemen exercised judicial and legislative authority and rights of taxation.

The stratified nature of the feudal hierarchy is best known from the principality of Achaia. The barons, one of whom was the Latin archbishop of Patras, enjoyed a strong position, participating in the decisive deliberations of the princely court, and exercising high justice. Among the other tenants-in-chief of the prince, from the second half of the thirteenth century we find some Italian bankers and merchants to whom the princes had granted knighthood and fiefdoms in return for financial assistance. There were several ranks of feudatories below the direct vassals of the prince. The lowest rank included those individuals who were not members of the knightly class: sergeants, owing mounted military service in return for land or a payment, and *archontes*, members of the local elite (see below, pp. 772–3).<sup>8</sup>

Our knowledge of thirteenth-century feudal custom in Frankish Achaia derives mainly from a private legal treatise, known as the *Assizes of Romania*. This compilation was completed between 1333 and 1346 in French, the language of the Frankish knights, yet survives in a Venetian translation presumably prepared in Negroponte in the late fourteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Achaian feudal custom developed from a mixture of imported and local elements. The conquerors and their successors borrowed principles, rules and formulations from their lands of origin, among them Champagne, as well as from the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, where the Frankish kings

<sup>7</sup> Jacoby (1989a), pp. 194–7, 218; Jacoby (1993), pp. 182–9; Jacoby (1997a); Jacoby (2001a); Bon (1969), pp. 318–25, on Andravida and Clarence. Geanakoplos (1959), pp. 112–14, 131–4, argues unconvincingly that there was no mass flight of Latins from Constantinople in 1261, despite mentioning 3,000 fugitives. The Venetians had every reason to fear the Byzantine reconquest of the city.

<sup>8</sup> Jacoby (1971), pp. 271, 291; Jacoby (1973), pp. 901–2; Jacoby (1986); Jacoby (1989a), pp. 189–94.

<sup>9</sup> *Assizes of Romania*, ed. and French tr. Recoura; tr. Topping, with numerous corrections to both in Jacoby (1971), *passim* (index of *Assizes* on pp. 353–6). See now *Assizes of Romania*, ed. Parmeggiani.

and nobility faced many similar problems to their own. Traces of the feudal custom from the kingdom of Sicily also appeared after 1278, when the principality came under Charles I of Anjou's rule. The determining factors in the development of the legal system, though, were legislative acts and judicial precedents established by the princely court of Achaia, registering the dynamics of Frankish problem-solving. Within this framework, the feudal custom of the principality had one novel feature: it incorporated elements of Byzantine law relating to the patrimonial lands held by Greeks and to the status of dependent peasants.

The *Assizes* confirm the strong legal and political position of the prince, reflecting both the tensions which occasionally arose between him and his barons, and the barons' cooperation with the princely court, for which we also have evidence from other sources. The *Assizes* deal extensively with matters of vassalage, fiefdoms, the military service they owed, and with the rights of lords over their peasants, but only marginally with non-feudal holdings, commercial cases and the drafting of wills. The extension of Achaian suzerainty over most islands of the Aegean in 1248 resulted in greater involvement by their Frankish lords, like the dukes of Athens and marquises of Bodonitsa, in the political, military and above all the feudal life of the principality. The collapse of the Latin empire in 1261 increased this involvement – which continued after 1278 under the bailiffs appointed by Charles I of Anjou and the princes ruling the principality directly – spreading Achaian feudal customs throughout the territories subject to the suzerainty of the Frankish princes.<sup>10</sup>

Representatives of Venice served as *baili* in the city of Negroponte (presently Chalkis) from 1211, dealing with judicial cases involving Venetians and their assets on the island. Their jurisdiction increasingly extended to feudal matters, drawing on Achaian custom. In 1262 the island's overlord, William II of Villehardouin, checked their interference in that field (see above, p. 767), and Venice refrained from exercising feudal jurisdiction in Euboea for the next half century or so; however, some Venetian lords in the Aegean continued to submit feudal cases to the Venetian *baili* in Negroponte. This jurisdiction stimulated Venice's interest in the use and preservation of Achaian feudal custom and induced her to sanction a Venetian version of the *Assizes* in 1452; this version acquired legal force throughout Venice's colonial empire, save in Crete. The reliance on Achaian custom contributed decisively to the piecemeal extension of Venetian lordship over Frankish Negroponte and some neighbouring islands, a process completed in 1390.<sup>11</sup> Venice also used other means gradually to undermine the authority of the lords of Euboea in the city of Negroponte.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Jacoby (1971), pp. 24–6, 29–174, 185–7.

<sup>11</sup> Jacoby (1971), pp. 188–202, 210–11, 237–9, 271–81, 295–300.

<sup>12</sup> Jacoby (2002).

As a result of Latin settlement, society in the Latin territories of *Romania*, other than those ruled by Venice, was divided into two distinct groups. While religious affiliation was not of major importance in daily life, it constituted a criterion of basic social stratification and individual identity. The Latins belonging to the Roman church enjoyed the superior status of freemen – *Francus* or Frank being synonymous with both Latin and freeman – while the local society remaining faithful to the Greek church was collectively debased.

Two factors drove this important change in local, formerly Byzantine society. Firstly, the conquering knights projected their own concept of a rigidly stratified society onto it, translating Byzantine social realities into legal terms. Secondly, since the abstract concept of statehood upheld in Byzantium was alien to them, all the prerogatives and functions of the imperial government, which had retained their public nature in the empire, were transferred into the hands of feudal lords. This again was in accordance with the legal system prevailing in western feudal society at that time. The overall privatisation and decentralisation of state authority in judicial and fiscal matters, the twin features of feudalisation in Latin *Romania* (except in Venetian-ruled territories) arrested social trends in Greek society and had a direct bearing on the status of its members.

Before 1204 the basic social and legal distinction within Byzantine society had been between free individuals and slaves. Social as well as economic differentiation among freemen was not expressed in legal terms, and they were all subject to the same imperial laws and courts. The Byzantine elite – the *archontes*, great landlords, high- and middle-ranking imperial officials and imperial dignitaries, mostly living in cities – thus lacked a legal definition. The Frankish knights, however, considered them members of a well-defined socio-legal class, similar to their own yet not equal. The knights' status was hereditary, subject to a legal system different from that governing the bulk of the indigenous population.

With the breakdown of Byzantine imperial government in the years just before and particularly those following the Latin conquest of Constantinople, the *archontes* in many areas of *Romania* assumed control over the local population. By and large, those who negotiated the submission of the cities and territories under their control were allowed to keep all or portions of their patrimonial estates and the dependent peasants living in them. In the duchy of Naxos the small number of Latin settlers prompted the conqueror, Marco I Sanudo, to adopt a conciliatory attitude toward the Greeks, integrating *archontes* among his feudatories. In Frankish Achaia the converging interests of the Frankish knightly class and the *archontes*, more numerous than elsewhere, led to the *archontes* and other Greeks being gradually absorbed into the ranks of the feudatories who owed simple homage, the lowest stratum in the Frankish feudal hierarchy. This

legal integration did not affect the status of Greek patrimonial estates, which remained hereditary and were governed by Byzantine law, as before the Latin conquest.

From the mid-thirteenth century, especially after the return of Byzantium to the Peloponnese in 1262, the Frankish leaders' concern to ensure the loyalty, cooperation and military service of the *archontes* led the Franks to grant them fiefdoms under feudal custom, thus furthering their social rise. They even dubbed some *archontes* to knighthood, a status that became hereditary. In most cases, however, this social process did not induce the Greeks to adopt the westerners' creed, nor did it make the Latin knights less reluctant to intermarry with them. The limits of the legal and social assimilation achieved by the *archontes* were also illustrated by the persistence of a cultural gap between the two groups. The *archontes*' social promotion enhanced their status within their own traditional community, yet deprived that community of an elite willing to oppose Latin rule.<sup>13</sup>

As noted above, the entire local population underwent a process of debasement as a result of the conquest. Except for the *archontes*, all Greeks sank into a state of dependency, since in principle they became *paroikoi* or dependent individuals, regardless of their personal status or place of residence before 1204. The *Assizes of Romania* distinguish between only two categories of Greeks, *archontes* and *paroikoi*, the latter also called *villani* by the Latins. In practice, however, the situation was more complex and a distinction apparently existed between local urban and rural populations. Political expediency accounts for Greek autonomy in Adrianople, held since 1206 by the Greek *archōn* Theodore Branas under Venetian lordship. And we may safely assume that the Greek court operating with Latin consent in Thessaloniki in 1213 upheld the rules of Byzantine law regarding the *paroikoi* and their assets, as distinct from those of non-dependent city-dwellers.<sup>14</sup>

However, continuity in the use of the Byzantine term *paroikos* conceals a major change in the legal status and social condition of the Greeks to whom it was applied. Under Byzantine rule, *paroikoi* were peasants considered legally free. As such they had access to imperial courts, although they were attached either to the imperial fisc, to an ecclesiastical institution or to an individual lord, and were subject to important personal restrictions. With the privatisation of governmental authority under Latin rule *paroikoi* were deemed legally unfree, like dependent serfs or villeins in the west; they were therefore members of a legal class from which they could escape only by a formal act of emancipation. The presumption of dependence was so strong that free status had to be duly proven by Greeks who enjoyed it, preferably

<sup>13</sup> Jacoby (1973), pp. 889–903; Jacoby (1989a), pp. 180–5, 197–200; Jacoby (1989b), pp. 2–8. The leaders of Slav groups, included among the *archontes* before 1204, benefited from the same social ascent.

<sup>14</sup> Jacoby (1993), pp. 151, 157; Wolff (1969), p. 211.



with the help of documents, if doubts arose. The subjection of the *paroikos* or villein to his lord was far more rigorous than it had been in the Byzantine period. He was considered a mere chattel and tied to the estate of his lord, who wielded almost unlimited authority over him, except for criminal justice which was reserved for competent courts. The legal capacity of the *paroikoi* in their handling of landed property and goods was also far more restricted than in the Byzantine period. Cases of manumission appear to have been rare. Paradoxically, in the absence of Byzantine imperial authority this whole process also adversely affected those dependent peasants who were subject to *archontes* and Greek ecclesiastical institutions. Even lower down the social scale than villeins were the slaves, whose numbers grew as a result of the frequent warfare and piracy in *Romania*. Many slaves were exported to the west or to Muslim countries. In the portion of the Latin empire under its direct rule, Venice adopted the principles and policies of the Frankish knights vis-à-vis the social stratification of Greek society and the privatisation of taxation owed by the peasantry, while maintaining state control over the property and rights it granted out. Moreover, Venice strictly upheld the public nature of Byzantine judicial and fiscal authority as exclusive state prerogatives.<sup>15</sup>

#### LATIN SETTLEMENT IN ROMANIA: ECONOMIC GROWTH

The Latin conquest and the subsequent redistribution of property in the Latins' favour did not alter the nature of *Romania's* economy. Land remained the main source of income, wealth and taxation, the agrarian infrastructure of the countryside was hardly affected, and the basic pattern of agricultural exploitation persisted. This continuity, furthered by the inclusion of Greek officials in the Latins' administration, is illustrated by the survival of Byzantine administrative, fiscal and legal institutions and practices, by the structure of the large estates of Frankish Achaia – documented by fourteenth-century surveys – and by various agricultural contracts. The Latin conquest, however, put an end to the dominance of the Byzantine *archontes* in the financing of economic activities and definitively abolished the Byzantine state's restrictive control over particular branches of manufacture and trade.

Central and western Greece and the Aegean islands, which stayed under Frankish rule longer than the territories recovered by Byzantium in the thirteenth century, saw ever stronger economic interaction between the rural sector, the cities and long-distance maritime trade. The free flow of cash between these sectors of the economy was furthered by various factors: the temporary or permanent presence of Latins, mainly in coastal cities,

<sup>15</sup> Jacoby (1989a), pp. 185–9, 207–16; Jacoby (1989b), pp. 16–18, 20–23; Jacoby (1993), pp. 169–81.

whose population grew; the supply of goods and services to merchants and ships in transit; the expanding western demand for agricultural and industrial commodities; and, finally, the infusion of liquid capital from the west. This last process was promoted from the 1270s at the latest by the activity of mercantile and banking companies from Siena (the Piccolomini and Tolomei), and these were later joined by some from Florence (the Cerchi, Bardi and Peruzzi). The range of their large-scale business stretched from the Latin east to the fairs of Champagne and to England. In Latin Greece, Clarence constituted their main credit centre, but they also operated in Corinth, Thebes and the city of Negroponte.

The Italian merchants and bankers introduced new forms of profit-sharing ventures, credit, business and estate management, as well as ways of marketing, and invested capital in the exploitation of rural land and in manufacturing. Thus in Thebes, Genoese merchants acted as entrepreneurs, financing the production of silk textiles from before 1240. We may safely assume that Venetian merchants acted in a similar capacity, both in Thebes and elsewhere. On the whole, the presence and activity of Italian bankers, merchants and administrators from the second half of the thirteenth century stimulated a growth in agricultural, pastoral and industrial productivity, output and profit, and boosted the economy of the former western provinces of Byzantium occupied by the Latins. Manufacturing, however, took a different course. To be sure, the silk textiles of Thebes and other centres of Latin *Romania* were still shipped to the west in the second half of the thirteenth century. Yet the expanding and diversified manufacture of prized silks in Italy, several of whose types were of Byzantine origin, and the improvements in the quality of glass vessels produced in Venice, partly intended for export to *Romania*, eventually stifled these same industries in western and central Greece and the Aegean islands. These regions increasingly supplied industrial raw materials to the west, while absorbing an ever larger volume of western finished products.

An important aspect of the economic evolution of western and central Greece and the Aegean islands after 1204 was the partial reorientation towards the west of long-distance exports, which had been largely geared towards Constantinople before the Fourth Crusade. The Greek inhabitants of these regions continued to participate in short-range and regional trade and in transportation, by land and by sea, as well as in seasonal fairs. Yet the Latins' overall share in these activities grew at their expense, and from the 1270s the Greeks appear to have relied increasingly on Latin shipping, even in the Aegean. The seaborne commerce of western and central Greece was increasingly subordinated to the requirements, routes and seasonal rhythm of long-distance maritime trade, dominated by Venetian merchants and carriers who took advantage of Venice's naval and diplomatic protection and the infrastructure which its colonies and commercial outposts in the

eastern Mediterranean offered. This led to the growing integration of these territories into a triangular trade pattern linking *Romania* with Italy and the Levant. The vigour of the pirates and corsairs preying along the main sea lanes of this network in the second half of the thirteenth century illustrates the overall growth of maritime trade in the eastern Mediterranean in that period.<sup>16</sup>

The economy of Latin Constantinople deserves special attention. It contracted after the Latin conquest of 1204 for want of massive local consumption or investment in high-grade manufacture, but revived shortly afterwards. Its operation became overwhelmingly based on commercial exchanges and the transit and transshipment of goods, functions already performed before the Fourth Crusade. Constantinople's economy was boosted by Venice's treaties with the Seljuq sultans of Rum, the emperors of Nicaea, and various other powers in the eastern Mediterranean along the sea route linking the City to Egypt. The strong position of Venice in Constantinople ensured its merchants – whether itinerant or settled – a dominant share in the City's trade; Pisan, Anconitan, Amalfitan and Provençal merchants also participated in this trade, as did the Genoese from 1232 onwards.

One of the most important economic effects of the Latin conquest of Constantinople was to open up the Black Sea to unrestricted western commerce. At first, however, the Latins appear to have relied upon local traders who had traditionally supplied Constantinople, mainly with wheat, salt, fish, hides and furs. The Latin merchants and carriers gradually extended their ventures in the Black Sea. Yet only after the Mongols consolidated their rule north of the Black Sea from around 1240 did the Latins markedly increase the geographical, commercial and financial range of their operations beyond the coast and penetrate deep inland. Some of them settled in Sougdaia on the southern shore of the Crimea, making it a base for penetration inland to Kiev and beyond, as well as for the export of slaves from Mongol territory to the Mediterranean. Significantly, the Venetians Niccolò and Matteo Polo – father and uncle respectively of the famous Marco – passed through Constantinople and Sougdaia in 1260 before undertaking their journey into inner Asia. Latin Constantinople thus served as an important transit station with a pivotal role in the integration of the Black Sea and Mediterranean trade systems. A sound knowledge and much experience of economic resources, markets and trade routes in the Black Sea and its hinterland were accumulated during the Latin period. They paved the way for the swift and substantial expansion of Genoese and Venetian

<sup>16</sup> Jacoby (1997a); Jacoby (2001a). On silk: Jacoby (1994a), pp. 44–8, 51–4; Jacoby (2000b). On piracy and corsairs: Ahrweiler (1966), pp. 322–3, 369–370, 377–8, 381; Geanakoplos (1959), pp. 152–3, 210–15, 302–4, 328, 336–7, 362; Morgan (1976); Balard (1978), I, pp. 39–40.

trade and shipping in that region in the decade following the Byzantine reconquest of Constantinople in 1261.<sup>17</sup>

#### ‘GREEK MATTERS’

We have already noted the limited rapprochement between Frankish and Greek social elites. The pursuit of manufacture, trade and shipping by both Latins and Greeks, sometimes jointly, prompted a degree of economic cooperation and social intercourse between them on a daily, practical level in urban centres. These contacts did not, however, affect the deep-seated attitude of the bulk of the Greek population of Latin *Romania* toward the Latins, largely shaped by religious affiliation and ecclesiastical developments. Few Greeks joined the Roman church in the thirteenth century, most remaining within their own religious community. The Latin conquerors of Constantinople first humiliated the Greeks by desecrating their sanctuaries and seizing their relics, many of which were transferred to the west.

The Greek church of Latin *Romania* was soon subjected to papal authority, and its structure was reorganised on the lines of the settlement in southern Italy and Sicily; this provided for the maintenance of the Greek church wherever Greeks constituted the majority of the population. In fact, however, this church gradually lost its bishops and many of its monastic institutions to the advantage of the Latin church. In addition, the conquerors confiscated large portions of its extensive landed property. The growing activity of the Franciscans and the Dominicans from the 1220s put further pressure on the Greek church of Latin *Romania*. Nevertheless, this church displayed considerable vitality, illustrated by its continuous presence and activity among the Greeks, especially in rural areas where the Latin church remained largely absent.

Already in the first years after the conquest the Greek clergy turned to the patriarchal see of Nicaea and the clergy of Epiros for support and inspiration. To the Greeks of Latin *Romania* the clergy conveyed at popular level the staunch theological opposition of the Byzantine church to the papacy, fuelling their opposition to Latin lay rule and Roman ecclesiastical supremacy. As a result, it became the focus and promoter of Greek ethnic awareness and collective identity. Its role in this respect was particularly important in areas such as the principality of Achaia, where the *archontes* refused to oppose the Franks. As noted above, Greek animosity toward the conquerors and their successors contributed to the collapse of the Latin

<sup>17</sup> Heyd (1885–6), I, pp. 294–310, II, p. 94; Borsari (1955), pp. 477–88; Balard (1978), I, pp. 38–45, 116; Jacoby (1998); Jacoby (2001b); Jacoby (2005a). Treaties in TT, II, pp. 205–7, 221–5; *Deliberazioni*, ed. Cessi, I, no. 140, pp. 209–10.

empire, yet elsewhere it had limited practical effect.<sup>18</sup> The abiding sense of alienation felt by the Greeks and their affinity for Byzantium were described by the Venetian Marino Sanudo about 1330, more than a century after the Latin conquest:

‘Although these places are subjected to the rule of the Franks and obedient to the Roman church, nevertheless almost all the population is Greek and is inclined toward this sect [i.e. the eastern orthodox church], and their hearts are turned toward Greek matters, and when they can show this freely, they do so’.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Wolff (1948); Wolff (1954); Setton (1976–84), I, pp. 1–153, 405–40; Richard (1989); Angold (1989); Angold (2003a), pp. 163–203, 227–47; Jacoby (1989a), pp. 218, 220; Lock (1995), pp. 193–239, 266–310.

<sup>19</sup> *Chroniques*, ed. Hopf, p. 143.

## CHAPTER 21

# BALKAN POWERS: ALBANIA, SERBIA AND BULGARIA (1200–1300)

ALAIN DUCELLIER

### INTRODUCTION

It is widely accepted that the fall of Constantinople in 1204 brought to its knees an empire already on the point of collapse, notably on its Balkan fringes, where three peoples showed new vigour: the Bulgarians, the Serbs and the Albanians. The boundaries between their lands were still very fluid, especially those between Bulgaria and Serbia, and each was at a different stage of evolution towards political and cultural autonomy. Bulgaria under the Asen dynasty, which broke with the Byzantines in 1185–7 and which in 1202 gained Byzantine recognition of its mastery over the lands from Belgrade to Sofia, represented the resurgence of an older state, though with rather different territorial boundaries. Even after two centuries of Byzantine dominance, Bulgaria retained distinctive political and cultural traditions which sustained its self-image as the major power in the Balkans, and, in consequence, implied Bulgarian rights over Constantinople itself.<sup>1</sup>

In Serbia, Stefan Nemanja (c. 1165/8–96) had recently brought together the two old power centres of Raška and Duklja (the latter roughly corresponding to modern Montenegro). Duklja, it is true, retained strong particularist tendencies, and internecine strife within the family of the Nemanjids only made this worse.<sup>2</sup> On the Dalmatian coast, Italian influences spawned short-lived communes, which barely managed to withstand the Serb princes' attempts to absorb them into their realms; the best example is that of Kotor.<sup>3</sup> In any event, Nemanja directed a push southwards from 1183, which enabled him to put pressure on Macedonia beyond Niš. He exerted influence on the Dalmatian coastal region north of Dubrovnik (Ragusa), which oscillated between Byzantine and Norman Sicilian overlordship. Nemanja also drove southwards down the coast as far as the Mati estuary in northern Albania, thus cutting off Duklja from the sea. At the same time the church of Rome attempted to extend its influence

<sup>1</sup> Zlatarsky (1970–2), II, pp. 410–11; Dujčev (1956), pp. 327–8. On the impact of the Third and Fourth Crusades on Bulgaria, see Primov (1975a); Asdracha (1976), p. 235. See also above, pp. 688–9, 690.

<sup>2</sup> For syntheses, see Djurović *et al.* (1970), pp. 5–14, 46–61; above, pp. 683, 686.

<sup>3</sup> Djurović *et al.* (1970), pp. 83–4.



Map 38 Albania

into the region of Albania, spreading outwards from the archiepiscopal seat at Antivari.<sup>4</sup> Although it seems that Serbia had already gained some self-awareness as an ethnic identity, it would be premature to see it as amounting to a properly constituted 'state'. Remaining within the Byzantine orbit,

<sup>4</sup> Djurović *et al.* (1970), pp. 15–27 and map, p. 16.

Serbia was quite capable of keeping its distance from Constantinople, and at the same time refraining from the Latin church's temptations: in 1200 the young *veliki župan* Stefan (1196–1227) repudiated his wife, Eudocia, daughter of Emperor Alexios III (1195–1203), and she withdrew near-naked to Dyrrachium (Durrës).<sup>5</sup>

As for Albania, its separate identity was real enough, even though it had not made a clean break with Constantinople. The rulers of the region of Arbanon around 1190, Progon and his sons Dhimitër and Gjini, had their base at Kruja. They were virtually self-governing, even though Progon merely had the status of *archōn*; in fact the title of *panhypersebastos*, borne by Dhimitër at the start of the thirteenth century, can only be seen as a sign of his dependence on the Byzantines.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, the earliest inscription to mention Progon and Dhimitër, from Gëziq, in the hinterland of Alessio, is written in Latin and calls them *judices*, while noting their dependence on Vladin and George, princes of Duklja. This gives us a snapshot of the political and cultural convergences underway in Arbanon.<sup>7</sup> This Arbanon, the 'Raban' of the *Life of Stefan Nemanja*, had no direct access to the sea, even though the coasts of Epiros were still inhabited mainly by Albanians, for all the Serbs' and Greeks' overlordship. Albanians were also the principal inhabitants of the mountain areas rising above the eastern shore of Lake Shkodër.<sup>8</sup> These lands came under the Roman church during the twelfth century, but the lower reaches were increasingly populated by Albanians. So was the ancient Dardania (modern Kosovo), which lay open to the Albanians via the river system of the Drin, some distance from the Serb power centres of Raška and Duklja. It is hard to see how the Albanians could have spread down from the mountains towards the shores of Lake Shkodër if one does not accept their earlier expansion down from the other side of the mountains, towards Gjakova and Prizren.<sup>9</sup>

There was certainly a religious divide in the region, but it would be wrong to exaggerate its impermeability, particularly as both the Bulgarian and Serbian rulers showed their willingness to be crowned by the pope.<sup>10</sup> It

<sup>5</sup> On the religious aspects of Serbian unification, see Kalić (1979); on the Serbian threat and the breach of 1200, see NC, ed. van Dieten, I, pp. 531–2; tr. Magoulas, p. 292; Ostrogorsky (1968), pp. 409–10; Ducellier (1981b), pp. 123 and n. 17, 152. See also above, p. 690.

<sup>6</sup> Soloviev (1934), p. 304; Ducellier (1981b), p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> Shuteriqi (1967), pp. 133–42; Ducellier (1979), p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> *Life of Stefan Nemanja*, ed. Ćorović; tr. Kantor; Ćirković (1988), a notably courageous work.

<sup>9</sup> The question of Illyrian continuity is addressed by Jireček (1916a), pp. 69–70; von Thallóczy and Jireček (1916), pp. 127–8. Drawing heavily on the correspondence of Demetrios Chomatenos, Jireček accepts that, before the Slavs' expansion, the territory occupied by Albanians extended from Scutari (Shkodër) to Avlona and from Prizren to Ohrid. See also Ćirković (1988), p. 347; Mirdita (1981).

<sup>10</sup> See Ćirković (1988), pp. 346–9, who draws a religious borderline along the heights of Dukagjin, and accepts the Albanians' descent towards the lower ground around Lake Shkodër. However, he does not take into account their expansion on the eastern side of the mountain range nor – more surprisingly – the obvious use by them of the Drin valley, which leads straight to Prizren.



was in recognition of continued population growth, rather than by way of punishment, that in 1348 Stefan Dušan (1331–55) required Latin priests from Shkodër to pay their taxes to the orthodox bishop of Prizren, a suffragan of Ohrid.<sup>11</sup> And it is apparent from a charter granted to Dubrovnik by Ivan II Asen (1218–41) in 1230 that the Albanians dominated the central regions of what is now the Albanian republic, in the areas drained by the Devolli river.<sup>12</sup> One is not dealing with Albania in the sense of a tight-knit political or territorial entity; on the other hand the imperial government took account of the ethnic character of the region when the former theme of Dyrrachion became known as *provincia Dirrachii et Arbani*. This was its name, if the *partitio Romaniae* is to be believed (and it probably does reflect pre-1204 realities). Such a name would register the existence of two main centres of Albanian settlement, Arbanon-Raban and Devol.<sup>13</sup>

#### THE BULGARIAN EMPIRE REVIVED

Each of these three very different entities reacted to the events of 1204 in different ways. For Bulgaria, the *partitio Romaniae* was a direct challenge, since the frontier regions around Philippopolis and Adrianople were doled out to Latins, despite the long-standing Bulgarian claims to them that are enshrined in the treaty of 1202. Renier de Trit held Philippopolis from autumn 1204 to June 1205, when Kalojan retook the town, on his way back from an expedition against Thessaloniki;<sup>14</sup> and in 1206 Venice granted out Adrianople to the ‘collaborationist’ *archōn* Theodore Branas.<sup>15</sup> This blocked Bulgarian aspirations to dominate the Maritsa valley and gain direct access to the Aegean at last.<sup>16</sup> The Bulgarians were bound to be further disquieted by the fact that the *partitio* of 1204 granted Venice, in addition to the Albanian coastline, the province of Koloneia, between Kastoria and Korça: expansion towards the Adriatic was another long-standing Bulgarian goal.<sup>17</sup>

Tsar Kalojan (1197–1207) managed to contain various separatist tendencies within Bulgaria, and he was able to draw on considerable military resources, especially among the peasantry of the Danube valley. Fully aware of what was happening on the international scene, he hoped to take

<sup>11</sup> *Zakonski spomenici*, ed. Novaković, pp. 691–2; Maksimović (1981a), pp. 175–9; Ćirković (1988), p. 348.

<sup>12</sup> *Stare srpske*, ed. Stojanović, II, p. 205; Ćirković (1988), p. 349.

<sup>13</sup> Ducellier (1981b), pp. 97–8. On the *partitio Romaniae*, see above, p. 759.

<sup>14</sup> Asdracha (1976), pp. 236–7; Vlachos (1970), pp. 277–8, with further references.

<sup>15</sup> TT, II, pp. 17–19; Villehard., ch. 423, ed. and French tr. Faral, II, p. 236; tr. Shaw, p. 138; Thiriet (1975), p. 80; Asdracha (1976), p. 239.

<sup>16</sup> Asdracha (1982).

<sup>17</sup> See Andrea Dandolo’s ‘Liber albus’, Archivio di Stato, Venice, fol. 34; Carile (ed.), ‘Partitio terrarum’, p. 220; Ducellier (1981b), p. 98 and n. 53.

advantage of Byzantium's unexpected collapse and rejected the terms of the *partitio*.<sup>18</sup> His preliminary contacts with the crusaders, which appear to predate the fall of Constantinople, came to nothing. Kalojan saw in Innocent III (1198–1216) – himself unenthusiastic about the course the Fourth Crusade was taking – a guarantor against the crusaders' aggressive ambitions.<sup>19</sup> For the papacy this was an un hoped-for opportunity, a chance to bring Bulgaria within the Roman confession. Neither the Bulgarians nor the inhabitants of Serbia and Bosnia had raised a finger to help Zara, whose enforced submission to Hungary during the crusade ensured that it would remain a catholic city. Indeed, the Bosnians, who were allied with the Hungarians, even took the opportunity to reconcile themselves with Rome in 1203, pledging to deal with Bogomilism.<sup>20</sup> Bosnia was regarded as a main bastion of this dualist heresy.<sup>21</sup> Kalojan obtained recognition of his claim to the imperial title of tsar, and asked Innocent III to nominate a patriarch to head the Bulgarian church. Such demands led negotiations to drag on, and in the end Kalojan had to settle for the relatively modest titles of king for himself and primate for his senior bishop. But the result was that at T'rnovo on 7 November 1204 he received from a cardinal a royal crown, and thus in principle at least came under the pope's wing.<sup>22</sup> In reality, of course, this was a tactical move and Kalojan never gave up his orthodox faith or his imperial ambitions.<sup>23</sup> Up to the end of the second Bulgarian empire, the titles tsar and patriarch remained in use. Thus, for example, at T'rnovo in 1211 the usurper Boril (1207–18) adopted a *synodikon* which, without renouncing Rome, reaffirmed Bulgarian orthodoxy as well as reasserting the traditional struggle of the Bulgarian tsars against Bogomilism.<sup>24</sup> This heresy had never been eradicated from the Bulgarian lands, as events at Philippopolis in 1205 make clear: Villehardouin describes the quarter of the city inhabited by the heretics, which the paltry army of Renier de Trit burnt down.<sup>25</sup>

Kalojan also benefited from offers of service coming from the Greek-speaking *archontes* of Thrace, who were reacting against the intransigence of

<sup>18</sup> It is unfortunately impossible to date Kalojan's embassy to the crusaders precisely: *Gesta Innocentii III papae*, ch. 108, p. cxlvii. But both Robert de Clari and Geoffrey of Villehardouin place it after the first fall of Constantinople on 18 July 1203, and it evidently preceded the Bulgarian–Latin rupture of August 1204: Hendrickx, 'Recherches sur les documents diplomatiques', pp. 135–6; also Wolff (1952).

<sup>19</sup> Innocent III, *Correspondence with the Bulgarians*, ed. Dujčev, pp. 22–3, 30–1, 43–4, 47–8; Italian tr. Dall'Aglio, pp. 52–5, 74–7, 80–5; Asdracha (1976), p. 237.

<sup>20</sup> Ćirković (1964), pp. 48–9. <sup>21</sup> Dusa (1991), p. 51.

<sup>22</sup> Obolensky (1971), pp. 239–41; Primov (1966), pp. 36–8. See above, p. 690.

<sup>23</sup> Dujčev (1960), p. 43.

<sup>24</sup> Boril, *Synodikon*; Angelov, D. (1961), pp. 253–4. On the orthodox yet 'Roman' character of the T'rnovo council, see Shivarov (1987).

<sup>25</sup> Villehard., ch. 400, ed. and French tr. Faral, II, p. 210; tr. Shaw, p. 132; Asdracha (1976), pp. 60–2 (rich in further references), 237; Primov (1948–9), pp. 145–58; Vlachos (1970), pp. 277–8. The Latins' control of the major Bogomil centres in Macedonia and Thrace may have furthered the spread of their beliefs to the west: Primov (1960), p. 86, preferable to Primov (1975b). See also above, p. 617; Hamilton, B. (2005).

the Latin emperor of Constantinople, Baldwin I (1204–5). These *archontes*, despairing of reaching a *modus vivendi* with the Latins, were even prepared to offer the imperial crown to the Bulgarian tsar at the beginning of 1205. The intrigues of a Bulgaro-Vlach, Šišman, caused uproar in Thessaloniki in May and June, and Boniface of Montferrat, its lord, had to lift his siege of Nauplion in a bid to rescue his wife Maria of Hungary from imprisonment in the acropolis of Thessaloniki.<sup>26</sup>

In the short term at least, Bulgarian policy produced results. On 14 April 1205 the Graeco-Bulgarian coalition, backed up by a formidable squadron of Cuman horsemen,<sup>27</sup> wiped out the Latin army at Adrianople, capturing the Latin emperor himself.<sup>28</sup> This disaster posed such a threat to Constantinople that Theodore I Laskaris (1205–21) was left with a free hand to build up his own power base in Asia Minor, the rump state of Nicaea (see above, pp. 734–5, 737). All too quickly, Kalojan revealed his real ambitions in Thrace; from 1205 to 1207 his armies lived off the land, while local manpower and livestock were carried off to the Danube regions where men and animals were in short supply.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, he was already known as ‘killer of Romans’ (i.e. of Greeks: *Rōmaioktonos*) because of his earlier treatment of the Greeks, for whom he would always be ‘John the Dog’ (*Kynoioḗannēs*).<sup>30</sup> It is no surprise that the Greeks hated the Bulgarians, all the more so once the new Latin emperor Henry of Hainault (1206–16) abandoned his brother’s brutal policy towards the Greek aristocracy. The provincial *archontes* readily came to terms with the Latins, with whom some had already contracted marriage alliances. A case in point is Theodore Branas, whose wife Agnes was the sister of King Philip Augustus of France.

It is a moot point where Kalojan would have gone next if he had not been killed suddenly in October 1207, under the walls of Thessaloniki.<sup>31</sup> In any event, his death brought a reprieve to the Latin empire which, under Henry, managed to hold onto the extreme north-west of Asia Minor. Bulgaria was plunged into turmoil after Boril seized the throne from Kalojan’s son, Ivan

<sup>26</sup> One should use Krantonelle (1964) with care. See also NC, ed. van Dieten, I, pp. 619–20; tr. Magoulias, pp. 338–40; Villehard., ch. 389, ed. and French tr. Faral, II, p. 198; tr. Shaw, p. 129; Apostolides (1929), p. 336; Hendrickx, ‘Recherches sur les documents diplomatiques’, pp. 139–40.

<sup>27</sup> Villehardouin speaks only of 14,000 ‘Turks’, but a report on the battle sent to Innocent III has Kalojan attacking the Latins ‘cum Turcis et ceteris Crucis Christi inimicis’: Theiner (ed.), *Vetera monumenta slavorum meridionalium*, I, p. 41. This has given rise to the notion that the tsar allied with the Bogomils; see for example Derzhavin (1945–8), II, p. 130. Angelov, D. (1961), pp. 251–2 shows that this was an attempt to discredit Kalojan in the pope’s eyes; Hansen-Löve (1971).

<sup>28</sup> Gerland (1905), pp. 46–7; Longnon (1949), pp. 77–8. <sup>29</sup> Asdracha (1976), pp. 190–2.

<sup>30</sup> GA, chs. 13–14, rev. edn. Wirth, I, pp. 23–5; tr. Macrides, pp. 139–41, 144–5; Theodore Skoutariotes, *Synopsis chronike*, p. 459; Vlachos (1970), pp. 276, 279–80; Nicol (1957), p. 20; Asdracha (1976), pp. 237–8.

<sup>31</sup> Zlatarsky (1970–2), III, pp. 254–5. Thessaloniki was of particular importance to the Slavs owing to their devotion to St Demetrios, and Kalojan’s death was attributed to the saint’s intervention: Obolensky (1974), esp. p. 19.

(later Ivan II Asen). Its neighbours fomented this: between the Vardar and Strymon rivers to the west, Alexios Slavos, governor of Melnik, submitted to the Latins, while the Serbian *veliki župan* Stefan recognised Boril's brother, Strez, as lord of the region around Prosek and Strumica.<sup>32</sup>

#### THE RISE OF THE NEMANJIDS OF SERBIA

With the collapse of the Byzantine empire Serbia's hour had come, although western interference in Dalmatia tended to drive the Serbian empire's centre of gravity further inland. A prime example of this interference was the Venetians' assertion of at least nominal lordship over Dubrovnik in 1205. Under pressure from an aggressive Hungary, and aware of the papacy's aspirations under Honorius III (1216–27), *veliki župan* Stefan revived Kalojan's policies of fifteen years earlier, receiving a royal crown from the papal legate in 1217. Henceforth he would bear the sobriquet *prvovenčani*, 'the first-crowned'. But the Serbs' ambivalent outlook is clear from the fact that in 1219 the king's brother Sava, an Athonite monk, approached the autocephalous archbishop of Nicaea, seeking consecration as autocephalous archbishop of Serbia. This was not simply a question of remaining staunchly orthodox, but of seeing in Nicaea the only authentic remnant of the old empire. Sava and Stefan 'the first-crowned' would have been well aware that normal practice would have been for them to respect the archbishop of Ohrid's authority over Serbia. This would have brought them within the sphere of the despots of Epiros, over-mighty neighbours with an apparently unstoppable programme of expansion. As it was, Stefan had had to provide guarantees to the Epirots, betrothing his son and heir Stefan Radoslav (1227–33) to the daughter of the Epirot ruler Theodore Angelos (1215–30),<sup>33</sup> who himself took control of Thessaloniki in 1224.<sup>34</sup> The Bulgarians for their part were not to forget this alliance with their own worst enemy.

Upon the succession of Stefan Radoslav, the alliance between Serbia and Epiros appeared to be sealed; the Serbian church accepted that it was subordinate to the powerful archbishop of Ohrid, Demetrios Chomatenos, thus abandoning Sava's act of defiance of 1219 (see above, p. 742). However, the Epirot despots' expansionism could only irritate the Serbs, who, like the Bulgarians, were bewitched by dreams of eventually establishing themselves on the shores of the Aegean and the Adriatic. Around the time of his coronation Stefan 'the first-crowned' annexed the area of Peć, even though the Serbs had yet to establish their rule throughout what is now

<sup>32</sup> Asdracha (1976), pp. 240–1.

<sup>33</sup> Theodore Angelos styled himself Komnenos Doukas. Nicol (1957), p. 60, and nn. 34–5 on p. 73 distorts matters by talking of 'friendship' between Epiros and Serbia.

<sup>34</sup> Nicol (1957), pp. 62–3, with further references; Longnon (1950), pp. 141–2; Sinogowitz (1952).



Map 39 Theodore Angelos' seizure of Thrace 1225

Kosovo.<sup>35</sup> In 1225 Theodore Angelos managed to expel the Latins from eastern Macedonia, while respecting the small Bulgarian principality of Melnik. He swept from victory to victory along the coast of Thrace, gaining control of Kavalla, Xanthi, Gratianopolis, Mosynopolis and Didymoteichon; he even reached Adrianople, where he drove out the newly installed Nicaeans.<sup>36</sup> Now that he was a neighbour of the Bulgarian kingdom, Theodore realised that the Bulgarian threat to his rear could jeopardise his grand plan, which was for the capture of Constantinople itself. So he devised a tactical alliance with Ivan II Asen of Bulgaria who had regained power in 1218 and who now consented to the marriage of his illegitimate daughter, Maria Beloslava, with Theodore's brother Manuel. This meant that Epiros and Bulgaria were forging an axis in opposition to Nicaea, but also, indirectly, against Serbia.

#### THE ALBANIAN HORNETS' NEST

The situation of Albania after the *partitio Romaniae* was quite different. Venice was assigned, in addition to Dyrrachium and its dependencies, the *chartolarates* of Glavinitsa and Vagenetia, regions which the Venetians made no real effort to hold, and which by 1205 had passed into the hands of the first of the rulers of Epiros, Michael I Angelos Doukas (1205–15). The rise of Epiros and the emergence of the new Slav powers of Bulgaria and Serbia had serious repercussions for Albania. The great trans-Balkan routes across Albania to the west, the Egnatian Way and the Via de Zenta (which ran inland from the coast near Lake Shkodër towards Prizren and Priština), were seriously disrupted by the incessant strife in the area. These routes

<sup>35</sup> On the Illyrian-Albanian population there, see Ducellier (1981c); Garašanin (1988b); Pulaha *et al.* (eds.) (1982), esp. Gashi (1982). See also Prifti *et al.* (eds.) (1990).

<sup>36</sup> Nicol (1957), pp. 104–5; Asdracha (1976), p. 241.

lost their classic role as outlets for eastern goods, starting the irreversible decline of the Epirot and Albanian ports, notably Dyrrachium.<sup>37</sup> In July to August 1205 the Venetian expedition on its way to Constantinople to instal Doge Tommaso Morosini as patriarch seized the opportunity to take over Dyrrachium. A petty duchy was set up there, and Venice sought to draw some economic benefit from it, though this proved small compensation for the resultant tensions with Epiros and Serbia.<sup>38</sup>

Albania thus came under pressure from several sides, not least the Latin archbishopric of Antivari's attempts at catholicising the region.<sup>39</sup> However, given the proximity of an expansionist Serbia and the Epirot principality, little land-locked Arbanon, with its main political centre at Kruja, opted for an orthodox affiliation and subjugation to Epiros, as well as alliance with Serbia.<sup>40</sup> The *archōn* of Arbanon, Progon, had died in 1208, and the attitude of his son, Gjin, is difficult to determine; however, his successor, Dhimitër, clearly saw Venice as the main enemy. This was aggravated by Venice's alliance of 3 July 1208 with George, prince of Duklja and nephew of the Serbian ruler Stefan 'the first-crowned'. A clause in the 1208 treaty even stipulated that Duklja would support Venice if ever the Albanian prince rebelled against the republic.<sup>41</sup> Dhimitër's diplomatic skills are shown in the alliances he struck to counterbalance the effects of this treaty: Dhimitër married Kominia, the daughter of Stefan 'the first-crowned' by his first wife, Eudocia, and he also forged excellent ties with Epiros.<sup>42</sup> Venice, too, was obliged to make an agreement with the Epirots in 1210. This involved Michael Angelos' nominal acceptance that he was a vassal of the republic; in return, Venice recognised his control from the Shkumbi valley as far as Naupaktos.<sup>43</sup>

By 1212 Venice had resolved to give up the Albanian hornets' nest, abandoning its useless and awkwardly situated duchy of Durazzo (Dyrrachium) to Michael Angelos, in circumstances which remain obscure.<sup>44</sup> Even so, Arbanon retained its traditional ties: with Byzantium, Serbia and orthodoxy. When Dhimitër died, probably in 1215, his successor, the Graeco-Albanian

<sup>37</sup> Ducellier (1981b), pp. 75–84, 151.

<sup>38</sup> Ducellier (1981b), pp. 126–7; especially important is the still unedited text known as the 'Chronicle of Daniele Barbaro', Cod. Marc. Ital. classe VII, 126=7442, fol. 128, Venice; see also *DBI*, VI, pp. 94–5 (G. Alberigo); Ducellier (1992).

<sup>39</sup> This was despite the fact that traditional orthodoxy was not deemed incompatible with catholicism. After 1187, the bishopric of Kruja seems to have passed into catholic hands: Ducellier (1983), pp. 3–4; Ćirković (1988), pp. 348–9.

<sup>40</sup> Ducellier (1981b), p. 136.

<sup>41</sup> Ducellier (1981b), pp. 138–9; *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae*, ed. von Thallóczy *et al.*, I, no. 134, pp. 42–3.

<sup>42</sup> Kominia was thus a granddaughter of Emperor Alexios III Angelos: Nicol (1957), p. 26; Ducellier (1981b), p. 138.

<sup>43</sup> Nicol (1957), pp. 30–1; Ducellier (1981b), pp. 141–5.

<sup>44</sup> Ducellier (1981b), pp. 149–51.

lord Gregory Kamonas took Kominia as his second wife. He was already married to Gjin's daughter, and now requested canonical dispensation to dissolve his first marriage from Demetrios Chomatenos, the *chartophylax* of Ohrid and already a major figure in Epiros.<sup>45</sup> Relations with Serbia had been damaged by a Slav attack on Shkodër after the collapse of the Venetian duchy of Durazzo and these were now repaired.<sup>46</sup> It was against this 'orthodox bloc' that the new Latin emperor of Constantinople, Peter of Courtenay, launched forth in 1217. He took Dyrrachium by stealth on his way to Constantinople, only to vanish in the Albanian mountain passes,<sup>47</sup> where Theodore Angelos was waiting for him.<sup>48</sup>

#### IVAN II ASEN OF BULGARIA

This complex network of ties between Greek- and Slavonic-speaking orthodox potentates presupposed an effective Latin threat, and had as its axis the agreement between Epiros and the Bulgarians; however, this alliance could never be more than opportunistic. Bulgaria recovered its strength under Ivan II Asen (1218–41), and Ivan made no secret of his ambition to take Constantinople, which was also the target of the Epirot ruler in his struggle against his Nicaean rival. The Bulgarians also had their eye on the Adriatic, and could not forget that their ambassadors to the pope had been unable to proceed further than Dyrrachium.<sup>49</sup> The death of the Latin emperor Henry in 1216, and the defeat of Peter of Courtenay the following year, revitalised the three powers aiming for Constantinople: Nicaea, Epiros and Bulgaria. The latter realm under Ivan Asen enjoyed its last spell of greatness in the middle ages; from then on, its rulers were primarily concerned with undermining the Greek contenders for the throne in Constantinople, playing off the various factions. The City itself was almost within their sights by 1225, and the Latins were prompted to seek a Bulgarian alliance three years later upon the death of Emperor Robert of Courtenay (1218–28) and with the prospect of a minor, his brother Baldwin, mounting the throne. A marriage was planned between Baldwin II (1237–61) and Ivan's daughter Helena. Ivan was attracted by the prospect of gaining the regency of the Latin empire and in April 1229 he disregarded promises made earlier to

<sup>45</sup> Ducellier (1981b), p. 160.

<sup>46</sup> Laskaris (1926), pp. 38–53; Nicol (1957), pp. 49 and n. 6, 71; Ducellier (1981b), p. 160.

<sup>47</sup> GA, ch. 14, rev. edn. Wirth, I, p. 26; tr. Macrides, p. 145; similarly, Theodore Skoutariotes, *Synopsis chronike*, p. 461.

<sup>48</sup> Nicol (1957), p. 50; Ducellier (1981b), pp. 161–3. See above, pp. 737–8.

<sup>49</sup> For 1203, see the Registers of Innocent III, year 6, letter 5; Theiner, *Vetera monumenta slavorum meridionalium*, I, p. 28; Nicol (1957), p. 23 n. 24 (wrongly giving 1204 for 1203). For 1207, see the Registers of Innocent III, year 10, letter 65; *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae*, ed. von Thallóczy et al., I, no. 132, p. 42; Ducellier (1981b), pp. 123, 144–5.



Map 40 Spanning the Egnatian Way





Map 41 Klokotnitsa and Ivan II Asen's counter-offensive 1230

the elderly John of Brienne. However, these plans only resulted in a breach with Theodore Angelos of Epiros.<sup>50</sup>

In spring 1230, taking the view that he could not march on Constantinople without first removing the Bulgarians' threat to his rear,<sup>51</sup> Theodore Angelos decided to attack them. He was crushed in battle at Klokotnitsa in the Maritsa valley,<sup>52</sup> captured and blinded; this defeat sealed the fate of the westernmost of the Greek rump states.<sup>53</sup> In April 1230, Ivan Asen launched a sweeping counter-offensive, gaining Adrianople, Didymoteichon, Boleron, Serres, Pelagonia (Bitola) and Prilep, as well as Thessaly and Albania right up to the gates of Dyrrachium; the town itself apparently escaped his control.<sup>54</sup> It is not clear whether the Bulgarians achieved their ambition of ruling from coast to coast, from the Adriatic to the Aegean. An agreement between Ivan and Dubrovnik of 1230 mentions Skopje, Prilep and

<sup>50</sup> Nicol (1957), p. 108, argues, on uncertain grounds, that the offer came from Ivan II Asen, while Ostrogorsky (1968), pp. 435–6, is likewise unclear. See also GA, chs. 37–8, rev. edn. Wirth, I, p. 60; tr. Macrides, p. 204, 206; Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Liber secretorum fidelium crucis*, pp. 72–3.

<sup>51</sup> Nicol (1957), p. 110, whose explanation is convincing, in contrast to George Akropolites, who explains Theodore's actions solely in terms of unbridled ambition: GA, ch. 25, rev. edn. Wirth, I, p. 41; tr. Macrides, p. 178.

<sup>52</sup> GA, ch. 25, rev. edn. Wirth, I, pp. 41–2; tr. Macrides, pp. 178–9; Zlatarsky (1970–2), III, p. 358. Klokotnitsa is the modern Semica: Nicol (1957), p. 112 n. 14. It was probably after Klokotnitsa that Philippopolis was lost by the Latins, who still held it in 1229: TT, II, pp. 267–8; Asdracha (1976), p. 242 n. 2.

<sup>53</sup> Nicol (1957), pp. 111–12.

<sup>54</sup> Nicol (1957), p. 111; Ducellier (1981b), p. 166; GA, ch. 25, rev. edn. Wirth, I, pp. 42–3; tr. Macrides, p. 179. But for the major evidence, see Uspensky (1901); Zlatarsky (1970–2), III, pp. 587–96.

Devol – acquisitions effectively barring the Serbians from Macedonia – and even Thessaloniki, but no Adriatic port is mentioned there.<sup>55</sup> In any case, the text of this agreement attests a revival of trans-Balkan trade to the advantage of one of the Slav powers, as economic facts caught up with military ones.<sup>56</sup> This also helped to counterbalance the overweening Italian presence in the region's trade.<sup>57</sup> George Akropolites paints quite a favourable picture of Ivan Asen's attitude towards his Greek subjects, although this was probably coloured by Akropolites' desire to cast his *bête noire*, Theodore Angelos, in the worst possible light. However, Ivan avoided Kalojan's mistakes and he does seem to have been regarded favourably by his new subjects; Ivan's recently acquired title 'tsar of the Bulgarians and of the Greeks' offered them a guarantee of sorts.<sup>58</sup> He hoped to give this title further substance by conquering Constantinople from the Latins. Just after his victory at Klokotnitsa in 1230, Ivan visited Mount Athos and showered gifts upon its monasteries: a symbolic expression of his role as supposed successor to the Byzantine emperors.<sup>59</sup> His conquests also enabled him to intervene in the affairs of Serbia, a potent rival whose alliance with Epiros he found hard to forgive. Bulgarian operations led to the downfall of the Serbian ruler Stefan Radoslav,<sup>60</sup> who had withdrawn to Dubrovnik, and then to Dyrrachium.<sup>61</sup>

However, Ivan was a realist and knew he could not take Constantinople on his own. He therefore put together a league of orthodox potentates, including John III Vatatzes, emperor of Nicaea (1221–54), and even Theodore's brother Manuel Angelos (1230–37), emperor at Thessaloniki. Manuel was Ivan's faithless son-in-law and in 1232 he had abandoned plans for church union with Rome and with Frederick II.<sup>62</sup> This league gave Ivan the chance to renounce Kalojan's nominal allegiance to the pope, and he hoped for an immediate dividend, the transformation of the Bulgarian church into a full patriarchate. It is likely that, from 1233, relations with Nicaea were close enough to force the 'unionist' archbishop of T'rnovo to abandon his see and retire to Mount Athos; presumably he had been

<sup>55</sup> Ivan II Asen's son-in-law, Manuel, only ruled Epiros by grace of Ivan and also accepted the subordination of his archiepiscopal see to that of T'rnovo: Nicol (1957), pp. 114–15.

<sup>56</sup> An example of the policy of restoring fortifications is Stenimachos, with a commemorative inscription of Ivan II: Zlatarsky (1911 [1912]), pp. 241–2; Asdracha (1976), p. 242.

<sup>57</sup> *Stare srpske*, ed. Stojanović, II, p. 205; *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae*, ed. von Thallóczy *et al.*, I, no. 163, pp. 50–1; Nicol (1957), p. 113 (with citation of the source); Ducellier (1981b), p. 166.

<sup>58</sup> Ivan signs himself thus on the treaty with Dubrovnik: Nicol (1957), p. 111.

<sup>59</sup> Dujčev (1965–96), I, p. 500; Năstase (1983), p. 72.

<sup>60</sup> Documents in *MM*, III, pp. 65–7; Jireček (1911–18), I, pp. 304–5; Marković (1952), pp. 211–19.

<sup>61</sup> Jireček (1911–18), I, p. 304; Krekić (1961), pp. 27–8; Nicol (1957), p. 123.

<sup>62</sup> Ostrogorsky (1968), pp. 436–7; Nicol (1957), pp. 116–17. On John Vatatzes and Frederick (1238), see Norden (1903), pp. 323–5; Borsari (1951), pp. 286–7.

induced to return to orthodoxy by the patriarch of Nicaea.<sup>63</sup> In spring 1235, the Graeco-Bulgarian alliance was further strengthened at Gallipoli by the betrothal of the future Theodore II Laskaris (1254–58) to Ivan II Asen's daughter, who had previously been betrothed to Baldwin II.<sup>64</sup> After lengthy negotiations with the patriarchs of Nicaea and the east,<sup>65</sup> the alliance was reinforced by the formal recognition of the new Bulgarian head churchman, Ioakim, as patriarch; Ioakim went to Nicaea for his consecration.<sup>66</sup> However, for the Bulgarians the problem was that this alliance would clearly involve abandoning any claim to the Byzantine throne; part of the price for the patriarchal title was Ivan's renunciation of his patronage over Mount Athos.<sup>67</sup>

From this point on, the attitude of the Bulgarians becomes rather erratic; Ivan Asen had probably not become Vatatzes' ally simply in order to acquire a patriarchate, and he must have been aware of the dangers Nicaea posed to him. After an abortive joint siege of Latin-held Constantinople in 1235–6, Ivan performed an about-turn and entered into an alliance with the Latins. He broke with Nicaea at the end of 1237, after a terrible pestilence at Trnovo which carried off his wife and one of his children, as well as Patriarch Ioakim. Ivan believed that he was being punished for breaking his word; Bulgarian writings of this period are full of eschatological references to brilliant triumphs, but also to cautionary punishment for sins.<sup>68</sup> As if to confirm all these prophecies, Ivan himself died in 1241. Soon afterwards the Bulgarian lands were ravaged by a terrible Mongol and Cuman army, putting paid to imperial ambitions for a long time. Nicaea stood to benefit from the settlement of numerous Cumans on the frontiers of Asia and Europe,<sup>69</sup> seeing that the outer fringes of Bulgaria became very vulnerable. The population in Byzantino-Bulgarian borderlands such as the Rhodope range was in fact mostly Bulgarian, ready to assist any action by fellow Bulgarians, as it did after the death of John III Vatatzes in 1254, with long-term consequences.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Tarnanidis (1975), pp. 34–5.

<sup>64</sup> GA, ch. 33, rev. edn. Wirth, I, p. 50; tr. Macrides, p. 194; Čankova-Petkova (1969); Asdracha (1976), p. 242.

<sup>65</sup> GA, ch. 33, rev. edn. Wirth, I, pp. 50–1; tr. Macrides, p. 194; Vasilievsky (1885); Ostrogorsky (1968), p. 437; Obolensky (1988), p. 167 and n. 211.

<sup>66</sup> Tarnanidis (1975), pp. 46–9, 52.

<sup>67</sup> *Actes du Protaton*, ed. Papachryssanthou, I, pp. 267–70. On the authenticity of the key document, see also Dujčev (1965–96), I, pp. 502–3; Năstase (1983), p. 78.

<sup>68</sup> GA, ch. 36, rev. edn. Wirth, I, p. 56; tr. Macrides, p. 201; Tapkova-Zaimova and Miltenova (1984), pp. 505–7.

<sup>69</sup> NG, II.5, ed. Schopen and Bekker, I, pp. 36–7; German tr. van Dieten, I, p. 81; Asdracha (1976), pp. 242–3.

<sup>70</sup> GA, ch. 54, rev. edn. Wirth, I, pp. 108–9; tr. Macrides, p. 281; Asdracha (1976), pp. 64, 243. On the ethnic make-up of the local population: Apostolides (1941–42a), p. 79; Apostolides (1941–42b), pp. 93, 97; Asdracha (1976), p. 64.

THE STRUGGLE FOR MASTERY IN EPIROS, ALBANIA  
AND MACEDONIA

The Bulgarians had drawn Nicaea's rulers and churchmen into Thrace and both Epiros and Arbanon gained some freedom of manoeuvre from this, especially after the death of Ivan Asen. Under the despot Michael II Angelos Doukas (1230–67), who gained control of all Thessaly,<sup>71</sup> Epiros acquired Dyrrachium once more,<sup>72</sup> although in 1250 Michael II had to soothe Nicaea by allowing John Vatatzes' ambassadors free passage to Italy. Dyrrachium had not lost its traditional role as a key transit point between the Balkans and western Europe.<sup>73</sup>

Albania enjoyed an economic upswing during this period. The number of Italian visitors increased, and these included many Venetians, with whom Epiros' rulers were not on good terms. The inhabitants of Dubrovnik were active traders in grain, wood and animal products, making the inhabitants of the Albanian coast less economically dependent on the hinterland, and weakening their traditional ties. A local Slav-dominated merchant class was also developing,<sup>74</sup> assisted by the privileges granted by Michael I Angelos and Dhimitër of Arbanon, and renewed under Michael II in 1237 and 1251.<sup>75</sup> Around 1230, Demetrios Chomatenos noted a degree of acculturation between Italians and Dalmatians, not merely in language and law, but also in the easy co-existence of the Latin and orthodox faithful.<sup>76</sup> In northern Albania, however, relations were less cordial. Around 1250 Giovanni da Pian Carpini, the celebrated archbishop of Antivari, succeeded in profiting from the failure of the Slavs and Epirots to halt the Nicaean conquests; these had resulted in Michael II Angelos ceding Prilep, Veles and even Kruja, the capital of Arbanon, to Vatatzes. With the support of the friars, Carpini sought to secure the loyalty of the people of Arbanon, but this brought him up against the formidable orthodox archbishop of Ohrid. Carpini was therefore unable to gain influence over the border bishops of Chounavia and Polatum (Shkodër) and (in admittedly obscure circumstances) these joined the orthodox camp.<sup>77</sup> Even so, the catholic church's activities in the region were proceeding apace, prompting Prince Gulam of Arbanon to abandon Michael II Angelos and join the Nicaean side. Presumably Nicaea looked to him a more effective bulwark against the

<sup>71</sup> Nicol (1957), pp. 136–7, 141–2. <sup>72</sup> Nicol (1957), p. 148; Ducellier (1981b), p. 167.

<sup>73</sup> Festa (ed. and tr.), 'Le lettere greche', pp. 15–16; *MM*, III, pp. 68–9; Ducellier (1981b), pp. 167–8.

<sup>74</sup> Ducellier (1981b), pp. 192–4. <sup>75</sup> Ducellier (1981b), pp. 186–7.

<sup>76</sup> Ducellier (1981b), pp. 204–5. See Demetrios Chomatenos' *responsa* to Constantine Kabasilas, the Greek metropolitan of Dyrrachium: Demetrios Chomatenos, *Erotapokriseis; Acta et diplomata res Albaniae*, ed. von Thallóczy *et al.*, I, no. 164, p. 51.

<sup>77</sup> Šufflay (1916), p. 211; *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae*, ed. von Thallóczy *et al.*, I, no. 164, p. 51; Karpozilos (1973), pp. 46–69; Ducellier (1981b), p. 206; Ducellier (1983), pp. 5–6. After Demetrios Chomatenos' death, the see of Ohrid was occupied by two Bulgarians, but in 1252 it was the Greek Constantine Kabasilas, late of Dyrrachium, who held office there. See also Gelzer (1902), p. 12.

catholic church.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, Nicaea's ruler John Vatatzes renewed the privileges that Kruja had received from Manuel I Komnenos (1143–80), although it is uncertain who controlled the town at this point.<sup>79</sup>

The Nicaean advances threatened the interests of the Bulgarians and Serbs alike. Despite his own weakness, and thanks to the death of John III Vatatzes, the Bulgarian tsar Michael I Asen (1246–56) managed to seize control of western Macedonia all the way to Dibra in 1254, occupying Skopje among other places, although the Nicaeans recovered it two years later. A close *entente* was established between Michael II Angelos and the Serbian ruler Stefan Uroš I (1243–76), who was also interested in dominating Macedonia. It was only in 1256 that Theodore II Laskaris regained control of the route to the Adriatic,<sup>80</sup> recapturing strongholds in Macedonia, including Dyrrachium.<sup>81</sup> Not without reason did Theodore boast of controlling Sofia, Philippopolis, Veles, Skopje and even Serbia, thanks to his latest acquisitions.<sup>82</sup> In the winter of 1256–7, Akropolites reportedly felt free to travel around the region, making his authority felt. He convened the notables (*ekkritoī*) of Arbanon at Dyrrachium, doubtless including Prince Gulam (who subsequently vanishes from sight), and he managed to take control of their polity (such as it was) without protest, installing a thoroughly Byzantine civil, military and fiscal administration.<sup>83</sup> The *ekkritoī* referred to by Akropolites later came to be known as princes, and they would dominate the lands of Albania into modern times. Still loyal to Michael II Angelos of Epiros, these *ekkritoī* proceeded to lead their fellow Albanians in a massive revolt and Michael himself laid siege to Nicaean-occupied Dibra, Ohrid and Prilep,<sup>84</sup> regions which would later become centres of Albanian settlement.<sup>85</sup> However, the revolt did not involve Albania proper or Epiros itself, and Michael's ally, Stefan Uroš, turned the situation to his own advantage: he advanced into central Macedonia, seizing Skopje and pushing south as far as Kicava and Prilep.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>78</sup> GA, ch. 49, rev. edn. Wirth, I, p. 91; tr. Macrides, p. 250; Nicol (1957), pp. 151–2; Ducellier (1981b), pp. 168–9.

<sup>79</sup> Andronikos renewed this grant in 1282, as would Stefan Dušan in 1342: Ducellier (1981b), p. 169; von Thallóczy and Jireček (1916), pp. 147–51.

<sup>80</sup> Zlatarsky (1970–72), III, pp. 456–7.

<sup>81</sup> GA, chs. 63, 67, rev. edn. Wirth, I, pp. 133, 140; tr. Macrides, pp. 308, 321; Jireček (1911–18), I, p. 317; Balascev (1911); Nicol (1957), pp. 158–9; Ducellier (1981b), pp. 169–70.

<sup>82</sup> Theodore II Laskaris, *Epistulae*, pp. 280–1; Theodore Skoutariotes, *Synopsis chronike*, p. 526; Nicol (1957), pp. 159–60; Asdracha (1976), p. 172; Ducellier (1981b), p. 170 (with references).

<sup>83</sup> GA, chs. 67–8, rev. edn. Wirth, I, pp. 140–2; tr. Macrides, pp. 321, 323–4; Nicol (1957), pp. 160–2; Ducellier (1981b), p. 171. On Akropolites' approach to writing history, see Macrides (2003b).

<sup>84</sup> GA, ch. 68, rev. edn. Wirth, I, pp. 142–3; tr. Macrides, p. 324; Nicol (1957), pp. 161–2; see also Kravari (1989), p. 47.

<sup>85</sup> Frashëri (1982), pp. 208–9; on modern problems, see Roux (1992), pp. 73–4 and map, p. 77.

<sup>86</sup> GA, ch. 70, rev. edn. Wirth, I, pp. 145–6; tr. Macrides, pp. 328–9; Nicol (1957), p. 163; Kravari (1989), p. 47.



Map 42 Manfred of Hohenstaufen's acquisitions c. 1257, and subsequent dowry settlement by Michael II Angelos of Epiros

Manfred of Hohenstaufen also exploited the troubles in the region, following in the Normans' footsteps. Probably around the end of 1257 he seized part of central Albania, including Dyrrachium, Berat, Avlona, Spinarizza and surrounding areas. This was the background to his marriage alliance with Helena, daughter of Michael II Angelos of Epiros. Staring defeat in the face, Michael had to recognise Manfred's right to these lands as dowry, adding for good measure Corfu and the southern Albanian coast, including Himara, Sopot and Butrint.<sup>87</sup> After successful campaigning by John Palaiologos in the spring of 1259, the Nicaeans regained control of western Macedonia,<sup>88</sup> and this success was reinforced by Michael VIII Palaiologos' (1258–82) victory at the battle of Pelagonia that summer.<sup>89</sup> However, Skopje seems to have remained in Serbian hands until the offensive launched by

<sup>87</sup> We know of this conquest from an act issued at Dyrrachium in February 1258: *MM*, III, pp. 240–2; Ducellier (1981b), p. 173; Geanakoplos (1953), p. 103 and n. 51; Geanakoplos (1959), p. 49. On Manfred's dowry, see Nicol (1957), p. 167; Geanakoplos (1959), pp. 50–4, 192; Ducellier (1981b), pp. 173–4. See now also Hodges *et al.* (2004).

<sup>88</sup> *GA*, ch. 80, rev. edn. Wirth, I, pp. 165–7; tr. Macrides, pp. 356–7; *GP*, II.11, ed. and French tr. Failler, I, p. 151; Nicol (1957), pp. 176–7; Kravari (1989), p. 48.

<sup>89</sup> Geanakoplos (1953), pp. 135–6; Nicol (1956), p. 71; Nicol (1957), p. 182. See above, p. 749.

the Bulgarian tsar Constantine Tich (1257–77). Somehow or other, the city ended up in the Byzantine sphere of influence<sup>90</sup> and in 1303 the Serbian ruler, Stefan Uroš II Milutin (1282–1321), would write of the Serbs' loss of the city, although quite what he meant by this is unclear.<sup>91</sup> In any case, Bulgaria no longer posed a serious threat to its neighbours after 1241. In 1262 Michael VIII succeeded in occupying the coastal towns of Anchialos and Mesembria, promising them as a dowry to his niece Maria, and with the stated intention of never giving them back to the Bulgarians. A Bulgarian counter-attack in 1272 was easily beaten off, showing up the limitations of what was now a divided kingdom.

Bulgaria was riven by political instability for a hundred years, and also menaced externally by the Greeks' formidable allies, the Cuman auxiliaries of the Mongols (see below, p. 805).<sup>92</sup> Yet for all its troubles, Bulgaria was no cultural vacuum. In the mid-fourteenth century, the Bulgarian archbishop Iakov was still capable of writing passably good Greek poetry in hexameters, something only Maximos Planoudes could rival.<sup>93</sup> As in Serbia, there were lively manuscript workshops which carried on the Slav–Hellenic tradition; the psalters of Radomir (fig. 55) and Karadimov, the chronicle of Constantine Manasses and the Tomić psalter (fig. 54) are among their products, and they help us understand the fourteenth-century flowering.<sup>94</sup> New forms emerged, such as the 'teratological' (monstrous) letter designs that adorn thirteenth-century manuscripts.<sup>95</sup> However, two dangers still loomed on the fringes of the restored Byzantine empire: the alliance forged between the Angevin kingdom of Naples and Epiros, prompting Charles of Anjou's later intervention, and the Serbs' ambitions of conquest in Macedonia.

Charles of Anjou had taken care to include in the Treaty of Viterbo in 1267 (see above, p. 768) his right to succeed Manfred in Albania.<sup>96</sup> However, it was some time before he staked his claim: partly because of his involvement in the Tunis Crusade of his brother, Louis IX (1226–70),

<sup>90</sup> Kravari (1989), pp. 48 nn. 129 and 130 (with references), 161. Skopje was still in Bulgarian hands in 1268, when Michael VIII's ambassador to Serbia had to bypass the area: GP, V.6, ed. and French tr. Failler, II, pp. 454–5. On the frontier, see Asdracha (1976), pp. 245–7.

<sup>91</sup> *Spomenici za srednevekovnata*, ed. Mošin *et al.*, I, pp. 299, 313; Grujić (1933), p. 273; Kravari (1989), p. 48.

<sup>92</sup> Ostrogorsky (1968), pp. 451, 458. On Michael VIII's grand alliance of Kapchale, Byzantium and Egypt, see Geanakoplos (1959), pp. 81, 290–1; Mansouri (1992a); Mansouri (1992b), pp. 317–24.

<sup>93</sup> Iakov, *Works*, especially the poem on pp. 82–4; Constantinides (1982), pp. 82–3. See below, p. 824.

<sup>94</sup> *Radomirov psalter*, ed. Makarijoska; Karadimov (Shopov) psalter, Sts Cyril and Methodius National Library, Sofia, MSS. 454 and 1138; see also Khristova *et al.* (1982), pp. 40–1; Boiukliev, 'Shopov psalter'; Alekseev (1999), p. 187; Constantine Manasses, *Chronicle*, ed. Lampsidis; *Tomić psalter*, I, pp. 46–7. See also Džurova (1997), pp. 190–2.

<sup>95</sup> Džurova (1977), pp. 36–99, and plates III, p. 57, XXI, p. 75, XXIII, p. 77, XXV, p. 79, XXVII, p. 81, XXVIII, p. 82. See fig. 56.

<sup>96</sup> Ducellier (1981b), pp. 230–1.

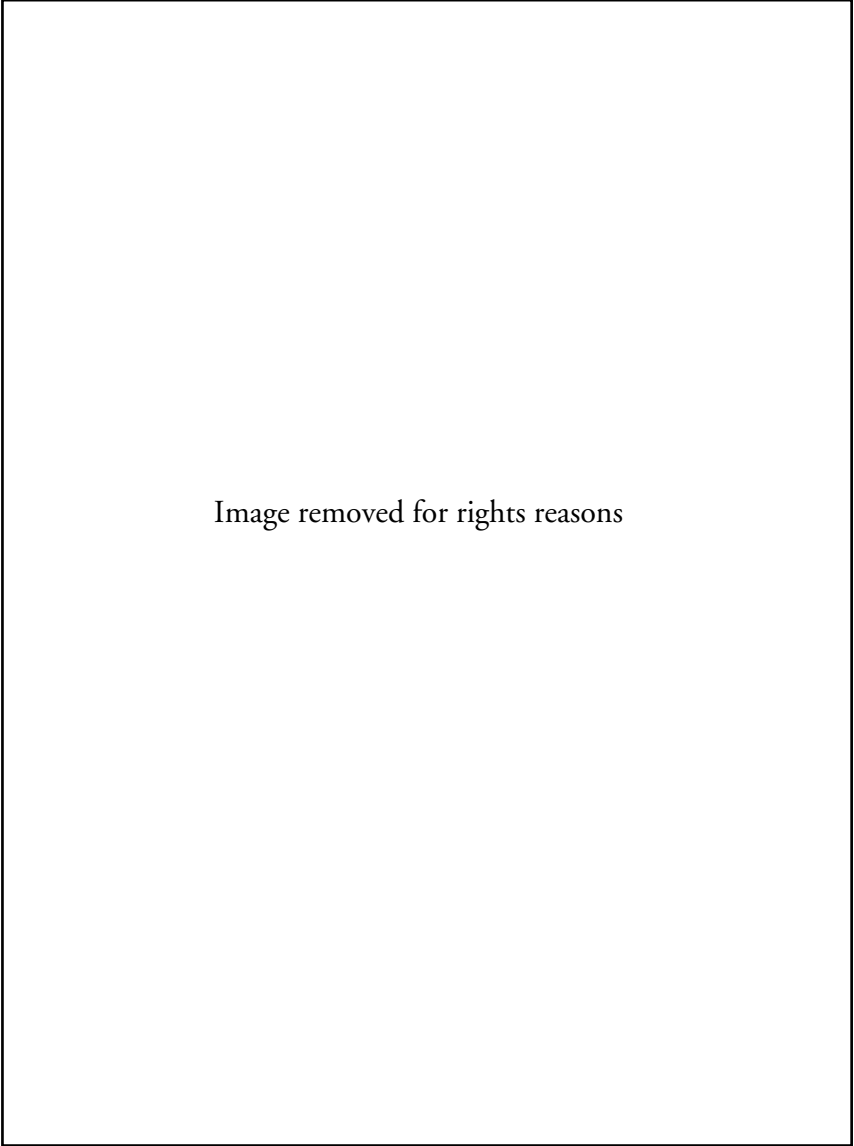


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Figure 54 Illustration from the Tomič Psalter

and partly from uncertainty as to how Michael II Angelos would react to such a bold move. It was only after Michael's death that Charles took over Dyrrachium, which had recently been devastated by a terrible earthquake;<sup>97</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Ferjančić (1966), pp. 29–32; Nicol (1972a), p. 171.