The Reign of Emperor John II Komnenos, 1087-1143:

The Transformation of the Old Order

DPhil History Thesis

Maximilian C. G. Lau

Oriel College, Oxford University

Short Abstract

The Reign of Emperor John II Komnenos, 1087-1143: The Transformation of the Old Order

DPhil History – Trinity Term 2015

Maximilian C. G. Lau, Oriel College, Oxford University

Despite ruling over arguably the most powerful Christian nation in the period, in a time when European and middle-eastern history entered a new phase of interaction due to the Crusades, John's reign has received little scholarly attention. The only major monograph is Chalandon's *Les Comnènes* from 1912, since which a number of new sources have come to light, together with numerous studies on his contemporaries. Despite the impression that sources are lacking for his reign, in fact there are over 50,000 words of court letters and poetry that allow us to take the political pulse of the Komnenian court. When incorporated with the extra information found in Syriac, Arabic, Russian, Hungarian and many other texts, archaeological remains, sigillographic and numismatic evidence, John's reign is in fact very well covered, and ripe for analysis. Between fieldwork in Turkey, Serbia and Kosovo and translations of these previously unused texts, this thesis contains new material on top of over a century of updated methodologies and research since Chalandon.

As such, this thesis will reevaluate assumptions concerning John and his reign, including rewriting the narrative itself, which has previously been distorted due to the agendas of the few sources used. Through the reconstruction of this narrative John's empire can be reexamined, and how it operated in the changed world of the twelfth century determined. The empire found itself in a more multi-polar power dynamic, and tackled this by operating more as an empire than it had as a larger polity as in the previous century: incorporating other peoples as clients and emphasing the rhetoric of imperial piety and legitimacy of the Roman empire. Equally, all of John's actions on the frontiers were fuel for the political theatre that was Constantinople, and this dynamic shaped his actions and resulted in the empire that Manuel inherited.

Long Abstract

The Reign of Emperor John II Komnenos, 1087-1143: The Transformation of the Old Order

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Scholars have traditionally overlooked the reign of the Byzantine Emperor John II Komnenos, focusing instead on John's father Alexios, and John's son Manuel. The justification for this has been predominantly source based, as there are no major accounts of John's reign, such as the *Alexiad* for his father or Kinnamos' and Choniates' extensive accounts of his son. Despite this assumption, John's reign is in fact very well covered by contemporary written sources, such as court speeches and letters, accounts in languages other than Greek and Latin, in addition to sigillographic and archaeological evidence. Equally it has previously not been fully appreciated that the histories of Kinnamos and Choniates were not benevolently written to chronicle events for our benefit, but were political pieces designed to convince the reader of their agenda. Interpreting the information they provide in the light of this and incorporating new evidence thus rewrites both our analysis of the reign and the very narrative of events itself. Such a rewriting is long overdue for John, as Ferdinand Chalandon wrote the only major monograph on his reign in 1912, and that in French with no corresponding English language study. This lack of research results in events such as a 2014 workshop at King's College, London, where the advertisement for the event could say that there are few written sources and that no significant political events took place. This thesis will demonstrate that such an interpretation undervalues many existing sources, and with the inclusion of new evidence from my fieldwork in Turkey, Serbia and Kosovo and translations of court orations and poetry, a window can be opened on to this previously shadowy era.

This era is one that immediately follows a transformation in the political order in Europe and the Middle East. The First Crusade made western European powers players in the eastern Mediterranean in a change that would shape events for hundreds of years, while the arrival of the Normans in southern Italy and the Turks in Anatolia had shattered the regional hegemony of the surviving Roman empire. The empire under Alexios I Komnenos could only react to these changes, and it is to Alexios' credit that he was able to secure some of the empire for John in the crises of the late eleventh century. As John reached manhood he and his father were finally able to act rather than react to events, and this in itself is one of the first revisions argued by this thesis: that John's reign did not begin in 1118 at the death of Alexios, but his period of co-rule with his father initiated plans and established the character of the regime long before Alexios died. Equally, this thesis presents the challenges John faced in the order he faced them rather than thematically; thematic studies of John's reign lead to misunderstanding his motives and actions, for example the largest crisis of John's reign was in 1125-6, when John's attempt to fight Venice, manage clients in Anatolia and Serbia and play Hungarian politics led to overextension and rebellion in Trebizond, forcing him to prioritise. This crisis has been almost entirely overlooked by historians due to studying John's reign thematically by region, when it is precisely the confluence of all these factors that led to crisis. John chose to negotiate a peace with Venice and briefly abandon Anatolia to focus on the Balkans, and understanding that choice allows the regime

to be further unpacked. Another example is that John's actions in Anatolia in the following decade were not driven by a primacy of foreign policy, or some form of 'Reconquista,' but domestic policy. His brother Isaac's attempted coup meant that John had to focus on the Danishmendids rather than Ikonion in Anatolia, and across his reign he focuses on them when they are united, while dealing with other threats when they fight civil wars. All of this was also reflected in the political theatre that was Constantinople – all of John's actions were driven as much if not more by how they would play in the capital than as some form of realpolitik.

Despite such priorities, John's government did attempt to carry out concrete policies to fulfil territorial and ideological goals. John operated an empire that sought to bring client rulers under his aegis; across his reign we see him bringing Pechenegs, Serbs, Turks and Crusaders into the imperial fold, while powers such as Venice were brought into agreements that would bolster the imperial regime. The cumulative acquisition of clients allowed John to pursue more ambitious challenges, with the final goal the restoration of the empire as it had been before the eleventh-century crises. The empire thus became more 'imperial' in operation than it had been previously, something reflected culturally in triumphs and ceremonies in the capital, and in the rhetoric of the court sources. This political pulse can also be seen to intersect with reality on the ground in the remains of John's fortresses, built across both Anatolia and the Balkans, that together evidence a comprehensive network of fortresses to hold the territory that John had conquered, both as an effective method of defence and to display renewed imperial power.

John's reorganisation of the Paristrion in the wake of his victory over the nomad invasion, and the reality of his dealings with the crusader states reinforce the greater picture of this being a period of imperial renewal. The empire in this period was a product of the transformation of the old order in the late eleventh century, and this transformation provided both new challenges and new opportunities for contemporary rulers. The long Byzantine twelfth century from the battle of Manzikert and loss of Bari in 1071, to the capture of Constantinople by the armies of the fourth crusade in 1204, has usually been interpreted as a period of decline, briefly arrested by some controversial Komnenian policies that likely caused as many problems as they solved. Through the use of contemporary sources, ones not overshadowed by later events, the twelfth century is shown to be a dynamic period for the empire, allowing it to emerge as a more imperial power despite its loss of territory, engaging with its neighbours in order to secure a place for the Roman empire in the new world order.

This thesis thus fills a gap in our understanding of the eastern Mediterranean of the early to mid twelfth century, rewriting events previously interpreted. Furthermore, this study provides the groundwork that will allow deeper analysis into John's reign, as with the narrative rewritten and the broader questions addressed, specific aspects of his reign that require a broader study, including legal, economic, administrative and ecclesiastical history, can be studied in context. Overall, this thesis will fill in a gap in our knowledge of medieval history that has existed too long, and will be the foundation of greater understanding of Komnenian Byzantium and its neighbours.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would never have been possible without the support of my parents, and many at Oriel College, the department for Late Antique and Byzantine Studies, Oxford, the Oxford University Byzantine Society and the University of St Andrews. Generous grants from All Souls and Oriel allowed much of the fieldwork, and without Mary Whitby and Ida Toth I would never have been able to translate the Greek material I needed. Many others helped with other texts, as well as the ideas. I would particularly like to thank my superviser, Mark Whittow, together with Elizabeth and Michael Jeffreys, Peter Frankopan, Marc Lauxtermann and many others. Finally to Douglas Whalin for accompanying me around both Turkey and Serbia, and getting heatstroke both times while I hunted castles: *Kolay Gelsin*.

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Abbreviations and Author's Notes

Note on Transliteration

In general I have transliterated Greek names and terms as closely as possible, but not with absolute consistency. Common names, places and ethnonyms are given in their most familiar form, for example 'Kinnamos' and 'Komnene' are used but alongside 'Constantinople,' 'Choniates' and 'Cuman' rather than *Konstantinoupolis, Khoniates* and *Kouman*.

Note on Citation

Where one page number is given for a primary text, it will refer to the text in its original language. Where two page numbers are given (e.g. *NC*, p. 14, p. 10), the first will be to the text in its original language, and the second to the translation. Where two numerals such as "10.5" are used, they refer to the book and chapter respectively. All maps and photos are the author's own from fieldwork in 2014 and 2015 unless otherwise stated. Numerals given to poems are those used in the published editions, e.g. "*Prodromos* XV" refers to Hörandner's numbering.

Note on Translations

Greek and Latin translations of the court sources are my own, while when translations to aid clarification for common sources such as Choniates are required, standard editions are used unless otherwise stated. French, German and Italian have been consulted first hand, other languages such as Russian, Hungarian, Syriac or Norse I have used either standard translations or consulted fellow scholars at Oriel College, Oxford and the Central European University, Budapest. I am hugely indebted to them for these additional translations.

AIPHOS – L'Annuaire de l'Institute de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves

AK – Anna Komnene, *Annae Comnenae Alexias*, ed. D.R. Reinsch and A Kambylis (Berlin, 2001)

BMGS – Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies

Byzantion – Byzantion: revue internationale des études byzantines

BZ – Byzantinische Zeitschrift

CFHB – Corpus fontium historiae byzantinae

CFHH - Catalogus fontium historiae Hungaricae, ed. F. A. Gombos (4 vols., Budapest, 1937-43)

CSHB - Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae

DO – Catalogue of Byzantine seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art, ed. J. Nesbitt and N. Oikonomides (Washington D.C, 2001)

DOP – Dumbarton Oaks Papers

FHIT - Fontes Historiae Imperii Trapezuntini

FRA - Fontes Rerum Austriacarum

FSI - Fonti per la Storia d'Italia

Gregory the Priest – "Continuation of Matthew of Edessa," *Armenia and the Crusades: tenth to twelfth centuries: the Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, tr. A. E. Dostourian, (Belmont MA, 1993)

IRAIK - Izvestija Russgo Archelogiceskogo Instituta v Konstantinopole

Italikos – Michael Italikos, *Michel Italikos Lettres et Discours*, ed. P. Gautier (Paris, 1972)

JK – John Kinnamos, *Ioannis Cinnami Epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis gestarum* (Bonn, 1836); *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus by John Kinnamos*, English Translation: C. M. Brand (New York, 1976)

JÖB – Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik

KC – Kleinchroniken, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken Vol. 1*, ed. P. Schreiner (Vienna, 1975)

Matthew of Edessa - Armenia and the Crusades: tenth to twelfth centuries: the Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa, tr. A. E. Dostourian, (Belmont MA, 1993)

MDAI, AA - Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung

Michael – Michael the Syrian, *Text and Translations of the Chronicle of Michael the Great Vol. 1 The Edessa-Aleppo Syriac Codex of the Chronicle of Michael the Great*, ed. G. Y. Ibrahim, English Text Summary by S. P. Brock (New Jersey, 2009). French Translation: J.P. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166-1199)* (Brussels, 1963)

MGH (S) - Monumenta Germaniae Historica, (Scriptores)

MPH - Monumenta Poloniae Historica

Muses – "Die Musen des Kaisers Alexios I," ed. P. Maas, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 22 (1913), pp. 348-59; English Translation: *The Alexian Komnenian Muses*, R. H. Jordan, C. Rouche *et al*. (Belfast Agreed Translation, Unpublished, 1989)

NC: Niketas Choniates, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, ed. J. L. van Dieten (Berlin, 1975); English Translation: *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates*, tr. H. J Magoulias (Detroit, 1984)

ODB – The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, ed. in chief A. Kazhdan (3 vols., Oxford, 1991)

Pantokrator Typikon – "Le Typikon du Christ Sauveur Pantocrator, ed. and tr. P. Gautier," *RÉB* 32 (1974), pp. 1-145; English Translation: "*Pantokrator*: Typikon of Emperor John II Komnenos for the Monastery of Christ *Pantokrator* in Constantinople," pp. 725-81

Priest – Priest of Diokleia, *Το Χρονικό του Ιερέα τες Διόκλειας, Κείμενο, Μετάφραση, Σχόλια, τα Πρόσωπα και ο Χώρος* [The Chronicle of the Priest of Diokleia, Text, Translation, Commentary, People and Places], tr: Angeliki Papageorgiou (Thessaloniki, 2012)

Prodromos – Theodore Prodromos, *Theodore Prodromos: historische Gedichte*, ed. W. Hörandner (Vienna, 1974)

PSRL – Полное собрание русских летописей

PVL – Повесть временных лет

RÉB – Revue des études byzantines

RIS – Rerum Italicarum Scriptores

RHC – Recueil des historiens des croisades

SCIVA – Studii şi cercetări de istorie veche şi arheologie

Smbat Sparapet – La Chronique attribuée au connectable Smbat, tr. G. Dédéyan, (Paris, 1980)

SRD – Scriptores Rerum Danicarum

SRH – Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum

Zonaras – John Zonaras*, Ioannis Zonarae Epitome Historiarum libri XIII-XVIII*, *CSHB* 49, Vol III, ed, T. Büttner-Wobst (Leipzig 1897)

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Introduction: Overshadowed by Father and Son?

Problems and Sources

John II Komnenos has the intriguing honour of being one of Edward Gibbon's only Byzantine heroes: the eighteenth-century historian, usually disdainful of all-things-'Byzantine', judges that Marcus Aurelius, as a true Roman exemplar, "would not have disdained" his successor of a millennium later.[1] This generous judgement of the twelfth-century emperor is a nearly word-for-word translation of the judgement made by Niketas Choniates at the end of his account of John's life in his *Χρονικὴ Διήγησις*, or *History* of the Roman Empire from 1118 to 1207, with both calling him the greatest of the Komnenoi.[2] Gibbon's recitation of Choniates is indicative of a problem that has affected scholarship ever since: what we understand concerning John II Komnenos' reign has been shackled to its presentation in the histories of Choniates and John Kinnamos. Unlike John's father Alexios I Komnenos, and John's son Manuel I, there is no major primary source, such as Anna Komnene's *Alexiad* for the former and Kinnamos' and Choniates' fuller biographies for the latter, going into detail regarding John's reign specifically. There are only the short accounts found in the histories of these two chroniclers, which provide seemingly viable narratives, and historians have treated them much as they have the more detailed presentations of later emperors. These histories present a seductively clear account of major events, their causes and effects, as they aspire to offer a summary of a reign that, for both, had been over more than forty years before they wrote.[3]

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[1] Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* ed. D. Womersley (vol. 3., London, 1994), pp. 70-2.
[2] *NC*, pp. 46-7; c.f. Gibbon with the translation, p. 72.
[3] Kinnamos wrote after Manuel's death, likely between September 1180 and April 1182 according to various details in his work, c.f. Brand's introduction to the translation, *JK*, pp. 4-5; Choniates wrote his manuscript in three drafts: one under Alexios III Angelos in the late 12th or early 13th century before the fall of Constantinople, one shortly afterwards and one a decade later. *NC*, pp. VII-CV; A. Simpson, "Introduction," *Niketas Choniates A Historian and Writer*, ed. A. Simpson, and S. Efthymiadis (Geneva, 2009), p. 16.

Historians' accounts of John tend to follow these chronicles, presenting John's reign as a list of campaigns by an active soldier-emperor, concluding with Choniates' (and Gibbon's) original judgement of him as a "worthy enough ruler."[4] This analysis has become the standard orthodoxy, as demonstrated by the event description for a workshop at King's College, London, entitled *In the Shadow of Father and Son: John II Komnenos and his Reign*:

> The figure of emperor John II (1118-1143) has been overshadowed by both his father Alexios and son Manuel. During his reign no significant political events took place.
> Written sources have not left us much evidence regarding his period, although authors agree that he was a good emperor. Nevertheless, the period witnessed territorial expansion in Asia Minor as well as the construction of the most important monastic complex of the twelfth century in Constantinople.[5]

This thesis will break from such analysis. First, I shall build on recent scholarship concerning the nature of Choniates' and Kinnamos' works, which has critiqued them as carefully wrought pieces of literature with a rhetorical purpose, rather than as mines for historical facts, as they have previously been treated. Second, I shall exploit previously overlooked evidence from contemporary court poetry, speeches and letters, alongside other histories that mention the empire – in languages such as Armenian, Slavonic and Arabic – artistic, sigillographic and archaeological evidence. While historians have customarily limited their enquiries by merely corroborating the information in these accounts, contrasting them with each other and accounts such as Latin crusader histories, suggests that there is in fact a wealth of previously unexploited evidence that could be used. However, I do not presume to construct a refined biography of John II; indeed, even with these additional sources and further analysis of the old sources, a realistic biography is

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[4] Examples include: *God's Regents on Earth,* 2015, and "John II Komnenos," ODB, pp. 1046-7.
[5] *In the Shadow of Father and Son: John II Komnenos and his Reign* Event Description, accessed 30th September 2014, http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/chs/eventrecords/2012-13/Komnenos.aspx.

still out of reach. Instead, I propose that the messages from his reign conveyed by the sources available to us ought to be better understood; the political pulse of the time is contained within them, allowing us a window of comprehension into how John, his administration, and his rivals wished events to be portrayed, into the type of world these chroniclers lived in and sought to construct, and, finally, how that legacy was preserved by Choniates and Kinnamos. Furthermore, bringing John out from the shadows cast by Alexios and Manuel will allow deeper questions to be asked regarding the nature and practices of the Komnenian empire in this period. Firstly, it will be possible to observe how the empire operated in the twelfth century, which represented a new and important chapter in Roman history, after changes brought about by the crises of the eleventh century, and the reshaping of the eastern Mediterranean after the passage of the First Crusade. Secondly, it will be possible to assess more adequately the causes and effects of John's successes and failures during periods of territorial expansion, and the building of the *Pantokrator* monastery. John's true intentions shall be brought into stark relief by the revision of old evidence, and the incorporation of the new.

To begin this task, it is first necessary to break free from the shackles imposed by Choniates and Kinnamos. Scholars must be acutely aware that these histories were not neutral accounts, simply chronicling what occurred; rather, they were written to convince their readers of a political agenda. In Choniates' case, recent scholarship has demonstrated how one of the purposes of his constructed narrative is to present Roman history since 1118 as a steady decline in the rightful order of the world, the *taxis*, culminating in the fall of Constantinople in 1204.[6] John's reign was designed to show the world as it should be in Choniates' narrative,

[6] A. Kaldellis, "Paradox, Reversal and the Meaning of History," *Niketas Choniates A Historian and Writer*, ed. A. Simpson, and S. Efthymiadis (Geneva, 2009), pp. 75-99.

with barely the first hints of disorder and decay creeping in, and John himself as the near-perfect emperor from which all others would decline.[7] This desire to portray John's reign as ordered and successful results in Choniates, in the vast majority of cases, only relating instances of reversal in the context of their imminent resolution, with no regard for accurate chronology. Indeed, he glosses over certain events in John's reign in such a way that he is undeniably guilty of lying by omission. Even when Choniates does relate events more verifiably, he often changes the order to suit his narrative goals, or for dramatic effect. Therefore, while it would be contentious to suggest that Choniates' account is useless, his version of events must be reconciled with other narratives.

To a certain extent, Kinnamos' version helps to clear up these issues; where Choniates' portrayal of John is almost without exception flattering, Kinnamos' narrative goal often causes him to view John prejudicially. Kinnamos was writing a biography of Manuel, for which John's reign would form the prelude. He is excessive in his praise of Manuel, likely for the purpose of gaining employment under the new regime, to demonstrate his literary talents and value to the regency government that followed Manuel's death.[8] John's purpose in Kinnamos' narrative is complex: on the one hand Manuel gains some glory from being the worthy son of a worthy father, but on the other Manuel must be seen to surpass his father: a ruler who completes the unfinished tasks of his father and is wholly virtuous where his father had faults.[9] Kinnamos uses the fact that he is only giving a summary of

[7] Ibid. pp. 79-80; Simpson goes so far as to say John is portrayed "as an Ioannes *imaginaire.*" Simpson, "Introduction" (2009), p. 45.
[8] *JK*, pp. 4-5.
[9] See P. Stephenson, "John Cinnamus, John II Comnenus, and the Hungarian campaign of 1127-1129," *Byzantion* 66 (1996), pp. 177-187.

events as his 'get out' clause on some occasions, but even so the events he chooses to chronicle always confirm his slanted rhetorical purposes.

Treadgold and Magdalino posit that Choniates had read Kinnamos: they argue that Choniates deliberately ignored or actively rejected Kinnamos so that Choniates would be the definitive historian of the era, regarding Kinnamos as a panygyricist of Manuel rather than a historian.[10] Treadgold believes that the reason Choniates' narrative provides more detail after 1134 is that he consulted with a soldier who had begun campaigning with John about then, while Kinnamos' more equal treatment of the whole of John's reign is because he could consult with soldiers who were alive for the whole of it, and Treadgold suggests a few imperial secretaries Kinnamos could have known personally.[11] Neither reveal their sources directly, but in addition to likely oral evidence from eyewitnesses, sections such as descriptions of John's triumph evoke contemporary rhetorical poems, implying they also used texts such as these.[12] Treadgold also notes that Kinnamos' title, *Epitome*, and the fact he only devotes a twelfth of his manuscript to John despite his reign taking up two fifths of the chronological time, may be due to the fact that our surviving text was a summary of what Kinnamos originally wrote, abridged by a scribe.[13]

Despite this limitation, Kinnamos' narrative in conjunction with Choniates' potentially reveals two sides of John: Choniates portraying the wholly positive aspects, Kinnamos portraying the flawed aspects, with both drawing on some

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[10] W. Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians* (London, 2013), pp. 237-8; P. Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I Komnenos 1143-1180*, (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 13-4.
[11] Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 412-3.
[12] See M. Lau, "The Power of Poetry: Portraying the Expansion of the Empire under John II Komnenos," *Landscapes of Power – Selected Papers from the XV Oxford University Byzantine Society International Graduate Conference*, ed. M. Lau, C. Franchi, and M. Di Rodi (Oxford, 2014), pp. 195-214.
[13] Ibid. pp. 410-11, 279-80.

eyewitness sources and documentary evidence. Reconciling these disparate sources has been the conventional strategy for scholars to analyse John's reign, causing ongoing debates regarding issues such as dating John's Serbian and Hungarian campaigns, in which Kinnamos and Choniates cannot be reconciled. Equally, this approach has led to the reign of John often being studied in imprecise thematic terms; indeed, most of the historiography has been limited to studies concerning his relations with the Crusaders or campaigns in the Balkans as a whole. While this reconciliatory approach has the benefit of being able to fill-in-the-gaps for certain issues, it suffers from the fact that John's goals almost certainly differed from one year to the next, as circumstances developed and his priorities shifted. What is more, the methodology of these sources gives the impression that John dealt with the various challenges facing him sequentially, when in fact his choices, and the events themselves, can be better understood when it is acknowledged that he had to balance multiple priorities at once, often facing various challenges in the same year. Indeed, I had planned to present the material thematically, as the other two major studies on the reign of John have done.[14] However, it became clear that the significance of certain events radically shifted when they were placed in conjunction, and so it became a priority to present the material in chronological order. This methodology has also caused me to lengthen the chronological range of this thesis, which originally began with Alexios' death in 1118, but now begins with John's early life, as our entire understanding of his reign can be re-evaluated when it is acknowledged that many of his initiatives began during his period of co-rule.

[14] F. Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène, 1118-1143, et Manuel I Comnène, 1143-1180,* reprint (2 vols., New York, 1912); A. Papageorgiou, *John II Komnenos and his era (1118-1143)* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, National Capodistrian University of Athens, 2010).

This thesis therefore represents a break, both from the original texts and the historiographical tradition. With the limitations of Kinnamos and Choniates acknowledged, they are nonetheless valuable sources, particularly in conjunction with evidence from the contemporary court sources. These sources are usually classified as 'rhetorical' texts, produced by court rhetors to glorify the emperor and his regime, with the three most productive during John's reign being Michael Italikos, Nikephoros Basilakes, and particularly Theodore Prodromos.[15] They produced a mixture of formal orations, *ekphrases*, hymns, occasional poems, and some letters, all of these being in varying forms of Greek and for audiences ranging from the court to the people of the city as part of a public ceremony.[16] The texts contain far more detail than is usual in imperial rhetoric, as though the rhetors may use conventional poetic devices, these devices have specific meanings under John, referring to recent events.[17] Therefore, though these sources have a political agenda that influences their transmission of events, they are no worse a source than the histories. Indeed, the fact that they are produced at the time provides us with the message the regime wished to be known in the capital, allowing us to take the political pulse of John's regime.

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[15] Nikephoros Basilakes, *Nicephori Basilacae Orationes et epistolae*, ed. A. Garzya (Leipzig, 1984); Michael Italikos, *Michel Italikos lettres et discours*, ed. P. Gautier (Paris, 1972); *Prodromos*.

[16] C.f. A. Kazhdan, and A. W. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Los Angeles, 1985), p. 129; W. Hörandner, "Zur kommunikativen Funktion byzantinischer Gedichte", *XVIII Mezdunarodnyj kongress vizantinistov. Plenarnye doklady* (Moscow, 1991), pp. 415–432; M. Lauxtermann, "Byzantine Poetry in Context," *Pour une "nouvelle" histoire de la littérature byzantine. Actes du colloque international philologique, Nicosie, 25-28 mai 2000*, ed. P. Odorico and P. Agapitos (Paris, 2002), pp. 139–152; E. Jeffreys, *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2003); F. Bernard, *The Beats of the Pen. Social Contexts of Reading and Writing Poetry in Eleventh-Century Constantinople* (Unpublished PhD Thesis; University of Gent, 2010); P. Magdalino, "Cultural Change? The Context of Byzantine Poetry from Geometres to Prodromos," *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh Century Byzantium*, ed. F. Bernard, and K. Demoen (Farnham, 2012); Lau, "The Power of Poetry", pp. 195-214; C.f. Chapter Nine.

[17] Hörandner considers Prodromos' *Kaiseridee* to be highly traditionalized, using tropes usual to rhetors and emperors in antiquity, but Kazhdan and Franklin have noted that the amount of factual detail is significantly more than is traditional. Hörandner, "Zur kommunikativen Funktion byzantinischer Gedichte", pp. 94-7; A. Kazhdan, and S. Franklin, "Theodore Prodromos: A Reappraisal", *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 106.

Comprehension of the messages disseminated to both elite and popular Constantinopolitan audiences can then be juxtaposed with not only Choniates and Kinnamos, but also non-Greek and non-textual sources, allowing some cases where the political rhetoric can be compared with events on the ground to provide a degree of understanding previously unattainable for this period. The non-Greek sources that are of particular use include local sources such as the Priest of Diokleia for the Balkans and Michael the Syrian for Anatolia that give us unique insights into the details of the events that occurred in these regions that Choniates and Kinnamos often gloss over.

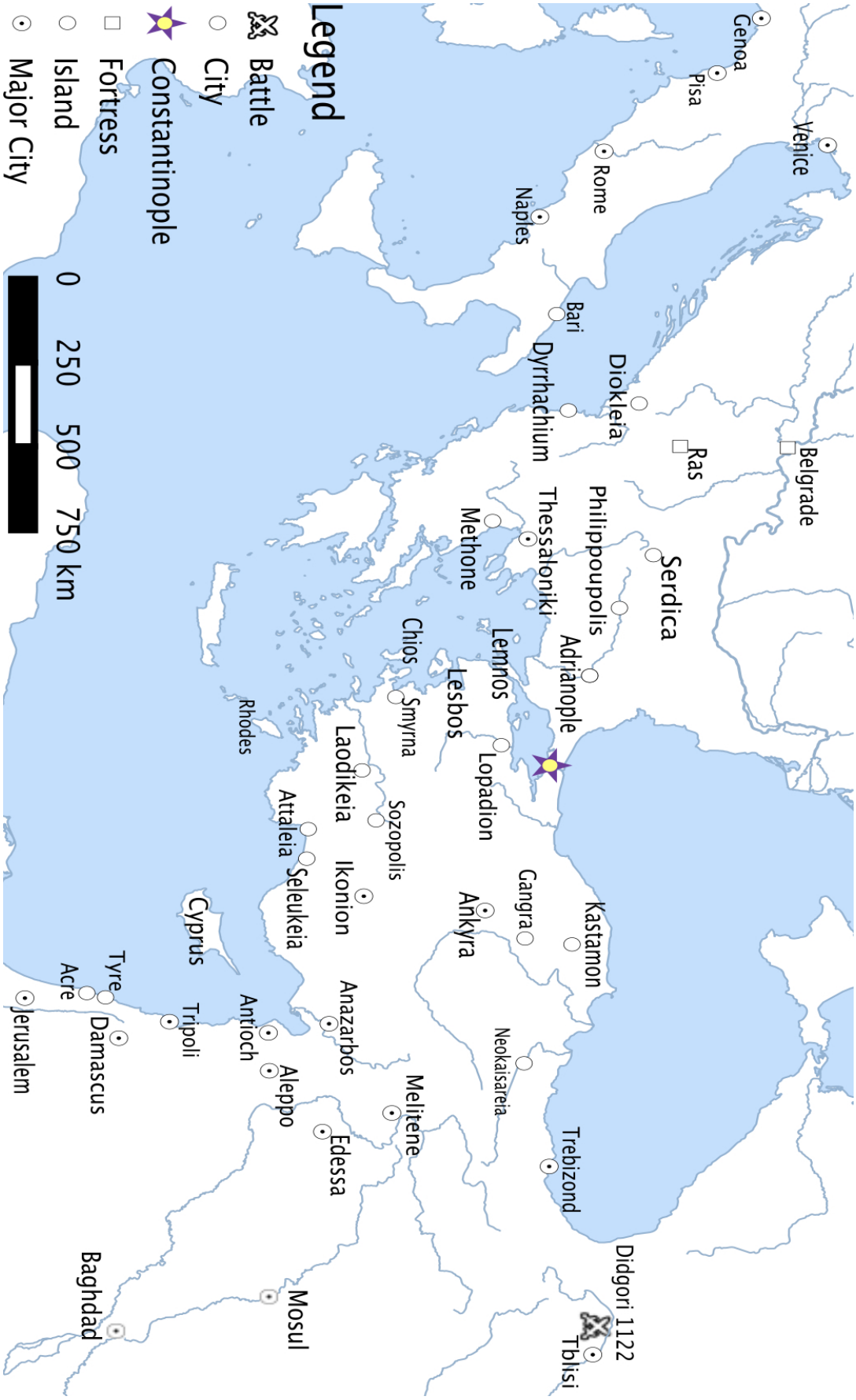
The intersection of the expanded textual evidence with material is shown most prominently in the cases of the building of the Pantokrator monastery and the Anatolian and Balkan fortifications. Though inscriptions are rare from fortifications of this period, forts such as Lopadion and Anchyrous are well dated in textual sources, and they have very specific architectural features that allow for the creation of diagnostic characterics for the identification of other forts. Chapter 8 will focus upon the fortifications in Anatolia and discuss past studies that have collated these characterics in more detail, but in general Komnenian fortifications are composed of red brick with stone courses across the masonry, sometimes in decorative cloisonné patterns. They are often small in scale, but with many forts constructed in the same region, creating a network to safeguard the countryside or coastline. In addition to these, many older fortresses are reused, thus though they do not display the same architectural features they do fit in with the network that John, his father and son built.

In the case of the fortifications in particular, this thesis thus incorporates much previously underutilised evidence to understand more fully what was

occurring – and what John wished to be known was occurring – in the provinces and on the frontiers. The disjunction between events on the ground and how they were presented (in Constantinople in particular) is the subject of my final chapter, where 'the other side of the story' as analysed in the rest of the thesis will be expounded. This holistic approach to what occurred during John's reign does come at the expense of further analysis of specific aspects of his regime; that is, full examination of administrative, economic, ecclesiastical and legal developments which will not be covered here but must form part of a broader study.

This thesis will evaluate John's success at fulfilling roles such as a manager of client rulers, military commander, diplomat, and pious, heroic and legitimate Roman paradigm of emperorship. His success can be seen in the fact that first Choniates, then Gibbon, and other scholars since, have bought into this stage-managed model of rulership. Understanding this legacy of success through critical source analysis allows us to prove that, far from there being "no sources for" or "no major political events during" John's reign, it is in fact a crucial period, during which Byzantium was in a position to act, rather than react, in the transformed world of the twelfth century. Far from being in a state of terminal decline leading to the fall of Constantinople in 1204, the empire evolved to operate effectively in this changed political order – at times reverting to older methods and patterns, at others deploying completely new initiatives. In the process, it can be seen that during John's reign, Byzantium became more of an imperial, Roman state than it had been in the previous century, in both strategy and culture. This overarching theme will be developed throughout this thesis, as it is the unifying *modus operandi* of John's regime, evidenced by both military campaigns and the politics of Constantinople, and so full clarification of this claim can only be proved cumulatively. This change

did not start in 1118, but developed throughout John's co-reign and reign, and was the result of events stretching right back to his birth.



Map One – Eastern Mediterranean

Chapter One

The Reign of John with Alexios

John II Komnenos was born in the purple on Monday 13th September 1087, and in 1092 was taken to Hagia Sophia to be baptised by patriarch Nicholas III Grammatikos, and then crowned as emperor by his father Alexios I.[18] John's sister Anna was not impressed with his physical appearance according to her *Alexiad*, describing the newborn as dark-skinned, with a broad forehead, somewhat thin cheeks, a nose that was neither snub nor aquiline, darkish eyes, and a vigorous disposition.[19] The Latin chronicler William of Tyre notes his dark appearance, in addition to shortness of stature, and in the near contemporary Acts of the Eleousa Monastery he is known as "τοῦ Μαυροϊωάννου" or Black-John, though such a dark visage is not particularly evident in either of the surviving visual depictions of him as an adult.[20] His "vigorous disposition" on the other hand stayed with him throughout his life, as attested in both the rhetorical sources that praise his untiring nature, and how not a year went by without a military campaign away from Constantinople from the moment the sources began to focus upon him.[21] Of his

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[18] Theophylaktos of Ohrid delivers a prose encomion to Alexios in 1088, congratulating him on John's birth and urging him to crown him as a co-emperor immediately, thus this establishes a *terminus post quem*. Theophylact of Ohrid, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα κῦριν Ἀλέξιον τὸν Κομνηνόν" [Oration for Alexios Komnenos], *Théophylacte D'Achrida Discours, Traités, Poésies*, ed. P. Gautier (Thessalonica, 1980), p. 235; later sources such as Zonaras and the short chronicles (*Kleinchroniken*) all imply his baptism and coronation were all but immediate, but the Neapolitan archive gives the exact date of 1092, *Zonaras*, 18.22, p. 739; *KC*, Chronik 5.3, p. 55; *Regii neapolitani archive monumenta edita ac illustrate*, ed. A. Spinelli (vol. 5., Naples, 1858), nos. 457-8, 462, 464-7, and all subsequent entries mentioning John; see P. Frankopan, *The First Crusade The Call From the East* (London, 2012), p. 79, n.40.

[19] *AK*, 6.8, p. 185.

[20] William of Tyre, *Willelmi Tyrensiis Archiepiscopi Chronicon*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens (Turnhout, 1986), 15.23, p. 706; Louis Petit, "Le monastère de Notre-Dame de Pitié en Macédoine", *Izvestija Russkogo Arheologičeskogo Instituta v Konstantinopole* 6 (1900), p. 30; See Chapter 9 of this thesis for visual representations of John.

[21] Examples of such rhetoric include *Prodromos,* XVI, lines 38 and 65, in addition to occasions when Prodromos begs the emperor to follow a victory with a stay in Constantinople so he may acclaim his

childhood we have only fragments of information as to his development, and thus unstable suppositions as to what effect contemporary events may have had upon him. Sources for this period include the anonymous *Muses of Alexios*, traditionally assumed to be deathbed advice written by Alexios for John, it has in fact been more securely dated by Reinsch to shortly after Alexios' death as a legitimising piece for John, for the author admits that Alexios could not talk from his final illness, and that the words had come "mystically, secretly."[22] It is mentioned prominently in the *Muses* that John grew up in the midst of one of the greatest crises the empire had known, "troubled all around by the barbarians that were causing distress and trying to constrict the children of Rome in their length and breadth," and he and his father had been equally threatened by enemies within the empire, and indeed coup attempts by members of their own family.[23] Though traditionally assumed to be a strength, the very foundation of the 'Komnenian family system,' Alexios' increased use of family in government resulted in that very system's inherent weakness as every member of the Komnenoi believed he could be emperor.[24]

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achievements, advice seemingly never followed, *Prodromos*, IXγ lines 11 and 16; Poem Xγ line 17; Poem XI, line 219.

[22] *Muses I*, line 42. Alexios authoring the *Muses* is assumed by Mullett, Angold and Magdalino: M. Mullett, "Alexios I Komnenos and Imperial Renewal," *New Constantines. The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th centuries*, ed. P. Magdalino (Aldershot, 1994), p. 265; M. Angold, "Alexios I Komnenos: An Afterword," *Alexios I Komnenos-Papers*, ed. M. Mullett and D. Smythe (Belfast, 1996), pp. 408-10; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 27-30. Mullett does discuss the possibility it may be by John rather than Alexios. Though Maas as the original editor believed the section mentioning Alexios being dead was added later, the text is one unified metre with no hint of another author, and this idea of the text existing without any introduction would be very unusual, thus Reinsch advocates the text being composed under John; for full discussion see D. Reinsch, "Bemerkungen zu einigen Byzantinischen ‚Fürstenspiegeln´ des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts," *Synesios von Kyrene: Politik – Literatur – Philosophie, herausgegeben von Helmut Seng und Lars M. Hoffmann* (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 412-7; full context of this source will be provided on p. 39.

[23] *Muses I*, lines 282-6.

[24] For earlier interpretations of the alleged strength of Alexios' kinship system, see A. Kazhdan and S. Ronchey, *L'aristocrazia bizantina: dal principio dell'XI alla fine del XII secolo* (Palermo, 1997); J-C Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance 963–1210* (Paris, 1990), p. 359; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 180-91; *ibidem*. "Innovations in Government," *Alexios I Komnenos-Papers*, pp. 146–49. For its weakness, see P. Frankopan, "Kinship and the Distribution of Power in Komnenian Byzantium," *English Historical Review* 495 (2007), pp. 1-34; idem, *Call from the East*, pp. 57-86.

How much these events affected John is impossible to know, as he goes unmentioned for much of this period in our sources, though from our knowledge of the youth and education of other imperial princes we can presume that he was not ignorant of these challenges to his father's rule while he studied a curriculum that for his own succesor Manuel was described as: "the imperial science."[25] This would likely have included the lives of rulers both good and bad from antiquity onwards, the Bible, rhetoric and military strategy – knowledge useful to any Roman emperor.[26] The crucial lesson the author of the *Muses* tells us that John learned, and should carry forward for the rest of his reign, was to always hold true to "virtue," ἀρετή, with the connotations of courage and manliness that this carries in Greek.[27]

Such courage would have been required for John's first known role in shaping events at the age of ten, when he was used as a hostage outside Constantinople in April 1097 to guarantee Alexios' good faith to the leaders of the First Crusade.[28] This allowed Alexios to mend fences with Godfrey of Bouillon, future ruler of Jerusalem, while John was hosted by Baldwin, who ascended the throne of Jerusalem himself in 1118, demonstrating that even at an early age, John would have been personally familiar with the Latin rulers of the Levant, and that he would have been aware of both the crisis of empire and the First Crusade. The other notable event that would shape John's later life was the capture of a Turkish prisoner at the siege of Nicaea that same year. He was of a similar age to John, and according to a later oration of Basilakes he was John's "inseparable friend and near rival in games and early military training" as well as constant companion according

[25] "βασιλικὴ ἐπιστήμη" *Italikos*, 44, p. 283.
[26] C.f. D. Angelov, "Emperors and Patriarchs as Ideal Children and Adolescents. Literary Conventions and Cultural Expectations," *Becoming Byzantine: Children and Childhood in Byzantium*, ed. A. Papaconstantinou and A-M. Talbot (Washington D.C, 2013), pp. 105-6.
[27] *Muses I*, line 253, and onwards discussing how all will go well if he holds true to virtue.
[28] Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana History of the Journey to Jerusalem*, ed. S. Edgington (Oxford, 2007), p. 84; William of Tyre, Book 2, 11.10-12.17, pp. 174-6.

to Choniates. He was in fact to be John's future *megas domestikos* of east and west, John Axouch.[29] This gift of such a companion for John also suggests that the young emperor was accompanying his father on campaign despite his tender age, and it is from this point onwards that there are increasingly frequent references to John on military expeditions, demonstrating that the primary focus of his education was warfare. This focus had been typical of the education of imperial princes from the eleventh century, and would continue to be so for the following centuries as the emperor must above all else provide victory to be deemed successful.[30] Complementing the business of soldiering, the games referenced by Basilikes' oration would have included pastimes related to military training such as polo in addition to hunting, for which John must have had a preference throughout his life as shown by both the planned assassination attempt in the hunting park at Philopation outside Constantinople in 1119, and indeed John's death whilst hunting in Cilicia in 1143.[31] Further deductions concerning John's early life are even less sure: Choniates tells us that his mother Eirene considered him "rash, pleasure-loving and weak in character" compared to her daughter Anna's husband Nikephoros Bryennios. Despite her hostility and bias against John with regard to his succession, such a wild youth may be being referenced by the *Muses* where the author states that though youth up until the age of 30 is "sullied and pleasure loving," on reaching the age of 31, as John had in 1118, you are "come under the control of yourself" and thus worthy of rule.[32] Thus there is the possibility John may be likened to Shakespeare's Prince Hal as portrayed in *Henry IV*, coming of age and

[29] Basilakes, "λογος εἰς τὸν σεβαστὸν καὶ μέγαν Δομέστικον" *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 87; *NC*, pp. 9-10; p. 79.24-29.
[30] Angelov, "Emperors and Patriarch's as Ideal Children," pp. 107-111; discussed further in Chapter Nine.
[31] Ibid. notes. 106-8; Kinnamos mentions how Manuel in particular was hugely devoted to Polo: *JK*, pp. 263-4.
[32] *Muses I*, lines 178 and 205-6 respectively.

maturity as power was given to him. Though any comparison with Shakespeare makes this by definition a literary trope, Choniates' reason for John's mother's opposition to her son becoming emperor combined with the *Muses* performed for John may hint that this was actually the case.

Whether this was the case or not, John was to play another passive role in what were still wholly his father's political initiatives, but one that would have profound effects upon John's political and indeed his personal life – marriage to the Hungarian Princess Piroska Árpád. This marriage was a desperate attempt by Alexios to try and extract himself from a diplomatic mess he had made, that almost led to the empire becoming isolated with a coalition of neighbours intent on working in concert against it. Correcting these missteps would take many of both Alexios' latter years and thus John's opening forays into personal rule, and therefore constitute essential background for analysing this period. Additionally, it is in the context of these events that John was himself crowned emperor.

John's Coronation, and his Marriage to Piroska-Eirene

The genesis of a series of diplomatic missteps and counter-steps began with the fallout from the battle of Levounion in 1091. Alexios defeated the Pechenegs by having their Cuman allies turn on them, such that this is often referred to as the turning point in Byzantium's fortunes and the beginning of the 'Komnenian restoration.'[33] In Stephenson's view, the victory at Levounion finally gave Alexios an unassailable position in Constantinople, directly allowing him to disinherit

[33] *AK*, 8.4-8.6, pp. 243-53; *Zonaras*, 18.22, p. 740; Frankopan, *Call from the East*, pp. 37-8; J. Birkenmeier, *The Development of the Komnenian Army 1081-1204* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 70-7; W. Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, 1997), p. 617; M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204. A Political History* (London, 1984), pp. 110-1.

Constantine, the son of Michael VII Doukas in favour of John, as well as banish "seditious elements" from court.[34]

This view is unlikely, not only because crowning John as emperor before this would be presumptuous with pre-modern rates of child mortality, but also because Zonaras tells us that Constantine Doukas was deprived of the purple shoes shortly after John's birth, a dating supported by Anna who tells us she suffered "a great blow to her future before her eighth year," putting the disinheritance in 1090 before Levounion, and thus unconnected to it.[35] Frankopan has in fact shown that Alexios' coronation of John as heir may indeed have caused more opposition to his rule and not less, as the plot of Alexios' nephew, also named John Komnenos, and the even more threatening conspiracy of Nikephoros Diogenes that both followed in 1094 demonstrates; it was with the failure of these conspiracies that nobles were banished.[36] Thus it is more likely that the timing of John's coronation was merely because being over the age of four, he had passed the years of early childhood mortality common in the middle ages and this was the natural occasion to crown an eldest son and heir as co-emperor. Alexios could thus imitate the Macedonians and start building the Komnenian dynasty as Isaac I Komnenos had failed to do during his brief reign in the eleventh century.

With these conspiracies threatening Alexios' rule, it is perhaps no surprise that his erstwhile Cuman allies decided that they had more to gain from hostility to Alexios. They appear to have had no trouble crossing the Danube and the Stara Planina mountains, bringing them into Macedonia to plunder fortresses such as

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[34] Stephenson, P, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900-1204*, (Cambridge, 2000), p. 103; *AK*, 7.2, p. 208 and 8.9, p. 257.
[35] *Zonaras,* 18.21, p. 733; *AK*, 14.7, p. 451
[36] *AK*, 7.7-8, pp. 252-3, 9.6-9, pp. 271-8, 14.7, p. 451; Frankopan, "Kinship and the Distribution of Power," pp. 1-27; Frankopan, *Call from the East*, pp. 79-86.

Păcuilul lui Soare, Nufărul, Axiopolis and even the regional headquarters of Isaccea en route.[37] Though they were defeated, it was not without yet another group of Cumans crossing the Danube, and even with this incursion seen off, there was yet another Cuman raid in 1114 that Alexios also saw the need to confront personally.[38] Despite this, scholars have previously undervalued the impact of these raids, which together with the possibility there may also have been a Rus expedition in 1116 that conquered a few towns along the Danube before being thrown back at Dristra, builds up a picture whereby imperial forces could only hold major cities in the Paristrion, rather than safely guard the Danube frontier from incursions.[39]

Rus hostility may have been provoked due to Alexios's attempt at a pro-Cuman diplomatic policy to forestall any future invasions and to win Levounion.[40]

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[37] *AK*, 10.1-4, pp. 281-95; *Zonaras*, 18.23, p. 744; The devastation in the archaeological record of Păcuilul lui Soare and Nufărul is noted by Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 105, based on coin finds – Madgearu however notes though these together with Isaccea and Axiopolis were attacked, none were abandoned in 1095 according to the latest archaeology, and that in fact the Pecheneg invasion of 1122 was to blame for the abandonment of these sites. A. Madgearu, *Byzantine Military Organization on the Danube, 10th-12th Centuries* (Leiden, 2013), p. 142. See Chapter 3.

[38] *AK*, 14.8, pp. 454-6; Madgearu posits that in times of imperial weakness, tributary peoples in this region were always prepared to take advantage, thus there was constant oscillation by nomads within imperial borders as well as peoples such as the Vlachs. He additionally notes how this region of Oltenia today has a large amount of place names of Pecheneg or Cuman origin, including the ford over the Danube still called *Vadul Cumanilor*, "the ford of the Cumans," strongly implying that the nomads had a strong influence upon the region: Madgearu, *Military Organization on the Danube*, p. 144.

[39] The facts of the Rus raid are controversial; see Madgearu, *Military Organization on the Danube*, p. 144; V. Spinei, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads North of the Danube Delta from the Tenth to the Mid-Thirteenth Century. East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450-1450* (Leiden, 2009), pp. 124-5; For the Rus expedition see: *PVL I*, ed. D. S. Likhachev, red. V.P. Adrianova-Peretts (Moscow, 1950), pp. 176, 201; "Ипатіевская летопись", *PSRL II* (St. Petersburg, 1843), pp. 7-8; "Летопись по Воскресенскому списку," *PSRL VII* (St. Petersburg, 1856), p. 24; "Густинская летопись", *PSRL II* (St Petersburg, 1843), p. 291; "Летописный сборникъ, именуемый Патрі-а ршею или Никоновскою летописью I," PSRL IX (St. Petersburg, 1862), p. 150 (where the events are dated to 1117); For the material culture findings see I. Barnea, "Byzance, Kiev et l'Orient sur le Bas-Danube du Xe au XIIe siècle," *Nouvelles études d'histoire* (Bucharest, 1955), pp. 173-7; V.B. Perkhavko, "Russia's trade with Byzantium's Danubian provinces in the eleventh-twelfth centuries," *Acts XVIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Selected Papers: Main and Communications, Moscow, 1991, II*, ed. I Ševčenko and G. G. Litavrin (Shepherdstown, 1996), pp. 13-8.

[40] Victor Spinei's work has been critiqued by N. Berend, Review of Victor Spinei, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads North of the Danube Delta from the Tenth to the Mid-Thirteenth Century. East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450-1450* (Brill : Leiden, 2009), *The Medieval Review* (11.03.14), p. 545, Spinei's response:

For the purpose, Alexios had offered a marriage alliance in 1104 to the Cumans' main Rus ally, Volodar of Premsyl, with the groom possibly being Isaac, John's brother, but Volodar was an enemy of both Vladimir of Kiev and Coloman of Hungary.[41] This overture therefore caused a shift of alliances hazardous to Byzantium, as Vladimir then established dynastic ties with Coloman, who had already been allied in a conflict against Volodar and the Cumans in 1099, and indeed Coloman began considering a marriage alliance with Alexios' arch-enemy Bohemond of Taranto, newly installed at Antioch and himself intensely hostile to Byzantium as the son of Robert Guiscard, in the same year after the passage of the First Crusade.

This cascade of alliances almost became a nightmare coalition aligned against Alexios. To arrest it he offered John, his heir, to King Coloman of Hungary in order to forestall any Hungarian-Norman-Kievan alliance that would have made Bohemond's second invasion even more hazardous to the empire, in addition to the Cumans having proven themselves occasional allies at best and unlikely to come to Alexios' aid without him giving up more than he may have wished.[42] Unfortunately for Alexios, the fallout from his Cuman misstep continued, as securing Hungarian goodwill not only required marrying John to Piroska, but also included Alexios giving Hungary free reign to invade Dalmatia, which in itself offended the Venetians who saw Dalmatia as their area of influence, causing a conflict between

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https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/14153/12.01.19.html?sequence=1 For this thesis only the less controversial aspects of his work are used.

[41] *AK,* 14.8, pp. 454-8; *PVL 1* (1950), p. 185; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 205; see Map Two.

[42] M. Font, *Koloman the Learned, King of Hungary* (Szeged, 2001); tr. M. Miklán (Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Pécs, 2001), pp. 73-4; Z. J. Kosztolnyik, *The Dynastic Policy of the Árpáds, Géza I to Emery (1074-1204)* (Boulder, 2006), pp. 101-2; J. Tuzson, *Istvan II (1116-1131) A Chapter in Medieval Hungarian History* (New York, 2002), p. 51; F. Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni: Political Relations between Hungary and Byzantium in the 12th Century* (Budapest, 1989), p. 13; Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, pp. 148-9; Spinei, *Romanians and Turkic Nomads*, pp. 124; Madgearu, *Military Organization on the Danube*, pp. 148-9.

Alexios' two allies in 1115. In fact by backing neither, Byzantium was not well placed, particularly as the Venetians had aided Alexios against Bohemond's invasion back in 1107, and then when he would not return the favour against Hungary, this caused much of the emerging distrust between Venice, Hungary and Byzantium with which John and his successors would have to deal. Examining this, we must therefore judge that either Alexios made an immense foreign policy blunder in attempting to ally himself to Premsyl and the Cumans by misjudging the effect such overtures from the battle of Levounion onwards would have on the broader network of alliances, or at the very least he was prioritising the elimination of the nomad threat in such a way that he was willing to seek that alliance first and repair his bridges with other parties later, or indeed to leave those problems to John as it turned out. Either way, his policy was unsuccessful as the Cuman raid of 1114 demonstrates; whether through the weakness of Volodar against the allied Vladimir and Coloman, the need to mend fences with Hungary to prevent a Hungarian-Norman-Kievan alliance, or the problem of the tribal nature of the steppe nomads meaning that peace with some tribes did not stop others from raiding, it was left to John to deal with the fallout.[43]

This then, was the full context for John's marriage to princess Piroska, rechristened Eirene as John's empress, and it is evocative of the whole situation that

[43] Both Rus sources and Al-Idrisi reference that at some point during the twelfth century, the Cumans ceased to be under a single leadership, implying they had been more than a loose alliance of tribes under a strong chieftain, and had divided into at least the 'Black Cumans' and 'White Cumans' – labels that Curta points out reflect Al-Idrisi's scholarly approach more than political reality, but which do imply political disunity. Hungarian sources place the 'Black Cumans' in the steppes to the east of the Carpathians, which may also be the 'Savage Cumans' referenced in Rus sources opposed to the other Cumans: Al-Idrisi, *Géographie d'Édrisi*, tr. P. A. Jaubert (Paris, 1840), pp. 400-1; F. Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 311-2; V. Spinei, *Ultimele valuri migratoare la nordul Mării Negre și al Dunării de Jos* (Iași, 1996), pp. 125-6; P. B. Golden, "The Polovcii Dikii," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* (vols., 3 and 4., 1979-80), pp. 296-309.

John was betrothed to her in 1095 on campaign with his father.[44] One more fortunate side-effect of this marriage was that on her mother's side Piroska was from the German imperial family, and thus second cousin to the western emperors Henry V and Conrad, which though not referenced in any Byzantine or western source, perhaps contributed to the good relations and even alliance between the western and eastern empires during John's reign.[45] Equally the above section contextualises much of the situation John inherited in the northern Balkans both diplomatically, with Hungary, Venice, and the Rus Principalities, and militarily with the Pecheneg and Cuman nomadic tribes.

Connected to this Balkan situation was thus the mixed legacy of Alexios concerning relations with the Normans of southern Italy, Sicily and Antioch. Again, John was not an observer to events, but a participant, as he can be placed in the company of his father's army during Bohemond of Taranto's second invasion of the Balkans, at least during two specific incidents in 1106 and 1108. Despite Anna's customary minimisation of her brother's role, even she mentions that John's eldest children, the twins Alexios and Maria, were born at Balabista in the theme of Macedonia in 1106, and that some of John's men were transferred to the command of Marianos Maurokatakalon in 1108, John being at the ages of 18 and 20 respectively and so definitely of an age when he would have his own retinue of troops.[46] By the treaty of Devol, the Norman duke swore fealty to both Alexios and John, the written text of both the treaty and the oath related verbatim by Anna in the *Alexiad*.[47]

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[44] Sathas Anonymous, Μεσαιωνικὴ βιβλιοθήκη, ed. K. Sathas (Venice, 1894), pp. 181-2.
[45] See M. Lau, "Piroska-Eirene, First Western Empress: Power and Perception," *Saint Piroska 880: Holiness and Power in Komnenian Constantinople* (Budapest, 2016) [Forthcoming].
[46] *AK*, 13.7, p. 403.
[47] *AK*, 13.12, p. 422.

The key terms of the treaty were Bohemond's oath of allegiance, in return for his becoming part of the imperial administration as *doux* of Antioch and *sebastos* in the court hierarchy, to send troops for the emperor's armies when called upon, to return his eastern conquests to the empire and he would be given more lands in Syria when they were captured from the Muslims in the Levant, such as Aleppo, and that a cleric from Hagia Sophia would be selected as Patriarch of Antioch.[48] This treaty hugely favoured Alexios and John without overly humiliating Bohemond, but unfortunately this diplomatic coup was never to be enacted as Bohemond died in 1111 and his nephew Tancred refused to honour the terms; and despite a few diplomatic overtures to the Pisans and Pope Pascal II, the enforcement of the treaty of Devol was another half-finished plan of Alexios left to John to complete.[49]

These plans being half-done is not to say Alexios' achievements were not considerable, and thus my analysis of his later reign does not seek to belittle his contribution, or indeed as should be said again, the work of both Alexios and John together. Between the battle of Levounion, John's marriage to Piroska and the treaty of Devol, Alexios and John had brought the western part of the empire back from the brink of a system collapse, and so they could finally start focusing on the Turks in Anatolia.

The Anatolian Situation

We cannot place John with certainty on Alexios' final campaign, but considering our intermittent knowledge of his presence with his father since his

[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid. J. Richard, *The Crusades c.1071-c.1291*, tr. J. Birrell (Cambridge, 1999), p. 130; Magdalino *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 31-2; A. Jotischky, *Crusading and the Crusader States* (Harlow, 2004), p. 69; Birkenmeier, *Development of the Komnenian Army*, p. 46.

seventeenth birthday at least, it stands to reason it would continue through his twenties, particularly as John's younger brother Andronikos is known to have been present from both the *Alexiad* and a later monody on his death by John Italikos, and "the porphyrogeniti" are known to have usually travelled together or stayed in Constantinople together under Alexios and John.[50] At the close of the eleventh century, taking advantage of the passage of the First Crusade, Alexios and his brother in law, the *megas doux* John Doukas, had defeated Tzachas of Smyrna and reclaimed the Anatolian coast and its major cities such as Nicaea and Philadelphia, and then in 1098 made peace with Kilij Arslan I of Ikonion, which lasted until the latter's death in 1107.[51] This peace to the east gave the empire some valuable breathing space, allowing Alexios to see off another Norman invasion of the Balkans in 1107, and then rebuild the shattered economy and administration, their manpower reserves, diplomatic alliances with polities in Italy, and to consolidate their reconquered territories.[52] By 1115, the empire was back on its feet, and the new sultan in Ikonion, Malik Shah had come to power, and according to Anna, threatened to ravage imperial provinces in Anatolia, encouraged by Alexios' gout and subsequent inaction.[53] When Alexios had recovered in 1116, he was therefore thoroughly determined to not only see off the raiders, but also to take the fight to Ikonion itself.

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[50] *AK*, 15.5, pp. 475-6; *Italikos,* 3, pp. 84-5; A monody by Prodromos also tells us he fought the Turks, though this could also refer to him campaigning with John during his brother's early rule. *Prodromos*, II; as indeed would John's own sons as attested by Prodromos and Italikos in almost all court sources.
[51] *AK*, 9.3, pp. 263-5; Albert of Aachen, pp. 127, 311; Frankopan, *Call from the East*, p. 203.
[52] There are multiple examples of Alexios setting his house in order in these years, including fiscal reform between 1106-9, the clerical reform edict of 1107, diplomatic activity with the Pisans, Genoese and Venetians and theological debates with the Papacy. See in particular A. Harvey, "Financial Crisis and the rural economy," and P. Magdalino, "The reform edict of 1107," both in *Alexios I Komnenos-Papers*, pp. 167-84 and 199-218 respectively.
[53] *AK*, 15.1, pp. 461-3.

As well as striking at these Turks merely because they had attacked the empire, reconquering Ikonion would secure interior lines of communication and logistics across Anatolia, further defending the coastal provinces, by gaining control over the two central passes through the mountains in the region, which follow the river valleys, Roman roads and indeed later railroads and motorways.[54] Such a strategy was indeed followed by the Diadochii kingdom of Pergamon under the Attalids in the 3rd to 2nd centuries BC, and by the Greeks during the Greco-Turkish war of 1919-22. The latter parallel is particularly illuminating, as many of the battles took place at the same sites as those in the twelfth century, such as the battle of Kütahya–Eskişehir in 1921. The Greek failure to capitalize on this victory allowed the Turks to rally their defences at the Sakarya/Sangarios River, throwing back the Greeks and leading to a successful counter attack and their banishment from Smyrna in 1122; these comparisons demonstrate that there is some geographical determinism at play with campaigns in this region that hold throughout its history.[55] As with the Attalids and the twentieth century Greeks, John and his advisors knew that the Anatolian coastal regions would be more protected by an interior hinterland in addition to the benefits to logistics and communications, and so a campaign should be executed there, rather than along the northern and southern coasts of Anatolia.

Despite the coast usually being more fertile and productive, there were also good economic reasons for annexing the interior rather than the coast. Prior to 1071, the Empire had two primary areas of pastoral land for herds and equiculture: the

[54] See Map Four; having control over the western provinces of Asia Minor down to Attaleia, there are only two major routes to Ikonion: the overland route to the east of both Sozopolis and Philomelion, and the coastal road near Attaleia, today the site of the 300 and 400/695/330 motorways respectively.
[55] E. V. Hansen, *The Attalids of Pergamon* (New York, 1971); M. L. Smith, *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor, 1919–1922* (London, 1998).

now Norman-occupied southern Italy and the now Seljuk-occupied plateau of Asia Minor.[56] Losing these areas "meant an increased reliance on Thrace, Bulgaria and Macedonia, and, to a lesser degree, Serbia".[57] By 1117, the Normans, the Pechenegs and the Cumans had ravaged all of these areas in recent years (and indeed Serbia was equally problematic, as shall be discussed in the following section, *The Balkan Situation*, p. 33). Coupled with the huge number of herds and horses used by an army on campaign almost continuously since the latter stages of the reign of Alexios at least, there is a strong reason to believe that the Empire may have been suffering a shortage.[58] Additional evidence for this can be discerned from the number of herds John is noted as capturing from the Turks on his campaigns, and indeed the praise and wonder Theodore Prodromos and Nikephoros Basiliakes lay upon the emperor for doing so emphasise how this would appear to have been a priority for him to both secure, and then to exhibit his prizes when he returned from his later Cilician campaign.[59] The enthusiasm for recruiting Pechenegs, Turks and Latins to his army may also be evidence of the lack of native horses and horsemen for John to draw upon, as shall be seen throughout this thesis, suggesting that the lack of land for native equiculture was a recurring problem for John. Between economic and strategic arguments, in addition to the attacks by the Seljuk Turks of Rum on imperial territory, the Philomelion campaign was therefore the most logical place for Alexios and John to continue their reconquest of Anatolia in 1116-7.

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[56] A. E. Laiou, and C. Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 97.
[57] Ibid.
[58] The former at least may have been ameliorated by large herds that were apparently found on Patmos, Rhodes and Cyprus, described by the Russian pilgrim Daniil at the beginning of the 12th century, but there is no alternate source of equiculture mentioned by any source: Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, p. 29.
[59] "τόσα βουκόλια βοῶν", "φεῦ τῶν μυρίων μυκηθμῶν τῶν ἐκ τῶν βουκολίων", "καὶ μυριάδας παμπληθεῖς ποιμνίων βουκολίων" *Prodromos*, XI, lines 97, 179, 192; "ὅση μὲν ἡ ἵππος ὅσα δὲ τὰ ποίμνια ὅσα δὲ τὰ βουκόλια." Basilakes, 'Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα κῦρ Ἰωάννην τὸν Κομνηνόν,' *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 65.

The campaign consisted of a series of skirmishes from the coast to the Anatolian plateau, culminating in the battle of Philomelion, the plain near the old fortress of Dorylaion, south of Amorion (C.f. Map Four), against Malik Shah of the Seljuk sultanate of Ikonion. As related by Anna Komnene, Alexios defeated the Seljuks in battle and then secured a peace treaty from Malik Shah that the Seljuks would return to the Empire all those lands occupied by them.[60] As with Bohemond, this treaty of Philomelion would not be enforced due to the death of Malik Shah, who was killed by his brother Mas'ud (allegedly first blinded by a candlestick given him by Alexios, then strangled with a bowstring).[61] As with Devol, so with Philomelion: Alexios (and likely John) had accomplished the removal of the immediate threat to the empire with this campaign, as the sultanate was weakened, both by Alexios' victories in battle and due to Mas'ud's succession. Mas'ud was particularly distracted from making any attempt upon Byzantine security in the years following as in order to secure his throne in Ikonion, it was necessary for him to ally himself with the Danishmendids by marrying Ghazi II Gümüshtigin's daughter. In order to repay the emir for helping him take Ikonion he was then required to campaign with him against Tughrul Arslan, another brother of Mas'ud who was then emir of Melitene, and following this against Constantine Gabras, who would rule Trebizond independent of imperial control from 1126.[62] Thus Alexios and John had removed a threat, and might soon have regained territories lost to the empire in the eleventh century if it had not been for yet another unfortunate death.

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[60] *AK*, 15.6, pp. 476-9; Birkenmeier, *Development of the Komnenian Army*, pp. 78-80; See Map Four.
[61] *AK*, 15.6, pp. 479-80; *Michael*, 16.1, p. 606, p. 219.
[62] *Michael*, 15.12,p. 600, p. 205; Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, pp. 44-5; The dating of Gabras' revolt is deliberately obfuscated by Choniates, likely to cover the fact that Gabras was in revolt for so long before John did anything about it. Choniates only mentions it when discussing John bringing him to heel in spring 1139, *NC*, p. 358, but according to Chalandon (*Jean II Comnène*, p. 84) and work done by C. Cahen, 'Une Famille byzantine au service des Seldjuqides d'Asie Mineure', *Polychronion; Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag,* ed. P. Wirth (Heidelberg, 1966), pp. 145-9, using sources such as *Michael* the revolt start date is 1126; see Chapter Four.

As Alexios entered the final year of his life and remained in Constantinople, John did therefore have the flexibility to deal directly with yet another half-finished crisis of the eleventh century: that of reasserting imperial authority over his Serbian subjects, and he could do this secure in the knowledge that the Turks of Anatolia, the nomads to the north and the Normans in both Italy and the Latin east were pacified and distracted, even though they were not wholly subjected to imperial power.

The Balkan Situation

Even before the nomadic and Norman invasions that are linked to John's coronation and marriage, Byzantium's role as the undisputed hegemon over other distinct non-Roman polities had been lost due to successful rebellions by Serbian rulers, and the increasing autonomy of peoples such as the Vlachs and Paulicians as previously noted. Yet as control over Roman themes, such as Dyrrachium, that bordered these polities was regained, Alexios and John had the opportunity to attempt to reinstate the empire's previous dominance.[63] For these events we primarily have Anna Komnene for the reign of Alexios, and then the Priest of Diokleia (Duklja) for the whole period to compare to Choniates and Kinnamos. All of these sources have issues with chronology, but between them and some small notes in other foreign sources, many of these issues can be cleared up.

[63] For this reconquest see Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, for the fortresses of Dyrrachium, see pp. 162-3, and for their refortification, see p. 181. Also see Curta, *Southeastern Europe*, pp. 272-6. For the *Doukes* of the theme, see pp. 183-4, noting that at least two of the three known governors were close relatives of John by blood or marriage, highlighting the province's importance as a safe cornerstone from which the empire's position could be rebuilt and expanded once more. For the rebellions and polities of the eleventh century, see J. V. A. Fine Jr, *The Early Medieval Balkans A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century* (Ann Arbor, 1991), p. 201, and Curta *Southeastern Europe*, pp. 268-70 for the earlier client status after the conquests of Basil II. See Map Three – Balkans.

By the reign of Alexios the most powerful of the independent polities to have arisen in the region over the course of the eleventh century was that under Constantine Bodin based in Diokleia, though even he never fully integrated the other *župans* (princes) of other regional centres such as Zahumlje or Raška, who preserved their individual nobilities and institutions and merely followed Diokleia's lead under Bodin.[64] The Priest relates that on Bodin's death his four sons fought over their inheritance, while Bodin's nephew, Vukan of Raška, gained in power at Diokleia's expense, and Alexios attempted to intervene, often unsuccessfully due to Norman and nomadic threats.[65] Chalandon calls this conflict the most obscure of the century, and the rise of fall of many figures took place over several bloody decades, much of it barely datable on account of the Priest rarely specifying years in his account.[66] Fine has however argued that the events that were directly to shape John's actions in the region can still be dated: the Priest mentions that there were twelve years of peace in Serb lands after Bohemond's Balkan invasion in 1106, and indeed the presence of John himself while Alexios was still alive.[67] Jakvinta, the widow of Bodin, had contrived that her son Juraj (also called Đorđije or George) would be installed as king, but those Diokleians who opposed him fled to Dyrrachium to request imperial aid. With Alexios ailing, John led an expedition against Juraj where he seized towns such as Shkodër and Kotor, capturing Jakvinta at the latter and bringing her to Constantinople where she died.[68] Another claimant to the Diokleian throne, Grubeša, was then installed as king and an imperial client,

[64]Fine, *Early Medieval Balkans*, pp. 220-30, particularly p. 223 for the organisational make up of the various Serbian principalities. Fine's account derives from his interpretation of the *Priest*, XLIII-XLVII, pp. 162-80.
[65] *Priest*, XLII-XLVII, pp. 162-80; Fine, *Early Medieval Balkans*, pp. 225-31.
[66] Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, pp. 69-70.
[67] *Priest*, XLV, p. 172; Fine (1991) p. 232; John is called "Caloioannes Cumano," thus making his identity clear by giving him the epithets he would soon earn, as well as telling us about John's reputation in Diokleia later in the century when the *Chronicle* was composed.
[68] Ibid. XLV, p. 172; Ibid. p. 232;

while Juraj fled to Vukan of Raška. However, John and Grubeša were not able to follow Juraj and impose imperial authority on Raška too, as it was then that Alexios' health began to fail, and so the imperial troops withdrew to Dyrrachium and John hastened to Constantinople. Vukan, or perhaps his successor Uroš I (it is unclear when exactly Vukan died) promised token allegiance to the empire and John was in no position to demand more from him or Juraj in 1118 as he had to secure his own succession in Constantinople.[69]

Due to Alexios' death, John was unable to impose a more secure settlement upon Raška and Diokleia, such that this too was a work in progress that would have to be resolved later in his reign.

Thus, as Alexios breathed his last in Constantinople, he left it to his heir and colleague to finish alone a number of foreign policy initiatives that they had been working on together for ten years, and indeed longer if we take John's passive participation into consideration.

The Empire in 1118

Surveying the frontiers and neighbours of the empire in September 1118, we therefore see the border starting at Dyrrachium in the west, skirting Raška and Diokleia turning north to Belgrade, then along the Danube. The two Serbian polities were both ostensibly clients of the empire, with Diokleia under King Grubeša being a major supporter of such a status quo, and Raška under grand prince Uroš I being an agitator for a break with the empire, still hosting the Diokleian pretender Juraj.[70] Such a line on a map is however misleading due to the varied terrain of the Balkans,

[69] Ibid.
[70] Much the same as the Hetumids (pro-imperial) and Rupenids (anti-imperial) in Cilicia, though they had slipped imperial authority completely since the late eleventh century.

with the major mountains only passable through certain defiles, and regions such as the fertile flood plain of the Danube or the plains of Macedonia to the south being the crucial areas of productivity and population. Thus Map Three, which displays major fortresses, cities, the major road and important terrain across the Balkans represents more accurately what John had to work with in the region. Equally there were certainly various nomadic tribes of Pechenegs and Cumans living within those borders, while yet more lived to the north of the lower Danube region, along with the Vlachs who were also ostensibly a client people.[71] Between the Serbian clients and the nomads lay the border with Hungary in the middle Danube. Hungary and Venice had been fighting over Dalmatia since John's marriage to Piroska-Eirene, as Alexios had stood aside in that conflict as a condition of the marriage, and so whenever the Venetians had asked for aid he "acknowledged their request, but sought council which drew out and delayed any action," until eventually the Venetians launched an independent expedition in 1115.[72] This would have ended in a negotiated peace, with the Hungarians controlling the north, and the Venetians the southern part of the coast, had not Coloman died in February 1116, leaving the 15-year-old Stephen II as king. This proved decisive enough for Alexios to support doge Ordelafo Falier in his expedition in July, which with some fortunate treachery on the part of an archbishop, secured Zadar, Šibenik and Split, which meant that

[71] It was a Vlach named Pudilos that had passed on to Alexios the message that the Cumans had crossed the Danube during the 1095 invasion, though equally some others helped the Cumans cross, demonstrating how the empire had lost its undisputed postion of regional hegemon in this period. *AK*, 14.8, p. 454; V. Spinei, "An Oriental Perspective on the Ethnic Realities of the Balkans in the Eleventh-Twelfth Centuries: Michael the Syrian," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 20 (2013), p. 205; Madgearu, *Military Organization on the Danube*, p. 144. C.f. n.38.

[72] Andrea Dandolo, "Chronicon Venetum. Andreae Danduli ducis Venetiarum chronica per extensum descriptum aa, 46-1280", *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores XII:I*, ed. E. Pastorello (Bologna, 1938), p. 229; Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, pp. 202-3; Alexios was also engaged in his campaign against the Seljuks in Anatolia and possibly the Kievans on the Danube at this time, so staying out of a western conflict was definitely in his interests, as noted by Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, p. 18.

despite further hostilities Venice was in control of Dalmatia in 1118.[73] That same year, the now seventeen-year old Stephen also suffered a huge defeat in battle against his northern neighbours the Bohemians at the river Olšava after negotiations between Stephen and Vladislav I of Bohemia broke down. They too had been at war intermittently since 1108.[74] Stephen's attempt to gain a victory against Margravial Austria to salvage some Hungarian pride then backfired, as although he led a devastating raid that carried off a considerable amount of plunder in 1118, this was followed by a similarly devastating campaign by Margrave Leopold III of Austria in alliance with Duke Bořivoj II of Bohemia (Vladislav's eldest son), which led to continuous raiding along Stephen's western and northern borders throughout his reign.[75]

Thus Hungary in 1118 was reeling on all fronts; with its young king almost certainly feeling betrayed by the empire despite his aunt Piroska's status as empress. As for Venice, Falier had been killed at Zara in combat with the Hungarians in 1117, and the new doge was Domenico Michele, who was aided by his wife the extremely capable dogaressa Alicia, and between them they would serve the interests of Venice well in the years to come.[76] The other western powers of the Normans, the papacy, the western empire and other Italian cities would not exert any influence on John's empire until the final section of his reign.

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[73] Ibid. pp. 230 & 203 respectively; "Annales Venetici Breves," ed. H. Simonfeld, *Monumenta Germaniae Historiae* XIV (Hanover, 1883), p. 71; Kosztolnyik, *Dynastic Policy of the Árpáds*, p. 103; It has been noted by Makk as well as Moravczik that Venice was usually ready to accept nominal imperial suzerainty over Dalmatia as long as they could trade, therefore their alliance may also have been preferable on that score. Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, p. 18; G. Moravcsik, "Les relations entre la Hongrie et Byzance à l'époque des croisades," *Studi Byzantina*, ed. J Harmatta (Budapest, 1967), p. 316.

[74] *CFHH,* pp. 136, 224-6, 531-2, 805-7; *SRH* I, pp. 434-7; the *Chronicon Pictum* mentions that Stephen's regent, named Janus, was actually in charge of the army and so he was directly to blame for this defeat. Tuzson, *Istvan II*, p. 83.

[75] Ibid. pp. 90, 156, 259, 315, 504, 559, 1764. Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, p. 19.

[76] E. Staley, *The Dogaressas of Venice: the wives of the Doges* (London, 1910), pp. 66-70.

The lands of the Rus were still dominated by Vladimir II Monomakh of Kiev, who since the divorce of his daughter Euphemia from Coloman in 1113 had become more favourable towards Byzantium once more, and it is likely that negotiations for a marriage alliance were already taking place.[77] For the Cuman steppe and the theme of Cherson in the Crimea we have little information, but what there is implies that there was no major nomadic leader, which is likely why the steppe tribes were on the back foot against both Vladimir and David IV of Georgia.[78] Georgia continued to be resurgent under David IV "the Builder", and following the conquest of Kakheti at the turn of the century and the defeat of the Seljuk invasion in 1105 at the battle of Ertzukhi, he embarked on a series of campaigns to capture the key fortresses and towns of Samshvilde, Rustavi, Gishi and Lori between 1110 and 1118, before turning to a campaign against a Kipchak tribe at the time of Alexios' death, in addition to sending ambassadors to Constantinople who would be the first to acclaim John as sole-emperor according to Zonaras.[79] In Anatolia, sultan Mas'ud of Ikonion was technically bound by the treaty of Phliomelion to yield his lands of central and southern Asia Minor to New

[77] See discussion on the marriage of young emperor Alexios with Vladimir's granddaughter Dobrodjeja Mstislavna, also known as Eupraxia, below.

[78] Though the theme of Cherson is all but invisible in twelfth-century sources, the fortifications of the harbour of Cherson were rebuilt at the end of the eleventh century, while some of the eastern part of the province was occupied by the Cumans, similarly to the Pechnegs in the Paristrion. Alexios' and John's various diplomatic relations and marriage alliances with Rus princes, and particularly Alexios' engagement of John's brother Andronikos to Volodarovna of Tmutorokan make a lot more sense when we see favourable trade relations and intelligence and management of the steppe peoples in the area as a Byzantine foreign policy priority. See notes on marriage policy below, and A. Papageorgiou, "Theme of Cherson (klimata)", *Encyclopedia of the Hellenic World, Black Sea*, tr. L. Spyridon, http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=11973, accessed 20th April 2015; J. Lazaropoulos, "Ἔτι σύνοψις τῶν τοῦ ἁγίου θαυμάτων μερικὴ ἐκ τῶν πλείστων", *FHIT,* 1, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus (Amsterdam, 1965), pp. 117, 10-118, 3.

[79] *Zonaras*, 18.28, p. 761; "The History of David, King of Kings," *Rewriting Caucasian History The Medieval Armenian Adaption of the Georgian Chronicles*, tr. R.W. Thomson (Oxford, 1996), p. 317-25; P.B. Golden, "The Turkic people and Caucasia," *Transcaucasia. Nationalism and Social Change. Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, ed. R. G. Suny (Ann Arbor, 1983), p. 59; *idem*, "Cumanica I: the Qipcaqs in Georgia," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 4 (Wiesbaden, 1984), pp. 57-64; *idem*, "Nomads in a Sedentary World: the case of pre- Chinggisid Rus' and Georgia," *Nomads in the Sedentary World*, ed. A. M. Khazanov and A. Wink (Richmond, Surrey, 2001), pp. 46-51; Spinei, *Romanians and the Turkic Nomads*, p. 128.

Rome, though naturally had not done so, and was in alliance with the Danishmendid emir Ghazi II Gümüshtigin, who ruled Anatolian lands further east, and the two of them were fighting against Tughrul Arslan, brother of Mas'ud, of Melitene. Trebizond and the northern coast remained in imperial hands, with *Doux* Constantine Gabras of the theme of Chaldia having been appointed by Alexios and John shortly before Alexios' death after the treachery of his elder brother Gregory.[80] As with the other western powers, Cilicia, the Crusader states and the Islamic world were peripheral to John's primary concerns until the third part of his reign, and so again will be discussed there; Map Four on Anatolia is correspondingly more figurative due to a dearth of knowledge of the exact sites held by each polity, and indeed the presence of nomadic Turks as well as the more settled polities. Hints of John's policy towards these peoples and regions may be found in the *Muses*.

The Muses as John's Manifesto?

Though not written by Alexios, if the *Muses* are to be taken as an authentic statement of political perceptions as Magdalino argues, then a few messages can be gleaned as to the importance of the various foreign powers.[81] The peoples mentioned are firstly the Normans and "Celts," that is the Latin Crusaders and the powers to the west, secondly the "Persians," the Turkish threat to the east, third the many "Skythian" peoples, the tribes of the Steppe, and finally the Arabs and Islamic polities of the east before far off powers such as the Indians are mentioned for emphasis.[82] The question then is where do polities such as Georgia, the Rus, the Hungarians or the Serbians fit into this scheme? And indeed are the Italian cities, in particular Venice, grouped in with the other westerners? An issue with viewing the

[80] Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, p.130.
[81] Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 29.
[82] *Muses I*, lines 272-6, lines 287-90, *Muses II*, lines 52-3, 65, 81.

Muses as any sort of policy document is however that it is incomplete, as even assuming there were only two *Muses*, (there could easily have been more that have not survived), we have one that is 400 lines long, and a second that cuts off abruptly at line 81 in the only copy of the manuscript, therefore there may well have been a great deal more information that is lost to us.[83] I would argue however, that peoples such as the Serbs were seen as a domestic rather than foreign issue to Byzantium, a client people to be kept in line rather than a foreign enemy to be defeated, while Hungary, the Rus, Georgia and the Italian cities were potential or actual allies, and therefore formed an entirely different category to the enemies listed in the *Muses*, such that it is likely they may have been covered in a now lost section of the *Muses*. Despite this limitation, the Muses are still useful as they do list John's major foreign enemies for us insofar as he saw them in 1118.

Overall, when examining the empire in that year it was stable on all fronts, and yet each front had its own developing problems and opportunities, as the work of Alexios and John over the previous ten years was at best only half finished. However, before John could continue this work-in-progress, he was required to return to Constantinople as his father lay dying.

The Death of Alexios I, and the Politics of John's Succession from 1112

Both the primary sources and the scholarship on Alexios' death have thus far not fully acknowledged John's role as emperor before Alexios died, which should be described not as a contested succession, but a contested transition to sole rule, a fact that adds a new dimension to what Choniates, Zonaras and Anna narrate of these events. As a high official in the imperial government at this time, Zonaras

[83] *Muses I and II.*

would have been in a prime position to comment on events, along with Anna who places herself at her father's deathbed serving him his food every day.[84] Regarding Choniates position, his account adds no individual information aside from the dramatic deathbed scene between Alexios and his wife Eirene Doukaina, which may represent Choniates' thirteenth-century beliefs on infighting being the cause of the empire's woes more than any actual event.[85] Together, the accounts all convey a heavy conspiratorial atmosphere. While Alexios lay dying, factions at court formed between those who supported a future where John would reign alone, and those who favoured rule by Eirene Doukaina, Nikephoros Bryennios and Anna Komnene, but Zonaras in particular makes plain that such a plan was not necessarily to the exclusion of John from government entirely. There was also the possibility that elements of the opposing faction wanted him tonsured, exiled or killed so that Eirene, Nikephoros and Anna could rule alone, but the plot may have been to simply have him remain as a co-emperor.

The background for this goes back to 1112 when Alexios was ill, feared he was dying, and so gave control over the government to his wife Eirene, who in turn "entrusted him [Nikephoros Bryennios] to pass judgement and he pronounced justice like the emperor."[86] Zonaras then goes on that: "it was planned that all the power and the government of the empire be transferred to Eirene [Doukaina] after the passing of her husband, so that even he [John] should be subject to her."[87] Thus John would remain in his position as co-emperor, rather than ruling alone. He continues telling us that this: "scheme was intolerable to him since he had already

[84] Zonaras held the positions of *Droungarios tes Viglas* and *Protoasekretis* under Alexios, *ODB*, p. 2229; *AK*, 15.11, pp. 494-5.
[85] Simpson and Efthymiadis, "Introduction" *Niketas Choniates*, pp. 38-9.
[86] *Zonaras*, 18.26, p. 754.
[87] *Zonaras,* 18.24, p. 747.

reached manhood and long since been joined in marriage to the daughter of the Hungarian ruler and become father of children."[88] Thus it is only after John's rejection of continued shared rule that we are told he feared for that rule, and even his life, and so then he visited Senators and other family members to secure their support (in particular his brother Isaac) for his sole rule, while his mother sent spies to watch him and tried to prevent him contacting more supporters. She pushed for the succession of Nikephoros and Anna as opposed to John, only when he refused joint rule.[89] The reasons why Eirene was opposed to her son's succession are never truly clarified aside from Zonaras' mention of a supposedly wild youth of which she had disapproved, or her belief that Nikephoros would simply make a better emperor, though Angold posits that she may have been partial to upholding the Doukas interest in the imperial office, to which I would perhaps add that she knew she would likely lose all her personal power at Alexios' death and thus she could only maintain her own position by weakening John's.[90]

As it turned out, Alexios recovered from this illness, but the issue of the succession was still far from decided, in the main because both Alexios and John were required to campaign away from the capital, and therefore someone had to be in charge of the administration and government in Constantinople. In Alexios' early reign his formidable mother, Anna Dalassene, and his brother Isaac had done this, and following their deaths and Alexios' illness, these powers passed to his wife and his son-in-law Nikephoros according to Zonaras.[91] As such, even with years as a

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[88] *Zonaras,* 18.24, p. 748.
[89] *Zonaras,* 18.24, pp. 748-9; *NC*, pp. 4-8; Glykas, *Michaelis Glycae Annales*, *CSHB* 21, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1836), Annals Part 4, p. 622, lines 15-19.
[90] Angold, "An Afterword," *Alexios I Komnenos-Papers* (Belfast, 1996), p. 406.
[91] *Zonaras*, 18.26, p. 754; Magdalino also posits that the increasing prominence of the logothete of the *sekreta* was due to the deaths of Alexios' mother and brother, and indeed the logothete himself may have been the nephew of Eirene Doukaina, giving her faction near dominance of the imperial administration if so. Magdalino, "Innonvations in Government," pp. 153-5.

crowned emperor at his father's side, there was some uncertainty as to what would happen at Alexios' death due to the structural problem of someone having to rule in Constantinople while the two emperors campaigned. Alexios and John's achievement was that only a member of the ruling family was in the running to be emperor – but that achievement carried with it the weakness that these family members were now potential rivals, rather than a useful support network.

John had been a co-architect of this situation in 1118; since 1112 at least he knew he would face a challenge from his mother and her faction on his succession. If he could prevail, then the schedule for the next few years was already set, as the unfinished projects in Anatolia and the Balkans could be completed as he returned to what was now 'business as usual', indeed he was already campaigning on his own in Serbia in 1118 so there would be no dramatic shifts in his *modus operandi* until larger political developments changed his plans. His first task was, however, to secure his rule, which he set about doing before his father was even cold.

Chapter Two

The Seizing of the Great Palace and Unfinished Business in Anatolia

The events surrounding John's accession to sole rule in 1118 initially appears in our sources as a controversial and contested break from the government of the empire under Alexios. Much of this impression is on account of the change over in sources – Anna Komnene and Zonaras give way to Choniates and Kinnamos, and with all being unreliable in their own way, a convoluted picture of these events is presented. John had been a central part of his father's regime for many years now, and so the resistance to his accession in 1118 requires reexamination, as upon further analysis there is a great deal of continuity in both personnel and policy in the early years of his reign, and that it was not so much resistance to his rule that was being contested in 1118, but whether he should rule alone. The first part of this chapter will thus analyse these events and our sources' reasons for portraying them in this way, before turning to what John did with his first years after his father's death. This will demonstrate both the nature of what was being contested at Alexios' death, and how talking about John's reign beginning at that point misrepresents that death as orchestrating a significant change in the regime.

On 15th August 1118, the feast of the Dormition of the Virgin, John visited his father secretly at the monastery of the Mangana, and whether by his father's gift or perhaps by force, he obtained his father's imperial signet ring.[92] John moved fast

[92] Both Choniates and Zonaras mention the signet ring, though Anna implies the same incident and it is not contradicted by any other source; *KC*, *Chronik* 6.1, p. 57; *Chronik* 14.78, p. 145; *Chronik* 15.23, p. 162; *Chronik* 16.26, p. 168; *NC*, pp. 6-8; *Zonaras*, 18.28, p. 763; *AK*, 15.11, pp. 497-502; as stated previously, Choniates' sources are unknown while Zonaras and Anna were present, and appear not to have derived their work from each other. Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, p. 389.

to secure his rule: he joined Georgians and other supporters and went to Hagia Sophia to be acclaimed emperor by the clergy while his supporters still filled the Mangana, then he immediately rode on horseback to the Great Palace.[93] There he won over the Varangian Guard according to Zonaras, or indeed lifted the gates right off their hinges to gain entrance according to Choniates, and then occupied the physical centre of imperial power until there was no doubt as to who was in control, while his supporters crowded the streets (and indeed a few attempted unsuccessfully to loot the palace).[94] His mother Eirene and Nikephoros Bryennios had been running the imperial administration since Alexios' illness of 1112 at least, and so taking the reins of government from them was the first priority.

Choniates informs us that his mother summoned John, perhaps to make one last appeal for a shared power settlement, but was rejected, and this occurred again when Alexios' funeral took place and John only sent other family members as representatives, but a few days later he felt secure enough in his victory, having rewarded his family and friends with honours to secure their continued support.[95] Choniates further notes that Nikephoros Bryennios refused to get involved in any plot, and it is only then that he tells us that Eirene Doukaina made one final appeal to Alexios to favour Anna in the succession, which he refused in this almost certainly invented scene, as Alexios could barely talk according to Anna and Zonaras, far less pronounce such a speech to his wife. In any case, John was now in possession of the Great Palace and had the support of the Church.

John's quick actions had allowed him to take control, but Nikephoros Bryennios stepping back also facilitated the process, leaving any opposition without

[93] The Georgian acclamation is mentioned by Zonaras, while others are more general in which groups saluted John. Ibid.
[94] *NC*, pp. 7-8; *Zonaras*, 18.28, p. 762.
[95] *NC*, pp. 6-10.

a head as Eirene and Anna could not hope to launch a coup without a male candidate to replace John. Anna did not let the matter lie however, as while John was on his first campaign in Anatolia, Anna and the faction that opposed John decided to take the ultimate step and have him killed in the imperial hunting grounds at Philopation outside the walls of Constantinople when he returned, having bribed the guards.[96]

Again Bryennios refused to get involved, which Choniates claims was due to "his customary sluggishness," as did John's mother Eirene.[97] Choniates reports that despite her original wishes, she would not conspire against a sitting emperor, and that had the plot succeeded she would have suffered "unending sorrow" far greater than the pains of childbirth at the death of her son.[98] The conspirators were then unmasked, though John, at the urging of Axouch, forgave them all, and so though initially depriving them of property he later restored it and was apparently even reconciled with Anna, having secured his throne from domestic rivals.[99]

Reconstruction of these events is aided by the addition of some mention of them by both Zonaras and Anna Komnene in their works, though the incorporation of their accounts into Choniates' narrative comes with their own caveats. The competing visions are however reconciled to a certain extent by the *Muses* of Alexios, itself a contemporary vision of John's regime in 1119.

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[96] Ibid. p. 10; Alexios had held court here, hearing petitions at appointed hours, for some time after his illness according to Zonaras, so would have been a familiar haunt for John over the previous five years as well; *Zonaras*, 18.26, p. 753.
[97] *NC*, p. 10.
[98] Ibid. p. 10-2.
[99] Ibid. p. 11.

Zonaras wrote his works in the monastery of St Glykeria, following his retirement from government office after the death of Alexios.[100] Though there have been suggestions that Zonaras may have backed Anna in her coup attempt and was therefore forced to retire, Zonaras himself tells us in his *Epitome Historion* that leaving the court for the monastery was his own decision on account of his wife dying, and though Treadgold has suggested he was dissatisfied with John's government there is no specific evidence for this aside from his history finishing at the death of Alexios.[101] There is no suggestion he was replaced or otherwise forced out from his administrative positions in 1118, but Zonaras' own comments concerning a period of lethargy before he decided to write the history suggest he did not spend too long in office under John.[102] He would however have been very familiar with his government, and indeed may have continued to work on behalf of the Great Church in his retirement.[103] Macrides has suggested he was possibly writing after Anna Komnene, as he refers in his *scholion* to canon 7 of the council of Neocaesareia to the emperor's second marriage, implying he was writing after 1161 when Manuel remarried, in addition to scattered remarks regarding the long term nature of Alexios' policy of settling Pechenegs in the theme of Moglena ("remained there over succeeding generations") and that of the *orphanotropheion* ("these arrangements were made in this way and are preserved to the present

[100] C. Mango, "Twelfth-Century Notices from cod. Christ Church Gr. 53," *JÖB* 42 (1992), pp. 221-8; See Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 388-99.
[101] K. Ziegler, "Zonaras," *Paulys Realencylopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft X A.1* (1972) cols 720-1; T. Banchich and E. Lane, *The History of Zonaras: From Alexander Severus to the Death of Theodosius the Great* (Oxford, 2009), p. 3; Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, p. 392.
[102] Mango, "Twelfth-Century Notices," pp. 221-2 and 226-7.
[103] Banchich and Lane, "Zonaras," pp. 5-7; they suggest Zonaras may have been given the task of writing the canons by Alexios, and is to be identified with a monk named Naucratius Zonaras who helped finance the reconstruction of a church on St Glykeria in the 1120s, together adding credence to a retirement early in John's reign. Treadgold suggests around 1130 for the death of his wife and his entering the monastery, though no opinion on whether he left office before this. Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, p. 392; see Mango, "Twelfth-Century Notices," pp. 221-2 and 226-7 for Naucratius.

day.")[104] Should this background be correct, Zonaras would have been at the centre of government during John's accession, though Beihammer has suggested that as a monk at his time of writing, his focus on John's acclamation in Hagia Sophia as essential to his assumption of power is perhaps overstated, while other aspects may have been understated due to some political sensitivity while writing under John and Manuel.[105] Kaldellis follows this reasoning in his thesis on the importance of the people in the acession of an emperor, where through such an acclamation imperial rule was ratified by the people, regardless of Hagia Sophia's role as a church.[106] As such, Zonaras' focus on Hagia Sophia, whether John was securing the support of people, Church or God, may well be rightly placed and overall his account is perhaps less controversial in its narrative agenda compared to those of Choniates and Anna.

Due to Anna's personal role in these events, her account has received more scholarly attention than many aspects of John's reign. Though the impact of Manuel's reign on Anna's narrative can be more clearly seen, as she sought to hold her father up as a model of what a great emperor should be in the light of Manuel's decisions, criticism of some of John's decisions is also implied.[107] Prominent examples include Anna's description of her father's defeat of the Pechenegs at

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[104] Georgios A. Rhalles and M. Potles, Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων (vol. 3, Athens, 1853), p. 80; *Zonaras*, 18.22, p. 741; R. Macrides, "The pen and the sword: who wrote the *Alexiad*?" *Anna Komnene and Her Times*, ed. T. Gouma-Petersen (New York, 2000), p. 73; Banchich and Lane do however dispute the point that the marriage refers to Manuel, instead arguing that Zonaras refers to the second marriage of emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates in 1079, but they are in agreement as to the rough dating of the *Epitome Historion.*

[105] A. Beihammer, "Comnenian Imperial Succession and the Ritual World of Nicetas Choniates' *Chronike Diegesis*," *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean Comparative Perspectives*, ed. A. Beihammer, S. Constantinou, M. Parani (Leiden, 2013), pp. 165-9.

[106] A. Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic People and Power in New Rome* (London, 2015), p. 106.

[107] P. Magdalino, "The Pen of the Aunt: Echoes of the Mid-Twelfth Century in the *Alexiad,*" *Anna Komnene and Her Times*, ed. T. Gouma-Petersen (New York, 2000), pp. 15-44; Treadgold has however suggested the limited readership meant that this work was hardly overt political criticism, and the history should be seen as a personal project of Anna's; Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 384-5.

Levounion as the end of the nomadic menace, though her description of the battle may owe more to John's own victory at Berrhoia, while Alexios' restrained homecoming in 1116 after Philomelion where he found homes for refugees as his first act, paints John as vainglorious when it is compared to his decadent triumph of 1133.[108] Such criticism of the brother who was emperor when she could have been empress must be primarily examined in the light of her coup attempts, both in 1118 and 19. Barbara Hill has interpreted this in the light of the Komnenian style of government under Alexios, whereby the Komnenian men were required to be out of Constantinople on campaign for much of the time, leaving first Alexios' mother Anna Dalassene, and then his wife Eirene Doukaina with a great deal of power in the capital, or indeed at Alexios' side when he was on campaign, as discussed in the previous chapter.[109] She argues that Anna Komnene would have seen herself as competent and perfectly within her rights to challenge her brother, ruling over the internal administration of the empire while her husband was out on the frontier, and that far from the usurpation being further proof of her "lack of understanding of politics in reality," this was a coherent and logical move for her to make.[110] Hill's thesis is built on the foundation that there was a very real possibility of John not succeeding Alexios as sole-Emperor in 1118, a theory that seems likely based on the sources depicting a contested accession, but unlikely considering John's many years of co-emperorship. Treadgold suggests that Bryennios' position as *kaisar* gave him enough of a position to challenge John, and it is only with his qualms about a coup before Alexios was dead, remaining at the Mangana while John seized the palace,

[108] Magdalino, "Pen of the Aunt", pp. 33-4; Spinei, "Michael the Syrian," pp. 226-8.
[109] B. Hill, "Actions Speak Louder than Words: Anna Komnena's Attempted Usurpation," *Anna Komnene and Her Times*, ed. T. Gouma-Peterson (London, 2000), pp. 52-3.
[110] Ibid. pp. 48, 55-8; Hill is here arguing against J. Howard-Johnston, "Anna Komnene and the Alexiad," *Alexios I Komnenos-Papers*, pp. 260-301.

that it failed.[111] Such qualms are analysed by Neville when she states that: "it is in light of the emotional distance of armchair antiquarianism, if not orientalist antiquarianism, that Nikephoros becomes portrayed as a passive weakling for failing to murder his brother in law."[112] She goes on to show how he is portrayed as a sluggish figure by Choniates for not seizing power, when most Roman nobles would have jumped at the chance, and indeed according to Nikephoros' *History*, Alexios would indeed have done just that – a point echoed by Kaldellis in his analysis of Choniates when he summarises Choniates' opinions as that it was: "better the cynical but capable Alexios and John than the learned but bitter Anna and sluggish Nikephoros."[113]

What is missing from these analyses however, is both the known personalities of these four figures according to our sources, and their relationship to each other, and indeed Zonaras' testimony of the power sharing agreement proposed (though rejected by John) in 1112, and likely again in 1118. The contest in 1118 was not to replace John with Nikephoros and Anna, but to have John rule alongside them, and this is hinted at by the actions of all the participants.

First is the likelihood of his mother attempting to supplant him – did she genuinely mean to kill her son in favour of her daughter? Though Eirene went so far as to set spies upon her son in 1112 to prevent him gaining enough of a faction to rule on his own, and indeed in 1118 summoned him twice to her presence to try and convince him to share power (and if Choniates is to be believed, perhaps begged her dying husband to do something), her words on learning of the murder plot against him, and her quiet loyalty to him for the rest of her life (at least until 1135) does not

[111] Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, p. 359.
[112] L. Neville, *Heroes and Romans in Twelfth-Century Byzantium* The Material for History *of Nikephoros Bryennios* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 179.
[113] Kaldellis, "Meaning of History," p. 79.

sit well with a desire to remove him from rule entirely. This is to say nothing of motherly affection even if she genuinely continued to believe that the empire would be better served with him sharing rule with herself, Anna and Nikephoros.[114]

Anna too, though seemingly the instigator of the Philopation plot, was also surprisingly swiftly reconciled to John after this, keeping her titles and possessions, as even with the intervention of Axouch, no emperor would have just let things lie if Anna was truly murderously bent on his destruction. Treadgold contends she remained in disgrace, but with her husband remaining as *kaisar*, her property restored and her freedom to patronise a *theatron* alongside her mother, this was as much a retirement from politics as a disgrace, and with Anna attending her sons' double wedding at court in 1122 she was hardly banished to a nunnery.[115] Indeed Choniates blames "evil-working men rallying around Bryennios" for the plot more than he does Anna and Nikephoros specifically.[116] His reasoning for this may be due to his narrative paradigm whereby disorder upsets the natural *taxis* of the empire and the world, thus John's triumph over Anna and Nikephoros represents how when order is preserved, all is well.[117] As for Nikephoros himself, it must be borne in mind that he had served alongside John and his father on campaign, possibly since John was still a boy at the end of the eleventh century, and indeed would continue to campaign with John until his death in 1138.[118] He appears to have been never out of favour with John, and thus together with Eirene and Anna's not entirely antithetical relationship to their son and brother, it is far more likely that

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[114] *NC*, p. 5.
[115] Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, p. 360; see n. 143 for Anna's literary patronage and future.
[116] Ibid. pp. 10-11, pp. 8-9.
[117] Kaldellis, "Meaning of History," pp. 75-99.
[118] Attested by Anna, in addition to letters Nikephoros sent to Prodromos, and indeed a speech composed by Prodromos about his warlike skills. *Italikos*, pp. 142-144 and pp. 152-154; he died from a disease contracted in Syria, though died in the capital: *AK*, Prologue 1.4, p. 8.

the 'plot' of first 1112 and then 1118 was in its original form the proposal for John to rule jointly with Nikephoros and Anna, a system of co-rule that was preferred throughout most of imperial history to ensure stability, and one that also kept the imperial women in power.[119] Only when John declined this on the basis of his and his sons' own maturity, and thus their right to become co-emperors soon, did some "evil men" attempt a more serious plot, with the unwilling participation of at least two of the people involved: Nikephoros and Eirene, which was revealed and neutralised, with ostensibly no punishment besides the temporary loss of property for the conspirators.[120] Though 1119 was a serious plot against John's rule, 1118 was a dispute over what form that rule would take, whether John would share power with his mother, sister and brother-in-law or with his own sons.

John's position was therefore fairly secure in the capital even before the plot in 1118, and must have been virtually perfect after the Philopation plot of 1119. In addition to the events of 1112 and 1118, John's position as emperor would have been cemented by the twin factors of being an adult, and ruling as co-emperor for so many years, and through his close association with the rest of the imperial political elite over those years. If Alexios had died in 1112 his transition to sole rule may not have been so straightforward; Zonaras tells us that while John's youngest brother Isaac was devoted to him, Andronikos the middle brother opposed him, and yet by 1118 Andronikos is not mentioned as being on either side, and from the monody on his death in 1130 he is named as: "John's councillor, brother and warrior," thus it appears that he, along with Nikephoros Bryennios, judged John's accession to sole

[119] Of 94 'senior' emperors reigning between 330 and 1453, 50 had at least one co-ruler. The role of imperial women in government has been much discussed, for a bibliography of relevance to the Komnenoi see Lau, "Piroska-Eirene".
[120] *NC*, p. 10, p. 8; Indeed Choniates later says that no one suffered capital or even corporal punishment during John's reign, p. 47, p. 27.

rule to not be worth contesting.[121] Though Alexios' greatest rivals had been his own family, for John many of the weaknesses of the Komnenian family system had become strengthened by years of campaigning together. Assuming John's first campaign was in Macedonia in 1105 and not before, John had by 1118 been campaigning with the rest of the political elite for thirteen years: fighting alongside them, enduring the hardships of travel and the companionship of the military camp. Magdalino has previously discussed how Alexios I gave: "the empire's military elite a collective identity and a degree of group feeling which it had never previously possessed," and likens them to the centralised *noblesse d'épée* of the French *Ancien Régime* far more than to any loose, western medieval baronial aristocracy.[122] For men who had fought alongside John, accepted him as Alexios' co-ruler, for such a long time only to betray him would be highly unlikely without just cause, and so it is no surprise that at least two of Alexios' prominent commanders, Eustathios Kamytzes and Eumathios Philokales, not only remained in high office but also appear to have increased in status under John.[123] Together with the respect John had earned through his years of soldiering alongside these men, the stability of his political settlement can be seen through the crowning of his own son as co-ruler at this time.

The Coronation of the Young Alexios

One of the most prominent weaknesses of Choniates' account is that his chronology is often implied rather than explained, and indeed in the few places

[121] "ὥλετο σοι σύμβουλος ἀδελφεος ἠδὲ μαχητής", *Prodromos*, II, line 47; *Zonaras,* 18.24, p. 749.
[122] Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 187-8.
[123] P. Gautier, "Le synode des Blachernes (fin 1094). Étude prosopographique", *RÉB* 29 (1971), p. 218; *AK,* 14.5, pp. 445-9 and 470; *Pantokrator Typikon*, p. 44; *DO* 2, Seal 22.15, p. 68; F. Miklosich and J. Muller, *Acta Diplomatica graeca medii aevi*, (vol. 6., Vienna, 1890), p. 96.

where he does explain it he often admits he is relating events out of order. [124] A most glaring example of this is when he mentions that John crowned his eldest son Alexios after discussing the expedition in Serbian lands in 1123, and thus scholars have assumed that it was at this time that the coronation took place. However, this passage in Choniates is grounded in no specific chronology connected with the sections round it, such as the "shortly afterwards" used for the Serbian section and "in the summer" used for the Hungarian section, and thus seems to be an aside in the narrative. [125] There is no such chronological ambiguity in the Neapolitan charters, which are dated according to imperial reigns; all those dating from 1119 to 1130 (the final entry) clearly state that on 1st December 1119, it was not only the twenty-eighth year of John's reign, but also the first year of the reign of his son, Alexios *Porphyrogennitos*.[126] Further entries allow us to narrow the date of his coronation down further, as on July 10th 1120 it was still the first year of his reign, while October 7th 1120 it was the second, thus his coronation must have taken place between July 10th and October 7th 1119.[127] Such a date range falls during the exact time of the Philopation plot, leading to the situation whereby either, as the elder Alexios had done, the coronation caused the Philopation plot as his internal enemies realised there would now be no possibility of co-rule for themselves, or indeed in the wake of the plot John decided he should remove any ambiguity surrounding the succession and crown his then fourteen year old son as co-ruler.

More information to clarify these events is to be found in both the *Muses*, and the first of the poems of Prodromos, written concerning the coronation and

[124] c.f. the capture of Armenian fortresses in Chapter Seven.
[125] *NC*, pp. 16-7, p. 11.
[126] "Imperante domino nostro Johannes porfirogenito magno Imperatore anno vicesimo hoctabo: sed et alexium eius filium porfirogenito magno Imperatore anno primo: die prima mensis decembrii indictione tertia decimal neapoli," *Regii neapolitani archive* (vol. 6., 1858), no. 576.
[127] Ibid. nos. 577 and 579; This dating is reinforced by every subsequent entry in the source.

marriage of the young Alexios. In addition to the specific reference to John's 31st year, which would cover August 1118-August 1119, contained in the *Muses*, there are multiple references to both the lineage and legitimacy of John, with the second muse opening with: "My son" before telling us that John is not only "flesh of [Alexios'] flesh" but a lover of his soul as well, "for you take after your father and delight in your fathers ways," which indeed echoes the opening of the first Muse.[128] Further than this, there is a pointed reference to the possibility that anyone, "even a woman, even a child" could become emperor,

> but to rule majestically and live with moderation is not simply the lot of a man and wife and child, but that of a man who knows how to rule safely, who is greatly concerned for a future work of celebration and is greatly concerned about the life to come.[129]

This passage must refer to the threat that Anna, Nikephoros and their own son Alexios posed to John, and though again whether this was tinder for the fire that became the Philopation plot, or a gloating triumph after it was thwarted, is unknown, but the reference to "a future work of celebration" may indeed be a reference to his own son's upcoming coronation and marriage.

Such a celebration would have been hugely to John's benefit in 1119: his own coronation had been a hurried event, rushed so that John could take over the Great Palace as soon as possible before his father had even died, and then missing the funeral as well meant that John had not had any major public display of his rule aside from his partisans briefly taking over the streets for his election, which was hardly a symbol of firm rule. By 1119, he had opened his sole rule with the swift conquest of Laodikeia, and so establishing his reign with a display of imperial

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[128] *Muses II*, lines 1-12, and Muses I title ("The final admonitions and instructions of Alexios Komnenos, Philometor, Autocrator, to John Porphyrogennitos, Victor, Autocrator, Philopator, his son").
[129] *Muses I*, lines 134-9.

power in the capital would be a logical next step, even more so had he recently thwarted a plot from his sister, demonstrating that his regime was there to stay.

Prodromos' poem has references to the twin emperors shining out upon their people, the "young saviours of Rome" present themselves at the coronation to "not only the army and countless people, but elders, senators, priests and the great shepherd," performing "the fitting rituals of the Romans."[130] There is again a focus on legitimacy and lineage, and not merely between the "two radiant lights of heaven," but also continuity with both classical antiquity (Claudius) and their forebears Isaac I Komnenos, Constantine and Michael Doukas, and then Alexios Komnenos.[131] Thus John and the young Alexios' imperial blood as relatives of both Komnenoi and Doukai emperors is emphasised, convincing listeners of the poem that they are the most legitimate candidates for rule due to this dynastic continuity from almost a century ago rather than just Alexios, in addition to the rhetorical tropes concerning foreigners worshipping them and the glory of the empire.[132] Complementing these rhetorical tropes is the more specific mention of the young Alexios having a bodyguard of Diokleians and Hungarians, which whether it occurred or was merely a particular rhetorical flourish of Prodromos', does evoke his authority over these nations, and thus his current and future role as God's chosen emperor and ruler of the earth, in addition to emphasising the lineage of his mother

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[130] *Prodromos*, I, lines 8-23.

[131] "εἰ γὰρ καὶ Κλαύδιος δοκεῖ παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις μέγας
ἐν τῷ χορῷ τῶν συγγενῶν τῶν σκήπτρου διαδόχων
φρονῶν καὶ σεμνυνόμενος ἐν τῇ χοροτυπίᾳ
καὶ προπομπῇ τῇ συγγενεῖ τῶν ἀπὸ σκηπτουχίας,
ἀλλ᾽Ἰσαάκιος αὐτοῦ μείζω φρονῆσαι δόξει
ὧν ὕψος μέγα Κομνηνοῖς τοῖς ἀπὸ γῆς ἡλίου
καὶ Κωνσταντῖνος μετ᾽αὐτὸν Δοῦκας Ῥωμαίων ἄναξ
καὶ Κωνσταντίνου Μιχαὴλ παῖς Δοῦκας αὐτοκράτωρ
καὶ μετ᾽αὐτὸν Ἀλέξιος μέγας Ῥωμαίων ἄναξ
πολλοῖς προπομπευόμενοι σκηπτούχοις συγγενέσιν,
ἐξ ὧν ἐβλάστησαν ἡμιν ἐκ τῆς σεμνῆς πορφύρας
πατὴρ καὶ παῖς οἱ βασιλεῖς οἱ φύλακες οἱ ῥύσται," *Prodromos*, I, lines 226-37.

[132] *Ibid*. Lines 87-99 in particular.

as a foreign princess.[133] Equally, the mention of the festival, of music, dancing, and celebration, is omnipresent throughout the poem, and thus almost certainly represents an actual festival for the people of Constantinople as John and his son's reign was sealed as secure by these ceremonies. The other half of the poem concerns the marriage of the young Alexios, which though undoubtedly adding to the celebration of legitimacy and continuity, was also an act of international diplomacy vital to John's ambitions.

Diplomatic Marriages

John expanded his father's policy of marrying male kin to foreign brides by doing so for as many male relatives as possible. Magdalino has argued that John used foreign marriages less than Manuel, insofar as only his sons and some brothers married foreign brides, but analysis has been troubled by questions over the identity of some of these brides.[134] Varzos and Jeffreys' more recent scholarship have cleared up a few questions as to the details of these marriages, and thus John's use of them for foreign alliances can now be fully analysed.[135] The picture that emerges is that John's policies in the early years were directly contiguous with the strategic priorities of his co-rule with his father, as diplomatic marriages made just before 1118 and just after demonstrate the same strategies.

As John rose to sole rule in September 1118, the crucial alliance made in recent years by him and his father was that with princess Katya of Georgia, daughter of David IV, together with another unnamed foreign bride from the

[133] "σοὶ Διοκλέων καὶ Δακῶν ἔθνη δορυφοροῦσι", *Ibid.* line 90; c.f Smythe's conclusions as to the presence of barbarians round the emperor at diplomatic receptions in this period as a way for historians and other authors to "give added legitimacy to the occupant of the imperial throne." D. Smythe, "Why do barbarians stand around the emperor at diplomatic receptions?" *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. J. Shephard and S. Franklin (Aldershot, 1992), pp. 305-12.
[134] Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 206-9.
[135] See n.137,

Caucasus.[136] It has been suggested that she married either John's brother Isaac (a scenario which assumes he did not in fact marry the daughter of the Rus Prince Volodar of Premsyl, as Isaac's son's 1164 flight to the Rus and previously discussed Rus sources suggest), or John's heir the young Alexios, or Alexios Bryennios Doukas, the son of Anna Komnene and Nikephoros Bryennios, the latter member of the imperial family being the most likely according to the latest scholarship, while the other unnamed bride married Alexios' brother John in the same ceremony.[137] Whoever she married however, this alliance conducted in the very last years of Alexios' life aligned the two expansionist, 'rebuilding,' monarchs against the Turks in Anatolia, so that both Alexios' final Philomelion campaign, and John's opening campaign in the same region were being carried out contemporaneously with David's own offensives westwards. This grand strategic two pronged assault upon the Turks was to their mutual benefit, as David IV took Lori in 1118 and then continued campaigning against the Turks in western Georgia until 1120, as John made his own conquests, and with Georgian ambassadors being amongst the first to acclaim John as sole emperor, such successes were no coincidence but must suggest a coordinated military alliance between John and

[136] The 12th Century Georgian Chronicle does not mention who exactly Katya marries, only that she and her sister Tamar (who married Shirvanshah Manuchehr III of Shirvan) reflect their father's glory by marrying the potentates of the east and west. "History of David, King of Kings," translation: Thomson (1996), p. 325; M-F Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie de l'Antiquité au XIXe siècle* (St. Petersburg, 1849), p. 360; R. Prinke, "Kata of Georgia", *Foundations* 3 (2011), pp. 489-502.

[137] Georgian historiography conventionally accepts Isaac as the husband, while Gautier and Sturdza argue for the young soon to be co-emperor Alexios. Varzos and Jeffreys have argued for Alexios Bryennios Doukas, principally because of the date being around 1116 means that the sons of John and the sons of Nikephoros and Anna would have had almost equal standing at court, and the Rus evidence telling us that John's co-emperor, the young Alexios, married a Rus princess in 1122, and so unless Katya died only a few years into her marriage (of which there is no evidence), she must have married another grandson of Alexios, of whom Alexios Bryennios Doukas is the most likely. Full arguments to be found at: *Zonaras*, 18.28, p. 761; P. Gautier, "L'Obituaire du Typikon du Pantocrator," *REB* 27 (1969), p. 209; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 205; K.Varzos, *Hē genealogia tōn Komnēnōn* I (Thessalonikē, 1984), pp. 308, 316-8, n.66 for the unnamed bride; L. Garland & S. Rapp. "Mary 'of Alania': Woman and Empress Between Two Worlds," *Byzantine Women: Varieties of Experience, 800-1200*, ed. L. Garland (London, 2006), p. 121; E. Jeffreys, "The *Sebastokratorissa* Irene as Patron," *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. L. Theis, M. Mullett, M. Grünbart, with G. Fingarova and M. Savage (Vienna, 2011/12) p. 179.

David for these years, first arranged while Alexios still lived. Ibn al-Athir relates that Constantine Gabras, governor of Trebizond and future thorn in John's side, was defeated with 5000 men by Balak, governor of Melitene, meaning John may also have sent troops to aid David in the east, though there are no further details of this campaign, possibly due to its short nature.[138]

After this, both monarchs broke off their Turkish onslaught to turn their attentions towards their respective nomad invasions in 1120, and then dealt with their own problems in the Balkans in the case of John and the eastern Caucasus in the case of David. Thus the two monarchs appeared to have acted in concert, aligning their foreign policy objectives, until the death of David in 1125 at least, which attested to the strength of this alliance, as will be discussed in more detail on pages 71 and 87 below. Again, it should be stressed that this was an alliance made in the final years of Alexios' life, and so should once more be held up as an example of the continuity between Alexios' last years and John's first years of rule with his own son.

The dual coronation and marriage of John's eldest son, the young Alexios, was, as already discussed, an act of legitimisation and imperial spectacle to demonstrate the power and stability of the regime. His choice of bride was however the final part of a diplomatic rapprochement between Byzantium and the other major polities bordering the northern steppe, as the bride was Vladimir II Monomakh of Kiev's granddaughter Dobrodjeja Mstislavna, known as either

[138] This incident is particularly strange as the defeat was meant to have been suffered at "the castle of Sarman in the area of Andukan," and the only two Andukan's known are in Ferghana, Transoxania, and at the village of Sarakhs in Khurasan, both of which are very far to the east. Though neither seem likely, Gabras' force was potentially heading east of Anatolia proper to aid David directly if Ibn al-Athir is to be believed; Ibn al-Athir, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from* al-Kamil fi'l-ta'rikh *Part 1*, tr. D.S. Richard (Aldershot, 2006), p. 227. Equally, such expeditions were not unknown as under Basil II an expedition went as far as Lake Urmia in Persia: C. Holmes, *Basil II and the governance of the empire (976-1025)*, (Oxford 2005), pp. 484-5.

Eupraxia, Eudokia or Eirene to Byzantium.[139] Though we do not know whether John or Vladimir initiated the marriage, the fact that it occurred demonstrates a warming of relations between Byzantium and Kiev, allowing both rulers to focus on other matters at the least, and possibly implying shared goals and an alliance of a similar nature to that with Georgia. The full effects of this policy will be further discussed in the following chapter in the section concerning John's unfinished business in the Balkans, but the sealing of this marriage so early in the reign demonstrates John's determination to tie up the loose ends of his father's reign, mend fences with previously hostile powers such as Kiev who could be allies, in order to focus on the true enemies of the empire.

These foreign diplomatic actions only complemented the stability John had achieved at home. His long standing status as co-emperor, buttressed by the comradeship he had built up with the other military aristocrats, had ensured that when his father Alexios died in 1118, the military would not stand against their fellow soldier, and no matter what his mother and sister wanted, John would not stand for sharing rule with anyone but his own son. From Alexios to John, and now to the young Alexios, in succession from the Doukai and Komnenoi back to emperor Isaac as related in the *Muses*: this was what Alexios and John had set up. From this basis, John's imperial inheritance was secure enough that he could start

[139] See n. 126; She may be identified with the Eudokia in the *Pantokrator Typikon*, but equally the Rus sources refer to Dobrodjeja as Eupraxia, though these identifications are not mutually exclusive in the translation to Russian as noted by *Pantokrator Typikon*, p. 43; Gautier, "L'Obituaire du Typikon du Pantocrator," p. 249, 51; ""Густинская летопись," *PSRL* II, p. 292; "Ипат'евская летопис," *PSRL* II.I, ed. A. A. Šachmatov (Moscow, 1923), p. 1122; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 206-7; Chalandon also cites an unknown *Annales de Goustin* which tells us that his wife Dobrodjeja was called Eirene, Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, p. 13; repeated by B. Hill who sees Dobrodjeja as Alexios' first wife: B. Hill, *Imperial Women in Byzantium 1025-1204 Power, Patronage and Ideology* (Harlow, 1999), p. 107; The poem by Prodromos does not specifically mention the bride's origin aside from a reference to her not being the first "to be given from northern lands", and indeed he calls upon her to forget her "ancestral origin and kin" and tells her to work together with her husband to "raise Romans" – possibly implying an almost embarrassingly 'barbaric' origin of the bride as a Rus princess may represent: *Prodromos*, I, lines 151-61.

completing the half finished projects on which he and his father had worked for at least the previous decade, both in Anatolia and the Balkans. He did not however leave Constantinople without carrying out at least two significant acts that evoke what he was trying to accomplish now that he was fully in control of the government, one of which would have major unforeseen consequences for the following decade.

The emperor leaves his mark on the capital

Kinnamos tells us that John "devoted himself to civil affairs as far as time allowed" before embarking on his first campaign, or indeed as Chalandon puts it: this was a reign that became a perpetual campaign with short breaks in Constantinople.[140] Aside from setting his government in order, and possibly celebrating the auspicious birth of his youngest son Manuel, there were at least two significant acts of "civil affairs" that occurred during this period that show John trying to set the tone for his regime.[141]

The first was settling a land use dispute between three *stratiotai* who held in *pronoia* a property of the Lavra Monastery: Archontochorion near Thessalonike, where their *paroikoi* were allowed to cultivate the land but not to live there.[142] *Doux* Konstantinos Doukas of Boleron, Strymon and Thessalonike had asked the emperor for advice, and on John's orders, through the agency of a *logariastes* called Xiphilinos, Doukas granted Leon Loukites, Romanos Andreas Rentenos and Theotimos Loukites land from the imperial fisc for their *paroikoi* to live on, settling the dispute. Aside from prosopographical interest in the amount of detail in this

[140] *NK*, p. 5, p. 14; Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, p. 10.
[141] *Italikos*, "Oration by the same Italikos of the emperor and lord Manuel porphyrogennitus," p. 279
[142] *Actes de Lavra. Première partie: Des origines à 1204*, *Archives de l'Athos V*, ed. and tr. P. Lemerle, A. Guillou, N. Svoronos (Paris, 1970), p. 332.

incident, it also shows John beginning his reign by showing care in ensuring soldiers are well provided for, and that as emperor he will be magnanimous and generous to his people, which as a first act provides some evidence for Choniates' glowing description of John's munificence, and indeed possibly demonstrates the first piece of evidence for his later reputation as "Kaloioannes," John the good or fair.[143]

The second act was to have much greater consequences, although not for some years. This was John's decision not to renew the trade privileges granted to Venice by his father by *chrysobull* in c.1082/1092, whereby they could trade duty free all over the empire (i.e. without paying the *kommerkion* tax), they were given properties in Constantinople that would become the core of the later Venetian quarter, and Venetian citizens were given numerous titles and pensions.[144] This was his right, as each emperor renewed all bulls passed by his predecessor, but it was an act that would seriously harm Venetian trade, and so would not have been done without good reason. Even John's staunchest defenders seem to have viewed this as a mistake, with it being seen as a "needless war," and our Greek sources try very hard not to mention it, with it only being brought up by Kinnamos in connection with incidents of Manuel's reign, and Choniates being completely silent on the subject.[145] It should be remembered however that no hostilities actually occurred until 1122, and then only in highly opportunistic circumstances in limited, specific

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[143] *NC*, pp. 46-7; C.f. Conclusion.

[144] There have been numerous papers on the exact dating of this chrysobull; for a full account see T. Devaney, ""Like an Ember Buried in Ashes:" The Byzantine-Venetian Conflict of 1119-1126," *Crusades – Medieval Worlds in Conflict*, ed. T. F Madden, J. L Naus and V. Ryan (Farnham, 2010), p. 129, note 5. Though Devaney settles on 1082, Frankopan has recently argued for 1092: P. Frankopan, "Byzantine trade privileges to Venice in the eleventh century: the chrysobull of 1092," *Journal of Medieval History* 30 (2004), pp. 135-60.

[145] *JK*, pp. 281-2; the phrase "needless war" is used in John's entry for *God's Regents on Earth*: http://www.doaks.org/resources/seals/gods-regents-on-earth-a-thousand-years-of-byzantine-imperial-seals/rulers-of-byzantium/john-ii-komnenos-1118-43.

incidents over the course of the following three years, and thus John's act of not renewing the *chrysobull*, and the outbreak of hostilities should be treated as separate incidents with their own contexts. Starting with the *chrysobull*, Thomas Devaney's article on the subject argues that: "John II refused to ratify the *chrysobull* of 1092 mainly because of Venetian behaviour in the capital." [146] Though he notes that there were broader geo-political tensions at play over Venetian territorial claims in Dalmatia, and trade, that other scholars have seen as the roots of the decision, Davaney points to a number of incidents in Constantinople on which John had to take a stand now that he was fully in control, particularly as he was about to leave the capital for an extended time on campaign.[147]

These incidents began with the theft of some of the relics of St Nicholas in Myra after the Venetians tortured the local clergy, while disobeying an order from Alexios not to go east to help the Crusaders in 1099-1100.[148] Though the Venetians compensated the bishop of Myra, the flagrant disrespect for imperial authority continued in 1107/8 when a Venetian monk stole some relics of St Stephen and brought them to a Venetian Church in Constantinople, leading to a standoff during which the imperial authorities would not enter the church but the Venetians could not remove them until a number of prominent Venetians (assumedly with some form of diplomatic immunity) accompanied the relics back to Venice and Doge Ordelafo Falier installed them in the monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore, causing

[146] Devaney, "Byzantine-Venetian Conflict," p. 134; this argument is accepted by Papageorgiou, *John II Komnenos*, p. 17.
[147] Geo-political arguments may be refuted on the basis of John making no moves towards Dalmatia throughout his reign, and that unlike Hungary, Venice had always been willing to recognise Venetian suzerainty over these areas: Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 34-5; R-J. Lilie, *Handel und Politik zwischen dem byzantinischen Reich und den italienischen Kommunen Venedig, Pisa und Genua in der Epoche der Komnenen und der Angeloi (1081-1204)* (Amsterdam, 1984), p. 367; economic based arguments were suggested by G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, tr. J. Hussey (New Brunswick, 1969), p. 377.
[148] "Translatio Sancti Nicolai Monachi anonymi Littorensis," *RHC: Historiens occidentaux* 5 (Paris, 1895), pp. 255-64, 272; "Annales venetici breves," p. 70; Dandolo, "Chronicon Venetum", pp. 221-2; Devaney, "Byzantine-Venetian Conflict," 129-30.

Alexios to grant Pisa commercial privileges as a direct threat to the Venetian monopoly.[149] These tensions were exacerbated by the increasing numbers of Venetians in the capital, with Devaney noting that the relics of St Stephen were escorted by "72 prominent Venetians," meaning there must have been many others, not to mention the non-prominent Venetians, as well as the evidence we have on trade goods the Venetians sought in Constantinople from commercial documents that imply a large number of more itinerant Venetian merchants.[150] Choniates tells us that it was from this large, distinct, and entitled group of traders in the capital that tensions came:

> They used to treat the citizen like a slave, not merely one of the general commonality, but even one who took pride in the rank of *Sebastos*…/they inflicted blows on many of the wellborn who were related to the emperor by blood, and generally insulted them savagely.[151]

Though Kinnamos is following his usual narrative trope by outlining a problem John failed to solve and then having Manuel solve it, there must certainly have been various incidents to lead him to write such an account.[152]

In the context of John's accession, knowing that he would shortly be leaving the capital to go on campaign, he had to make his mark to show that he was in control of his capital and was supportive of the complaints his family brought to him. As Devaney has argued, there was no grand, geo-political reason for John to reject the new doge Dominico Michiel's request for the renewal of privileges, if anything he would want to keep them on side while he campaigned to both west and east, and yet the only thing more important than trade and international allies was a

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[149] Dandolo, p. 227; *Acta et Diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana 3*, ed. F. Miklosich and J. Müller (vol. 6., Vienna, 1968), pp. 9-13; Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, p. 367; Lilie, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 69-76; Devaney, "Byzantine-Venetian Conflict," p. 130.
[150] *Documenti del commercio veneziano nei secoli XI-XII*, ed. R. Morozzo della Rocca and A. Lombardo (vol 1., Rome, 1940), nos. 19, 24, 33, 41, 42, 45 and 46; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 27-34; Devaney, "Byzantine-Venetian Conflict," p. 131.
[151] *NC*, p. 281, p. 210.
[152] C.f. p. 11.

strong position in Constantinople, and thus cementing that position made it necessary for him to refuse the doge's request. Indeed, Davaney's suggestion that John may have been particularly sensitive to challenges in the capital due to his sister Anna's plotting may have some merit, an argument that is advanced by Papageorgiou who has noted that Pisa's trade privileges were also not renewed in 1118.[153] Such a stand taken against all foreign trading privileges suggests a decisive opening policy showing John would be tough on foreigners, who would have to earn imperial favour anew through loyalty and alliance, and in the Venetians case at least were now being punished for the previous insults against imperial family members and the Orthodox church. Though hindsight suggests that John should perhaps have acted otherwise, in 1118 this was an entirely measured and rational decision for the new ruler to take, and demonstrates that though John's policies and initiatives did sometimes follow the dictates of modern-looking *Realpolitik*, such policies always came second to the primacy of domestic politics in Constantinople, as discussed in full in the final chapter.

Thus John left Constantinople in early 1119, having spent barely six months putting the capital in order. Through both man-management, as discussed in the previous chapter, and then by extending the benevolent hand of imperial largesse to the Church and the Army, as demonstrated by the Archontochorion dispute, and the stern hand of imperial chastisement to disrespectful foreign merchants, he had secured Constantinople sufficiently that he could turn to the unfinished projects that he had worked on with his father. His first business lay to the east.

[153] Devaney, "Byzantine-Venetian Conflict," p. 134; Papageorgiou, *John II Komnenos*, p. 10.

Enforcing the Treaty of Philomelion

Though John had been summoned from campaigning against the Raškans when he heard that his father's illness had taken a turn for the worse, the token acceptance of imperial rule by Uroš was enough to stabilise the situation there, even if Juraj's designs on Diokleia would have to be resolved at some point. This being so, John could turn to the more pressing matter of Anatolia, where the security situation had deteriorated since he and Alexios had been there in 1117.

With sultan Malik Shah's murder by his brother Mas'ud, John had two choices if he was to follow the optimum strategy of retaking Anatolia by first seizing the coastlands, and then the lands now held by the Seljuks of Rum: he could either seek to compel Mas'ud to cede his lands, as his brother had previously promised at Philomelion, or he could accept that the sultanate of Rum would not become a client state, and therefore seek to conquer it by force of arms. This situation was complicated however by Mas'ud's loose authority (at best) over various minor Turkish nobles and indeed still nomadic tribal leaders, both as a structural reality of the sultanate, and due to his accession by murder, and then forced alliance and campaigning with the Danishmendids away from his capital at Ikonion. Our sources give us little information as to the exact reasons for John's opening move: Kinnamos merely tells us John wished to regain lost land, while Choniates adds the detail that the Turks had broken treaties with his father (Philomelion), and were "in great numbers overrunning the cities throughout Phrygia and the Maeander," the latter possibly referencing increased raiding that would almost certainly occur with news of an emperor's death as raiders took advantage of the possible instability that was often the result of such a death, and indeed with Mas'ud's lack of control and absence on campaign against Tughrul

there would be no one to restrain them.[154] With the winter to plan, and the knowledge that David of Georgia was assaulting the Turks from the east simultaneously with Ghazi's and Mas'ud's war with Tughrul, John and his commanders could therefore expect their enemy to have no reinforcements and so would have made a carefully thought out choice of target: their opening gambit was to be the reconquest of Laodikeia on the Lykus, in south Phrygia.[155]

The campaign appears to have been overwhelmingly successful, and neither Choniates nor Kinnamos expend many words describing it. They both mention that Laodikeia was ruled by Alp Qara, one of the barbarians' "most eminent men".[156] Choniates tells us that John routed Alp Qara, then built a wall around Laodikiea after the campaign, "putting everything else in good order".[157] Kinnamos adds that John camped near Philadelphia while sending Axouch to lay siege to the city, and then joined him (when the latter requested aid) with the whole army, and took Laodikeia almost without resistance, before "leaving a garrison and filling it adequately with supplies", and returning to Constantinople.[158]

From a geo-political standpoint, the target makes perfect sense, as reconquering Laodikeia would reopen the land routes across Anatolia, from Bithynia and Mysia in the north to Karia and the major city of Attaleia in the south, as well as provide a hinterland for the reconquered areas of the west coast, and such a strategy behind John's conquests has been postulated by Birkenmeier. Indeed, from analysis of this and all of John's other campaigns in Anatolia, he argues that John always pursued a campaign policy dominated by siege warfare so as to:

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[154] *JK*, p. 5; *NC*, p. 12, p. 9.
[155] Map Four.
[156] *JK*, pp. 5-6, p. 14; *NC*, p. 12, p. 9.
[157] *NC*, p. 12, p. 9.
[158] *JK*, pp. 5-6, pp. 14-5; see Chapter Eight.

"defeat his enemies not by destroying their armies, but occupying strategic fortified cities and controlling the surrounding territory", fighting battles only when it was required in order to take over their cities.[159] Papageorgiou however, believes that this analysis overstates their role, as though "undoubtedly sieges contributed to the successful outcome of John's campaigns", pitched battles remained the most important strategic tool, and battle was the principal way that the combat effectiveness of an army was proven in the period, with sieges being an exception.[160] With this opening campaign we have a clear case of how the character of John's campaigns can be argued in two ways – on the one hand the narrative suggests a simple march to the territory and then a successful siege after overwhelming force is brought to bear on Laodikeia, favouring Birkenmeier's interpretation. On the other, we may ask why did John camp at Philadelphia before joining *megas domestikos* Axouch in his siege? On later campaigns we know from the contemporary sources that John conducts extensive military operations and skirmishes in the area on every campaign, both because the logic of moving through hostile territory suggests it, and so as to conquer the land in its entirety and not just the major fortified point or points.[161] Also there is the "rout" of Alp Qara and 800 other "eminent men," specifically mentioned by Choniates, which also suggests some form of battle.[162] It is unlikely that Alp Qara, particularly being so experienced in war according to Kinnamos' description, would have been caught inside Laodikeia, and neither source mentions that Alp Qara either surrendered or was captured or killed, therefore he must have escaped, something much more likely had there been some form of engagement. These factors all favour

[159] Birkenmeier, *Development of the Komnenian Army*, p. 87.
[160] Papageorgiou, *John II Komnenos*, p. 4.
[161] See Chapter Six, in addition to the strategy discussed in Lau, "The Power of Poetry," pp. 207-9.
[162] *JK,* pp. 5-6, p. 14; *NC*, p. 12, p. 9.

Papageorgiou's more holistic argument where sieges are important, but not at the expense of battles, with which I am in sympathy, but I believe that the major issue here is not whether John preferred to campaign through sieges or through a mixture of sieges and battles, for surely both were necessary to any seasoned commander, but why Laodikeia and Alp Qara were chosen for John's first campaign.

Birkenmeier and Papageorgiou are correct that taking Laodikeia would reopen a land route to Attaleia, but equally it is noteworthy that neither Choniates nor Kinnamos mention that Alp Qara was a lieutenant of Mas'ud, or indeed in any way connected to the sultanate of Ikonion. Whether Alp Qara was indeed a free agent or not, John's seizure of Laodikeia was a decisive demonstration to Mas'ud that John could bring the might of the imperial army to bear upon the sultanate, if Mas'ud did not honour the treaty of Philomelion and become an imperial client. One way or another, the empire was determined to reconquer these lands, as shall be seen throughout John's dealings with Mas'ud. This determination is demonstrated when John immediately followed this campaign by targeting Sozopolis in spring, 1120, with barely a stay in Constantinople in between. Choniates tells us that he did this both because offence was the best defence for the provinces he already had, and indeed to keep his army fully trained and ready for war – a comment perhaps indicating that John did not necessarily need to campaign to take these lands back, but that perhaps an additional show of force was required to bring Mas'ud to the negotiation table, as shall be discussed below. Kinnamos by comparison again merely tells us that John set out to conquer.[163]

Sozopolis was a far more ambitious target for conquest due to its location on a "steep and overhanging site" with only one approach, and the impossibility of

[163] *NC*, p. 12; *JK*, p. 6.

using war machines or other siege warfare against it, facts both chroniclers make much of.[164] John turned this challenge to his advantage with inspired tactics however, with Choniates and Kinnamos mentioning that John gave command of a detachment of his army to a certain Paktarios, possibly identified as the *protonobelissimos* and later *Doux* John Paktarios attested by two seals. Kinnamos also mentions another noble called Dekanos, who may be the same or related to either the George "*tou Dekanou*" commemorated in the Pantokrator *typikon* or Nikephoros Dekanos who was *kouropalates* and *anagrapheus* of Nisos.[165] Either way, their appearance in histories written much later must demonstrate how other members of the high nobility were on campaign with John, likely competing for the chance to prove themselves in battle to be rewarded by the emperor, and be mentioned in dispatches back to Constantinople, which may have been a source for Kinnamos' and Choniates' Histories. Their descriptions of the plan by which John gained Sozopolis are very similar, telling us that John commanded his subordinates to take the detachment of *δορυφοροι* (that is 'lance- or spear-bearers', though their actions indicate that they were also armed with bows, and were mounted) to the gates with the rest of the cavalry and shoot at the Turks guarding them. When the Turks sallied, they were to "flee unashamedly", and then turn and fight when the Turks were lured out. They were then to secure the gates and trap the Turks between them and the rest of the army. According to Kinnamos, the cavalry unit did just

[164] *NC*, pp. 12-3; *JK*, p. 6, p. 15; further discussion of Sozopolis as part of John's fortress network in Chapter Eight.
[165] John Paktarios: Seyrig 821 was found in Beirut, suggesting Paktarios was a commander for John in his near eastern expeditions as well by which time he had become *doux*. He is listed as merely *protonobelissimos* on Orghidan no. 95. *Les sceaux byzantins de la collection Henri Seyrig,* ed. J-C. Cheynet (Paris, 1991), no. 211; *Documents de sigillographie byzantine : la Collection C. Orghidan*, ed. P. Laurent (Paris, 1952), no. 95, p. 196; George Dekanos: *Pantokrator Typikon*, p. 45; Nikephoros Dekanos: *DO 1*, Seal 32.1, p. 100; Gautier, "L'Obituaire du Typikon du Pantocrator," p. 257.

that.[166] Choniates differs in his telling by adding a few details. As well as making no mention of Dekanos, he tells us that the cavalry lured the Turks away and then the rest of John's army assaulted Sozopolis, switching the metaphorical 'hammer and anvil' divisions of the army around from Kinnamos' account.[167] They both agree however that after taking Sozopolis, the army took the fortress of Hierakokoryphitis and many other fortified towns and strongholds near Attaleia.[168]

Sozopolis' location near classical Apollonia in Pisidia also demonstrates John's continuing the optimum strategy of taking land from the sultanate of Ikonion to secure the southern Anatolian plains first. Thus between Laodikeia and Sozopolis the frontier would have moved eastwards across all of Anatolia, and indeed the town's impregnability to assault would make it ideal to defend that territory from this time onwards.[169] Indeed, the information that after the successful seizure of Sozopolis he consolidated the southern frontier by taking further targets, suggests that John's preferred policy was to retake the entire territory controlled by Ikonion, and whenever he had the choice he appears to have returned to this policy throughout his reign: to enforce by the sword, or by treaty, the return of Roman lands first guaranteed by the treaty of Philomelion.

Finally, it should be remembered that to the east, King David IV of Georgia was undertaking his own campaigns against the Turks, and his successes had led the Muslims of Tblisi and Ganja to appeal jointly to the Seljuk Sultan Mahmud II. Despite his tender age of only 16 he formed a coalition against David led by his

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[166] *NC*, p. 13; *JK*, pp. 6-7.
[167] Ibid.
[168] *NC*, p. 13; *JK*, p. 7.
[169] The exact location of Sozopolis has not been proven beyond doubt, but its location near classical Apollonia in Pisidia is shown by its replacement of the latter in Byzantine lists, and the likelihood that when Apollonia was abandoned in late antiquity, Sozopolis was the more fortified location where they moved the city, perhaps to the steep hill with the town now called Oluborlu on it: W. M. Ramsay, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (New York, 1972), pp. 400-1.

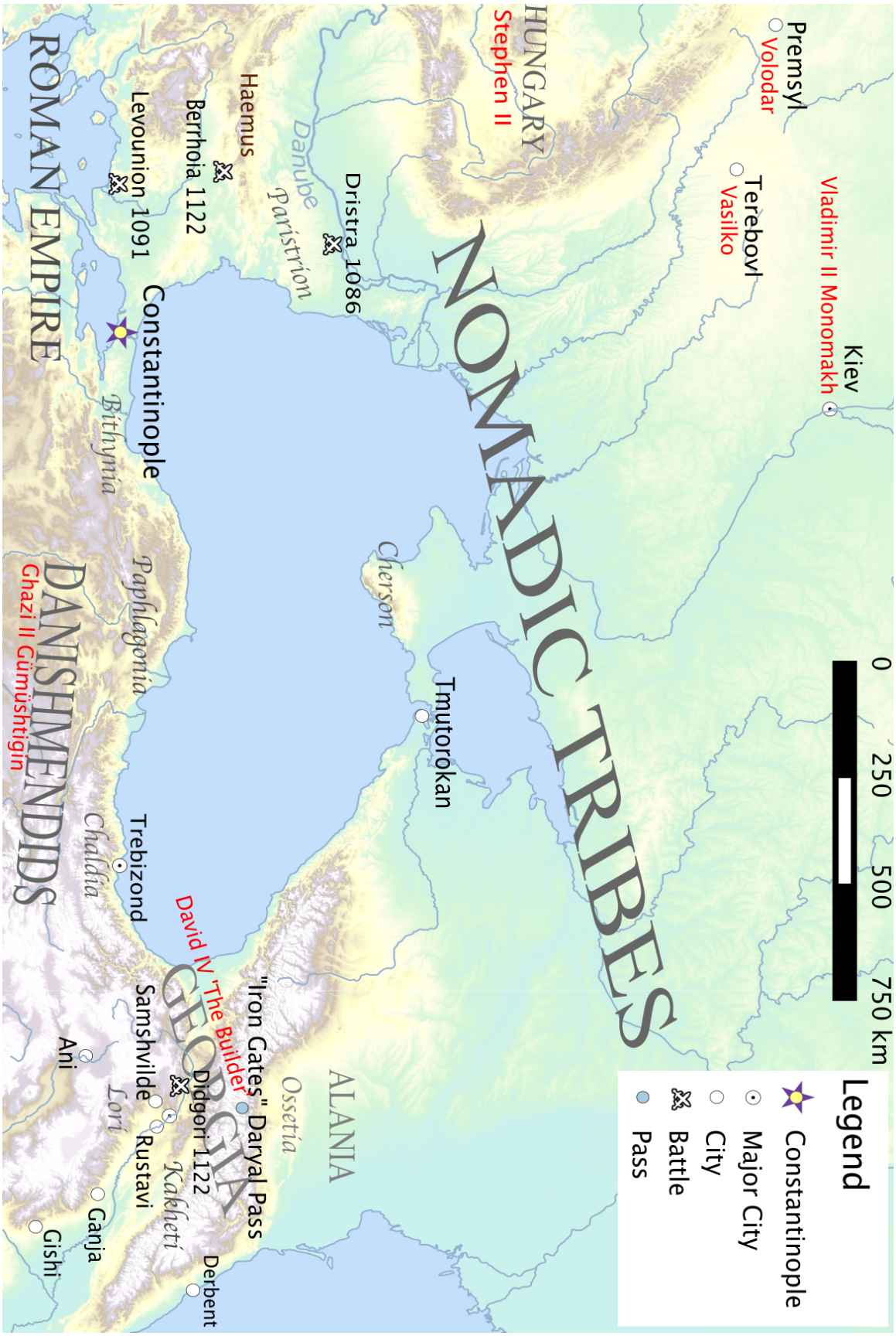
brother Tughrul of Nakhichevan, Najm ad-Din Ilghazi (who had formerly ruled an Armenian principality of Mayafariqin on the upper Tigris and had previously been offered the rule of Tblisi but refused due to fear of retribution from David), and Manuchehr III of Shirvan, who had married one of David's other daughters but feared David might next target his own territory.[170] Rather than reverse David's successes, this coalition led to David and his son Demetrios' greatest victory at the battle of Didgori on 12th August 1121, where despite overwhelming odds their forces defeated the coalition, allowing David to expand his territory to include his new capital at Tblisi in 1122-3, the emirate of Shirvan and the Caspian port of Derbent in 1124, defeating Cuman tribes en route.[171] Whether by mere virtue of the simultaneous campaigning of the two monarchs, or indeed the possibility that the marriage alliance between them consisted of a full military alliance against the Turks, these deeds of John and David taking place at the same time go some way to explaining their mutual success as their enemies were placed on the back foot on multiple fronts, and so could not lend aid to each other.

Unfortunately for John, he, unlike king David of Georgia, was not to receive the luxury of continuing to choose his targets at will, as even as he returned to Constantinople once more for the winter, he received word that nomadic barbarians, likened to locusts by Choniates, had crossed the Danube in numbers, invading and despoiling imperial territory.[172]

In short, though John's succession had not been completely smooth, his triumph and subsequent raising of his own son Alexios to the purple had cemented his position. Despite the death of Alexios, and the replacement of Eirene, Anna, and

[170] "History of David, King of Kings," tr. Thomson, pp. 309-53; D. Rayfield, *Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia* (London, 2012), pp. 92-3.
[171] Ibid.
[172] *NC*, p. 13; *NK*, p. 7.

some of their faction with John's partisans, it was still very much business as usual for the empire and its emperor, with John the son continuing to act as he would have done in the last years of Alexios' reign. The nomadic invasion of 1122 however, provided John with an opportunity to do what his father, and indeed all emperors since Basil II had restored the Danube frontier, had been unable to accomplish.



Map Two: Black Sea

Chapter Three

The Nomadic Invasion

Despite Choniates' biblical analogies of locusts and destruction, it had been only a few years since the last Cuman raid across the Danube in 1114. This invasion should be seen as merely the latest crisis of the 'nomad problem' from which the empire had suffered since Basil II had absorbed the Bulgarian state in the eleventh century, and which had been exacerbated by the eleventh-century crisis of empire that had also allowed the Turks into Anatolia. John is almost certain to have accompanied his father to face this 1114 invasion, and so together with his now considerable field experience in all the years since would have been as prepared, if not more prepared, than any emperor had been since the nomad problem had first arisen for Byzantium. This may be the main reason that explains why John's methods were more successful than those of his predecessors in removing that threat. Secondary to this experience, the changed world of the twelfth century had provided new opportunities for all the rulers around the Black Sea to deal with the nomadic threat. Indeed this period saw a sea change in the fortunes of the settled peoples around the Black Sea against the nomads, with John and his contemporaries all turning the tide against them.

For John, this was epitomised by his victory at Berrhoia, a victory celebrated long after his reign with an annual festival. Mentioned by Choniates as still being celebrated until at least the close of the twelfth century when he was writing, this made it emblematic of John's military legacy; this was John's Trafalgar. The legend of Berrhoia would spread at least as far as the Russian Steppe and Scandinavia, as the diverse sources from which some details of the campaign, and especially its

reception and significance, attest, and this highlights the second reason for John's success: his skilful acquisition of every advantage, military and diplomatic, against the nomads. Equally however, the nomads themselves were left satisfied by the outcome, demonstrating further why this must be acclaimed among John's greatest successes.

Sources for the Invasion

Depictions of nomadic invasions are rife with tropes and emotive language that stretch back to the depredations of similar peoples in both biblical and classical antiquity; though this invasion was no different, the distorting effect of these paradigms is lessened by a considerable volume of diverse sources from across the lands around the Black Sea and beyond. For these events we have five groups of sources to draw upon, though many of them focus upon the battle itself and thus information on the whole campaign is less secure. From the Greek side, Choniates gives us the most complete description, though much of his account demonstrates a significant rhetorical flavour suggesting that this was one of the events that he based upon a now lost panegyrical work.[173] Kinnamos, however, focuses his account on the battle's second half, and has none of these trappings, despite containing some details that Choniates does not, suggesting his account may be based on that of a solider who fought there many years before.

In addition to these, we have two Greek court poems, several Norse sagas, Rus chronicles and some asides in sources from the Caucasus. A monody by Michael Italikos upon the death of John's brother Andronikos mentions his valour

[173] For example John turns to the icon of the *Theometor* with tears and gestures in order to "don the breastplate of power" to rout the Pechenegs "just as Moses had turned back the troops of Amalek by raising his hands," *NC*, p. 15, p. 10.

against the nomads and the decisive role he is said to have played in the battle, while there is also an oration by Basilakes addressed to Axouch.[174] These complement the Norse sagas in their accounts of the battle, comprising of the Saga of Harald Hardrada and multiple *vitae* and miracle accounts of his half-brother Olaf the Saint.[175] All of these focus upon the role of the Varangian guard in the battle, one already prominent in our former two sources, and have been analysed by Dawkins, Blöndal and Benedikz.[176]

The Norse sources would appear to be in defiance of chronology, as both figures lived in the eleventh century, and the emperor named is either '*Kirjalax'*, derived from *Kyrios Alexios*, or 'Mikael Katalaktus', who is likely to be Michael IV the Paphlagonian.[177] Dawkins argues however that these sources were all written down in the late twelfth century, and that though they concern figures of the eleventh century, they contain valuable details of events in the twelfth, which when cross referencing them with other sources on Berrhoia, make a convincing argument for at least this real event being added to the semi-mythological account of these earlier figures. The place of battle is known as "Pézínavellir," that in Norse could derive from Patzinak according to Dawkins and Blöndal, and was located in the

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[174] *Italikos*, "Monodie sur le Sébastocrator Andronic Comnène, Fils D'Alexis I Comnène," pp. 129-34; Basilakes, "λογος εἰς τὸν σεβαστὸν καὶ μέγαν Δομέστικον" *Orationes et Epistolae*, pp. 84-91.
[175] *Fornmanna sögur, eptir gömlum handritum útgefnar að tilhlutun hius Norrœna fornfræða fèlags*, *Vols. V and VI*, ed. F. P. Hartv (Kaupmannahøfn, 1832; 1834), pp. 136 and 144-6 respectively; *Flateyjarbok Vol. II*, ed. S. Nordal (Akraness, 1944), pp. 377, 380; *Saga Olafs konungs ens Helga: Udförligere saga om kong Olaf den Hellige efter det ældste fuldstændige pergaments haandskrift i det store*, ed. C. R. Unger and P. A. Munch (Christiania, 1853), p. 242; *Heimskringla*, XX-I, Snorri Sturluson, ed. B. S. Kristjánsdóttir (Reykjavík, 1991); *Passio et miracula beati Olaui: edited from a twelfth-century manuscript in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Oxford*, ed. F. Metcalfe (Oxford, 1881), p. 77; "Legendae aliquot veteres de *Sancto Olavo* Rege Norvegiae", *SRD Vol. II*, ed. J. Langbek (Christiania, 1773), pp. 535, 539.
[176] R. M. Dawkins, "An Echo in the Norse Sagas of the Patzinak War of John II Komninos", *AIPHOS* V (Brussels, 1937); These conclusions are supported by additional analysis in S. Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*, tr., revised and rewritten by B. S. Benedikz (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 148-53
[177] '*Kirjalax'* in particular became the trope name for any emperor of Byzantium in the sagas: Blöndal and Benedikz, *Varangians of Byzantium*, p. 122.

land of the Vlachs (*Blökumannaland*). The sources state that the barbarians had many 'kings' reflecting the multiple tribal chiefs, while the details of the battle also follows the events as represented in the writings of Kinnamos and Choniates, and do not follow those of Levounion as related by Anna (for which there is no mention of the Varangians even being present), or any other battle. Therefore Berrhoia must be the source for these accounts, and the key role that Varangians played in the outcome alone makes it likely to be an event that would have had a huge impact in the north, as can be seen below.[178] As such the Norse sagas make a valuable contribution, one echoed by other sources that might be considered outliers in the understanding of these events: the Rus chronicles and sources from the Caucasus.

The Rus sources are the *Primary Chronicle*, based on the *Laurentian Codex*, and the *Hypatian Codex*, which together are the best Rus sources for the 9th-14th centuries (*PSRL I* and *II*). Though these manuscripts date from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries respectively, they contain elements based on earlier sources, as demonstrated by Serbin. [179] Together with the Georgian "History of David, King of Kings" and a small note in an Alanic manuscript, described in full below, analysing events with these sources allows clearer understanding of the key issues surrounding this nomadic invasion, John's response to it, and later events. [180] These key issues include the fact that the invasion was not spontaneous but interconnected to developments across the Black Sea region, the identity of the invaders and how that affected the nature of the invasion and its resolution. The course of the battle itself is also one of a few examples where we can analyse the battlefield tactics of John's army, as well as its ethnic composition, his use of diversely armed troops

[178] Dawkins, "Echo in the Norse Sagas," pp. 245-8; Blöndal and Benedikz, *Varangians of Byzantium*, pp. 148-53.
[179] *PSRL I*, p. 33, ed. K. N. Serbin (Leningrad, 1977); *PSRL* II (1843).
[180] "History of David, King of Kings," tr. Thomson.

and determine the importance of commanders such as Axouch and John's brother Andronikos. Reconstructing a Byzantine 'face of battle' for Berrhoia can therefore shed light on John's army during the rest of his reign. Finally, the aftermath of the invasion allows John's frontier policy in the Paristrion to be understood, and hints of the benefits of his grand strategy are to be seen alongside its flaws, as the rest of the world did not sit still while he handled the nomads. This invasion was therefore one of the major events of his reign, the analysis of which touches upon multiple aspects of the nature of his regime, as well as more broadly the nature of relations between settled and nomadic peoples, and nomads with other nomads. The origin of the invasion lay with a change in that relationship in the far north.

The Nature of the Horde

The Rus chronicles record that Vladimir Monomakh of Kiev carried out a successful campaign to expel nomads whom the chroniclers name specifically as the Oghuz, the Pechenegs and the Berendei tribes from his lands.[181] Those same sources mention that the Cumans now dominated the Steppe, and had driven the Oghuz and Pechenegs away from their previous grazing lands along the River Don, and that while the Berendei moved to Hungarian lands before returning to the Rus in 1139, the Pechenegs and Oghuz were funnelled along the coast, directly towards imperial lands.[182] This larger view of events does however raise the issue as to the exact ethnicity of the nomads, which has been debated extensively in the secondary

[181] "Прозна Володимеръ Береньдичи изъ Руси, а Торци и Печенези сами бежаша", "Ипатіевская летопись", *PSRL* II (1843), p. 8. Also: "Летопись по Воскресенскому списку" (1856), p. 25; "Густинская летопись", *PSRL* II (1843), p. 292; "Холмогорская летопись", *PSRL* I, p. 33, 42; Spinei has thus suggested Monomakh's offensive may have caused the nomadic invasion using much the same sources as those of the possible Rus invasion discussed in Chapter 1, n. 23; Spinei, *Romanians and the Turkic Nomads*, p. 126.
[182] Ibid. Curta too agrees that this interpretation explains the events that follow. Curta, *Southeastern Europe*, pp. 312-3.

literature, and should be analysed to understand the nature of the nomadic invasion and thus John's response to it. Choniates and Kinnamos refer to the invaders with the classicising Σκυθοι, Skythians, or indeed simply Βαρβάροι, and rarely use the more precise Πατζινάκοι or Πετζινάκοι, or indeed Κομανοι for the Cumans.[183] Stephenson in particular argues that: "the use of the emotive ethonym [Pechenegs], so hated and feared in his father's day, should not blind us to the fact that John was dealing with Cumans."[184] Stephenson rightly points out that for our authors themselves, such labelling was not a problem, as they follow Herodotos in his view that differentiating between different tribes from the north was not necessary for the Greek *oikoumene* – he takes Anna Komnene at her word that Levounion saw the end of the Pechenegs as an invading force, and that the Cumans from then on were the threat.[185] He supports this by adding that the Priest of Duklja gives John the epithet of "Cumanus," while Michael the Syrian calls this the "Cuman War".[186]

Though Stephenson's argument is an important contribution to the debate, this was almost certainly no unified, monolithic Pecheneg invasion, nor one solely made up of Cumans, a conclusion supported by the Rus chronicles references to Pecheneg and Oghuz tribes migrating south. Chalandon's work complements Stephenson's in this regard, noting that it had been 30 years since Levounion, and a new generation of Pechenegs had therefore emerged to challenge the empire, to which I would add that some of these nomads regardless of descent may have been already living south of the Danube from previous migrations, and joined the

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[183] *NC*, pp. 13-4; *JK*, p. 7.
[184] *NC*, pp. 13-4; *JK*, 7; Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 106; indeed Choniates references the Pechenegs "former accomplishments during the reign of Alexios," and thus sees them as the same invaders: *NC* [tr.], p. 10.
[185] Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 108; Herodotos, *Herodotus Vol. I*, tr. A. D. Godley (Cambridge, Mass, 1981), Book IV, pp. 6-7 and 17-8; *AK*, 8.5-6, pp. 245-9.
[186] Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 106; listed as "Caloioannes Cumano": *Priest*, XLV, pp. 75-6; *Michael*, 15.12, p. 599, p. 206.

invasion en route, as the barbarian horde all but guaranteed plunder and riches, and so would have snowballed in size as it travelled.[187] To reconcile these views, from examination of the sources it becomes apparent that the invaders were divided into many different tribes, with Choniates mentioning that over the winter of 1122 they were encamped in multiple locations with different chiefs, many of whom John was able to bring over to his side through feasts and "gifts of silk and silver" – his specific use of Skythian-speaking envoys showing the empire's long acquaintance with these peoples, and knowledge of how to deal with them.[188] Such political organisation and methods of dealing with them by settled societies is standard in the typology of nomadic societies, and thus both John and the nomads were following a well rehearsed dance at this point in the invasion.[189]

Horváth claims that after Levounion, and with the loss of their grazing land and the scattering of the Pecheneg tribes over the Rus principalities, Hungary and the whole of the Balkans, "the Pechenegs who invaded Byzantium in 1122 were already under Cumanian suzerainty". This puts a veneer of organisational control over this invasion that the sources do not support, nor does it seem likely from the state of the political disunity of the Cumans themselves.[190] The mixed nature of the horde is confirmed by the only other mention in Greek sources of the 'festival of the Pechenegs', that in fact calls it the feast "the destruction of the Cumans or Pechenegs", a fact unnoticed before Ivanov and Lubotsky's article on the date of the battle. This nature is also mentioned in one of Prodromos' epitaphs for John, in

[187] Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, p. 48.
[188] *JK*, p. 7, p. 16; *NC*, p. 14.
[189] Standard studies include: A. M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, 2nd ed. (London, 1994), specifically pp. 164-97 on political organisation and pp. 198-227 on relations between nomads and settled; T. J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier Nomadic Empires and China* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 5-8 on steppe political organisation and frontier relations.
[190] A. P. Horváth, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians. Steppe peoples in medieval Hungary* (Budapest, 1989), p. 31.

which the poet tells us John defeated the western Getae, who were a mixed race, a "Skythian Chimaera," who like all nomad confederations would therefore be multi-headed, and thus multi-ethnic.[191] Choniates and Kinnamos tell us that there were many tribes, and that is most likely exactly what they were – a diverse mixture of Pechenegs, Cuman and Oghuz tribes, some tribes driven from the steppe by Vladimir of Kiev, some previously living in the corridor between the Black Sea and the Carpathians, some already settled in the Paristrion – all opportunistically combining into a horde to attempt to seize plunder, or even carve a homeland for themselves out of the still rich provinces of the empire. Defeat for John would therefore have meant yielding the Paristrion to this horde permanently, as well as rendering his economic and political heartland of Macedonia and Thrace permanently vulnerable to attack from the north. Worse even than this, defeat would mean a weakening of the empire's still precarious international reputation, for though Alexios had laid the foundations for recovery, and John's opening campaign in Anatolia had been an auspicious start to the reign in continuing his legacy, it would all be undone if this nomadic invasion was not dealt with.

[191] S.A. Ivanov and A.M. Lubotsky, "An Alanic marginal note and the exact date of John II's battle with the Pechenegs" *BZ* 103.2 (2011), p. 600; they cite the *Ecloga Basilicorum*, written before 1142, which outlines that an appeal could be lodged with a higher court within ten days of a sentence, not counting rest days, both original and those introduced more lately, such as for victories, and it gives the specific example of the destruction of the Cumans or Pechenegs, "κατάλυσιν Κομάνων ἢ Πατζινάκων", and Ivanov and Lubotsky make the point that it is very unlikely there would be two different holidays before 1142 that went unmentioned by any other source (Anna at least would surely have mentioned it if her brother had adulterated a festival that her father had set up, as indeed Ivanov and Lubotsky also argue on p. 602 in response to an anonymous reviewer of their article). "Ecloga Basilicorum", ed. L. Burgmann, *Forschungen zur Byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte* 15 (Frankfurt am Main, 1988), XVII*; Prodromos*, XXV, lines 35-6: "ἡ δυσμικὴ δὲ τῶν Γετῶν πανσπερμία, ἡ Σκυθικὴ χίμαιρα."

Facing the Horde – the Battle of Berrhoia and its prelude

John's response was calculated, as both Choniates and Kinnamos mention that the emperor spent time on preparations for the expedition, with Choniates specifically saying John spent time to "gather the Roman forces, equipping them with the best arms possible."[192] This sets the tone for John's policy, whereby he loaded his hand with as many cards as possible to take on the nomads. Whilst his troops were gathered, equipped, and no doubt trained, he launched a diplomatic offensive to bring some of the tribes over to him through the aforementioned: "feasts…/and gifts of silk garments and silver cups and basins," with Kinnamos saying this was successful and many changed allegiance. Choniates tells us that this policy diverted the nomads, allowing John to bring his forces up against them while they considered peace.[193] The chroniclers' accounts then follow their usual form, with Kinnamos slightly denigrating John's achievements by alleging they were only possible through bribery, and Choniates making John out to be the grand strategist by distracting them with these bribes, while all along intending to lure them to honourable battle – the truth is unclear, as there is no specific mention of the nomads fighting alongside John in the battle to come (though there is mention of cavalry, and as shall be seen, they do enlist later). Nevertheless the ease with which his settlement of the nomads was achieved hints that John had already shown his generosity and good faith before the battle, and so his former enemies would be already inclined towards reaching an accommodation, as their will to continue fighting was eroded on every side.

Despite this whittling of the enemy numbers, the battle of Berrhoia was still by no means a foregone conclusion as our sources make plain, with Kinnamos

[192] *JK*, p. 7; *NC*, p. 14, p. 10.
[193] Ibid.

telling us it was "for some while in the balance," while Choniates described it as "one of the most frightful and terrifying battles ever fought."[194] John continued to seize every advantage regarding the battle itself: attacking on his terms in the April morning twilight, while many of the chiefs still had not decided whether they were going to come over to him or not, sapping the will of the tribesmen to fight as they knew they could attain what they wanted by surrendering, and in carefully selecting the field of battle itself.[195]

The course of the battle followed that of Levounion, whereby the discipline of John's army threw back the nomads such that they retreated to their wagon laager.[196]

Where Choniates and Kinnamos merely say that many died in assaulting the wagons, the *Fornmanna Sögur* specifically mentions that first the emperor sent in Greeks, who lost many men and then fled, then Franks and Flemings who fared equally poorly.[197] At this point there was a meeting of the army leadership that resulted in the Varangian Guard being sent into battle, which each of our sources portrays slightly differently according to their expected prejudices. Choniates represents this initiative as a cunning plan of John's, conforming to his usual paradigm in portraying John as the model emperor, complete with leading the bodyguard into battle himself after leading prayers to the Virgin.[198] Kinnamos by contrast has John doing this against the wishes of the Romans, possibly implying he is impulsive and foolhardy according to Stephenson's analysis, but equally possibly

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[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid. Ivanov and Lubotsky, "Alanic marginal note," p. 602.
[196] C.f. M. Lau, "The Battle of Beroia: A Byzantine Face of Battle", *The Byzantinist* 1 (2011), pp. 8-9: http://oxfordbyzantinesociety.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/obsnewsweb.pdf
[197] *Fornmanna Sögur* V, p. 136; Dawkins, "Echo in the Norse Sagas," p. 246; If true, this could be because the Latin troops were more heavily armoured than the native Byzantine troops, though such a discussion must be considered in full in a broader study.
[198] *NC*, p. 15.

simply revealing the natural reaction of army commanders when their ruler wishes to lead a bold charge against an enemy that had thrown back previous assaults, and indeed a ruler that may well have been wounded.[199] The *Fornmanna Sögur* (and indeed the other Norse Sagas with fewer details) tells us that the emperor was angry, and that he was told that he should use his "wineskins," the Varangian Guard.[200] The emperor is said to have told them he would not waste his 'jewels' by throwing them away against so large an enemy, but then the Captain of the Guard, named as "Þórir Helsingr" in the *Fornmanna Sögur*, declared that he and his men would be willing to leap into the fire if that would purchase the emperor's pleasure.[201] The emperor then told them to pray to St Olaf for victory – in some versions the Virgin and St Olaf, in common with Choniates' account – and they swore to build a church to the same saint or saints before charging the nomads' wagon-fortress, with no mention of whether John accompanied them himself or not. In all versions however, the attack is dramatically successful – the axes of the Varangians demolished the wagon-ramparts, allowing the rest of the army entrance, and though some Pechenegs fled they were rounded up by the Roman pursuit, leading to "captives beyond number."[202] The Norse Sagas give the additional information that the Varangians captured the blind 'over-king' of the many barbarian kings, and that both he and the emperor saw a noble warrior on a white horse riding in front of the Varangians, in reference to St Olaf giving the Varangians the victory. [203] From a fourteenth-century document naming a certain

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[199] *JK*, p. 8.
[200] *Fornmanna Sögur* V, p. 136; *Flateyjarbok* II, p. 380; *Heimskringla* XX; *Saga Olafs konungs ens Helga*, p. 242; Dawkins, "Echo in the Norse Sagas," pp. 246-7; The drunkenness of the Varangians earning sich a nickname is attested in multiple sources throughout the period: Blöndal, *Varangians of Byzantium*, p. 239.
[201] *Fornmanna Sögur* V, p. 136; Dawkins, "Echo in the Norse Sagas," p. 246.
[202] *JK*, p. 8; *NC*, pp. 15-6; Also the *Italikos* Monody and Norse Sources above.
[203] *Saga Olafs konungs ens Helga*, p. 242; *Passio et miracula beati Olaui*, p. 77; "Legendae aliquot veteres de *Sancto Olavo* Rege Norvegiae," p. 539; Dawkins, "Echo in the Norse Sagas," pp. 246-7.

Alexios Sophronios as patron, there is a record of a small monastery (μονώδριον) dedicated to the Virgin of the Varangians (τῆς Βαραγγιωτίσσης) behind the chancel of Hagia Sophia, while there is mention of a Church of St Olaf in Constantinople (supposedly containing his sword as a relic) in another twelfth-century saga.[204] Thus Norse tradition is if anything more reliable than our Greek sources for the details that are corroborated elsewhere. What is clear is that this was a conflict of legendary proportions, fitting for Norse Sagas and works of imperial rhetoric, and its reputation was well earned by the results of this battle. All of these accounts demonstrate that far from being merely an army of mercenaries, following the reverses of the eleventh century, as is generally assumed, John's army did in fact contain a good number of 'native' troops alongside foreigners who were fully enrolled in the army as auxiliaries or as part of a subject people's commitment to support the empire, and the same pattern can be seen in all of John's future campaigns.[205]

Indeed, Kinnamos and Choniates tell us that even those who were not rounded up were eager to swear allegiance to John after the battle, with Kinnamos telling us that the Pechenegs served for a long time, and are mentioned on multiple occasions by both Greek and Latin sources after this as being a valued part of the imperial army.[206] In reality, following Berrhoia, the Pechenegs cease to be an

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[204] *Flateyjarbok* II, p. 377; Heimskringla XXI; *"258 Februar 1361 Kallistos I. überträgt dem Alexios Sophianos die Verwaltung des Monydrion der Thotokos Barangiotissa in Konstantinopel auf Lebenszeit", Das Register des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel*, ed. J. Koder, M. Hinterberger and O. Kresten (vol. III, Vienna, 2001), pp. 514-21; Blöndal, *Varangians of Byzantium*, p. 186; Dawkins, "Echo in the Norse Sagas," pp. 246-7.

[205] For the lack of native troops under Alexios see: Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, pp. 195-6; W. Treadgold, *Byzantium and its Army 284-1081* (Stanford, 1995), p. 219; D. Nicolle, *Crusader Warfare 1 Byzantium, Western Europe and the Battle for the Holy Land* (London, 2007), pp. 163, 175.

[206] *JK*, p. 8; Pecheneg troops in specific are used to capture the town of Nistrion near Shayzar in 1138, *NC*, p. 29; Pecheneg troops in service to either the Byzantines or the Asenids harass the armies of the second and third crusades in 1147 and 1189, Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem*, ed. V. G Berry (New York, 1948), pp. 40-1 and *Das Itinerarium peregrinorum: eine*

independent force in our sources, integrating and thus disappearing from the historical record completely over the course of the next century.[207] Such dramatic integration must have occurred because John gave the nomadic invaders what they wanted – lands and service in an army to put their fighting skills to use. Though the demands of imperial rhetoric painted the nomadic horde as purely adversarial to the civilised, Christian Romans, the Pechenegs in particular had in fact had a long history of alliance with the empire in the previous century, even being called the "Christ-loving host."[208] Their transformation into the barbarian enemy in literature between the crises of the eleventh century and John's reign demanded an imperial victory to end them, and though John had provided such a victory the restoration of many of the nomads as loyal imperial clients was also a significant factor in his final success.[209] Equally however, a similar process of assimilation was happening across the borderland of the steppe.

The Wider Conflict of the Settled against the Nomadic

This battle was only a true watershed due to the culmination of the same processes happening to the Cuman and other nomadic tribes all around the Black Sea, a process that from the evidence, must have been coordinated for convenience or was the result of an active alliance by the rulers themselves. John's inheritance of

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zeitgenössische englische Chronik zum dritten Kreuzzug in ursprünglicher Gestalt, ed. H.E. Mayer, *MGHS* 18 (Stuttgart, 1962), p. 21; An exception is that some join in the Serbian rebellion against Manuel in 1150, but this, if anything, shows them to be firmly part of the new order rather than as an independent people, and indeed may hint at where exactly they were resettled by John in the west, as discussed further in the following chapters. *JK*, p. 107.

[207] Their last mention in Rus sources is in 1169, "Ипатіевская летопись" (1843), p. 96; Spinei, *Romanians and the Turkic Nomads*, p. 127.

[208] The literature of the previous century is fully discussed in S. A. Kozlov, "Были ли печенежские союзники византийцев «христолюбивым воинством»?" [Whether the Pecheneg Allies of Byzantines Were the «Christ-loving Host»?] Electronic Science and educational journal "History" Issue 11.34 (2015), accessed 20th May 2015, URL: http://history.jes.su/s207987840000954-8-1

[209] S.A. Kozlov, "More than Enemies. The Description of Nomads in the Byzantine Literature of the Epoch of the First Pecheneg Incursions," *Rules and Violence On the Cultural History of Collective Violence from Late Antiquity to the Confessional Age*, ed. C. Dietl, T Knäpper (Berlin, 2014), pp. 83-100.

a changed world, that despite posing new threats to the empire, also offered new opportunities, produced an environment whereby the settled polities of Byzantium, Hungary, Kiev and Georgia (together with Ossetia and Alania), could act in concert against their nomadic enemy, something for which both their multi-lateral diplomatic relations and simultaneous campaigns provide evidence, even if our sources, in seeking to glorify their respective rulers, do not state explicitly that a grand alliance against the nomadic threat, or at least coordination of military campaigns, existed.

After suffering for many years from nomadic invasions themselves, Hungary accepted those few Pechenegs and Cumans who did not swear allegiance to John, where they are alleged to have become a bodyguard unit for King Stephen II, diminishing his support amongst his own nobility, though this could be a literary trope to disparage the reputation of Stephen.[210] Whether this is true or not, place names, material culture, archaeological finds and documentary evidence from the following centuries certainly confirm their long term settlement in Hungary, and enlistment as semi-autonomous Hungarian vassals.[211] Vladimir Monomakh's original expulsion of the nomads that may have precipitated their invasion of Byzantium had also led to another tribe known as the Berenedei first moving into Hungarian lands, before returning to the Rus in 1139 to settle, and being integrated into the Kievan principality over the course of the next century.[212]

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[210] Simonis de Kéza, *Gesta Hungarorum*, ed. and tr. L. Veszprémy and F. Schaer (Budapest, 1999), pp. 138-9; "Chronicon Pictum", *SRH* I, ed. I. Szentpétery (Budapest, 1938), pp. 419-47; Horváth, *Steppe peoples*, pp. 31-2, 121; Tuzson, *Istvan II*, p. 13; There is also the possibility that those who did not side with John were those Pechenegs professing Islam, as many had already settled in Hungary according to K. *Štulrajterová*, "Convivenza, Convenienza and Conversion: Islam in Medieval Hungary (1000-1400 CE)," *Journal of Islamic Studies* (2012), pp. 4-6.

[211] Horváth, *Steppe peoples*, pp. 32-8.

[212] "Прозна Володимеръ Береньдичи изъ Руси, а Торци и Печенези сами бежаша", "Ипатіевская летопись", *PSRL* II (1843), p. 8. Also: "Летопись по Воскресенскому списку"

The same integration is seen across the steppe in Georgia, where a Cuman horde led by Atrak (also known as Otrok), likely also driven away from the steppe by another of Vladimir's offensives, accepted a treaty to settle and fight for David the Builder.[213] David had begun this process back in 1117-8, when he had subdued the Ossetians to the north of Georgia with an expedition through the Daryal Pass, but whilst doing so, supposedly settled 40,000 Cuman families in Georgia, granting them lands in exchange for serving in his armies.[214] Donald Rayfield has recently suggested that though Vladimir and David never met, there is evidence of diplomatic contact between them via embassies, with Rus sources also mentioning Vladimir opening the 'iron gates' (the Daryal Pass) and chasing the Cumans out, whilst the seventeenth-century historian, archdeacon Paul of Aleppo, who supposedly drew on now lost sources, believed that Rus soldiers helped David transfer the Cumans to Georgia.[215] Indeed, David went a step further to produce what Rayfield has labelled a "pax Georgiana" in the north Caucasus, divorcing his Armenian wife Rusudan and then marrying Atrak's daughter Garandukht, while also betrothing his youngest daughter Rusudan to Jadaros, heir to the Ossetian throne, all c. 1117-8.[216] Simultaneously with John however, after his victory at

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(1856), p. 25; "Густинская летопись", *PSRL II*, p. 292; "Холмогорская летопись," p. 42; Spinei, *Romanians and the Turkic Nomads*, p. 126.

[213] "History of David, King of Kings",tr. Thomson, pp. 325-7; Golden, "Turkic people and Caucasia," p. 59; *idem*. "Cumanica I," pp. 57-64; *idem*. "Nomads in a Sedentary World," pp. 46-51; Spinei, *Romanians and the Turkic Nomads*, p. 128.

[214] R. V. Metreveli, *Некоторые вопросы внешней политики Грузии в средние века: XII в,* (Tblisi, 1995), pp. 3-25; Rayfield, *Edge of Empires*, pp. 90-1.

[215] For the Rus sources see above. Incorrectly called an eighteenth-century historian in Rayfield's *Edge of Empires* (2012), p. 91, the Paul of Aleppo reference was discovered in one version of the manuscript by Metreveli*, Некоторые вопросы внешней политики Грузии в средние века*, pp. 3-25; unfortunately no reference is made to what his exact sources were, and so this possibility of direct contact cannot be confirmed.

[216] "History of David, King of Kings, tr. Thomson, p. 325; Golden, "Nomads in a Sedentary World," pp. 46-51; Rayfield, *Edge of Empires*, pp. 91-2; The arrival of Queen Rusudan in Jerusalem is preserved in a letter from praecentor Ansellus of Jerusalem to G (Gerbert of Galoni) archbishop of Paris, dated by Bautier and Rayfield to 1st August 1120, *Cartulaire générale de Paris*, ed. R. de Lasteyrie (Paris, 1887), p. 172; Z. Avalishvili, "The Cross from overseas," *Georgica* Vol II-III

Didgori in 1122 our sources tell us he also campaigned against Cuman tribes, which again suggests that just as John and David had coordinated their campaigns against the Turks, so too against the nomads, again whether for convenience or in formal alliance cannot be determined, but it certainly accounts for their mutual success.

Those same nomadic raiders had also threatened Alania for many years, and Ivanov and Lubotsky have commented on how the 12th century was a heyday for Orthodox Christianity in the region. Due to a confluence of this fact, the Christian history of suffering at the hands of nomads, and their relative isolation it is no surprise the 'festival of the Pechenegs' as instituted by John was celebrated in the Caucasus until at least 1275, possibly suggesting it was also celebrated in other Orthodox regions as it had reached as far as Alania.[217] The fact of its transmission however, is indicative of two major changes to the old order of the Black Sea world that the battle of Berrhoia prompted: the major shifting of international alliances in the latter part of Alexios' life and the early part of John's reign with his own son that was revolutionary by any previous reckoning, and the subsequent shift of John's Balkan focus from the lower to the middle Danube, as he attempted to earn for the empire a dominant role in the new geopolitical order.

Regarding these alliances, as discussed in the previous chapter, Alexios' desperate Cuman alliance to win Levounion had isolated Byzantium internationally, causing the ire of Kiev and Hungary, who not only allied with each other through Euphemia of Kiev marrying King Coloman, but the latter also contemplated alliance with the Normans. The situation with Hungary had been salvaged by John's

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(1936), pp. 3-11; G. Bautier, "L'envoi de la relique de la Vraie Croix à Notre-Dame de Paris en 1120," *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 219 (1971), pp. 387-97.

[217] The basis of their article is an Ossetic colophon in a manuscript dated to 1275 concerning the date of "Pecheneg Sunday." Their point on the Ossetic expression that literally translates as "to exterminate the Pechenegs", meaning "to strive, hanker, yearn for something" is also very well made. Ivanov and Lubotsky, "Alanic marginal note," pp. 602-3.

marriage to Piroska/Eirene, and though Alexios had made a small misstep in his betrothal in 1104 of John's brother Andronikos to Volodarovna of Tmutorokan, also known as Eirene, daughter of Volodar Rostislavich of Premsyl, as he was the enemy of both Vladimir II Monomakh of Kiev and Coloman of Hungary, he finally had some luck in that Coloman's bride, Euphemia of Kiev the daughter of Vladimir, was supposedly caught in adultery and therefore returned to Kiev in 1113.[218] As discussed in the previous chapter, John's heir and co-emperor the young Alexios had married Vladimir's granddaughter Dobrodjeja Mstislavna in what would be the second of John's major international alliances, completing the diplomatic rapprochement and together with the marriage with Georgia, implying alliance or at least shared goals between the polities.[219] Though Vladimir died in 1125, his son Mstislav I continued offensives against the Cumans, and thus together with the Georgian-led Caucasus and Hungary, by the 1120s all of the major Black Sea polities were linked by marriage alliances to each other, with John's Byzantium at the centre, and all had both carried out successful campaigns against their nomadic enemy, and then started the process of integrating the Berendei, Pechenegs or Cuman tribes into their own polities.[220] Byzantium's place as the lynchpin of this alliance had been earned as a consequence of the restoration of imperial prestige due to victories that had culminated in Berrhoia, and imperial diplomacy that had

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[218] *AK,* 14.8, pp. 454-8; *PVL* 1 (1950), p. 185; "Chronicon Hungarorum," p. 429; Kosztolnyik, *Dynastic Policy of the Árpáds*, p. 102; Tuzson believes the adultery charge was libellous and instigated by a Norman faction at court, in keeping with his general argument for the actions of the Hungarian court in this period, as discussed below. Tuzson, *Istvan II*, p. 141; the toponym Tmutorokan and its proximity to the theme of Cherson hints that this may have been done to safeguard the empire's northernmost province. See Map Two.

[219] "Густинская летопись," *PSRL* II, p. 292; Gautier, "L'Obituaire du Typikon du Pantocrator," p. 249; Varzos, *genealogia tōn Komnēnōn*, pp. 308, 316-7; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 206-7; Jeffreys, "*Sebastokratorissa* Irene as Patron," p. 179.

[220] See Map Two; only with the breakdown of the unified Rus polity were the Cumans able to raid again by Manuel's reign, and even then their major offensive was against Poland. Polish Invasion: *MPH* II, ed. A. Bielowski (Lwów, 1872), pp. 832, 875; Invasion during Manuel's Reign: *NC*, pp. 77-9; *JK*, pp. 93-5; Recall also how John Bryennios Komnenos married another bride of Caucasian origin, further cementing contact and alliances across the steppe.

culminated in marriage alliances with Hungary, Kiev and Georgia. The transmission of the news of this victory, whether in Greek, Syriac, Norse or in the spread of the celebration of the "feast of the Pechenegs" to the Caucasus, demonstrates the importance of this change to contemporaries as well as to historians. Equally, John's mastery of the opportunities that the changes of the eleventh century had brought with the rise of Hungary, Kiev and Georgia, had allowed him to coordinate with these polities to solve finally the 'nomad problem' that had afflicted the Balkan frontier since Basil II.

The nature of the Paristrion after Berrhoia

Going all but unmentioned in our surviving sources were however the practicalities of the frontier policy that demonstrates this change in the old order, a change that saw imperial resources move from the lower to the middle Danube. Stephenson and Madgearu have argued that between the battles of Levounion and Berrhoia, the Komnenoi shifted their defensive frontier to the Haemos Mountains, leaving the Paristrion as a "half open," peripheral province, though one firmly in the imperial sphere of control in the view of Madgearu.[221] They point to depopulation revealed in the archaeological record by abandoned forts, and mentioned in sources such as William of Tyre who refers to the ancient provinces of Dacia being left barren for military purposes, suggesting that by taking away the targets (places to raid), the raiding stopped.[222] When the developments of the previous century are

[221] Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, pp. 103-5; Madgearu, *Military Organization on the Danube*, p. 168.
[222] The devastation in the archaeological record of Păcuilul lui Soare and Nufărul are noted by Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 105, based on coin finds – with Madgearu specifically noting that though these together with Isaccea and Axiopolis were attacked in 1095, they were not abandoned until 1122 according to the latest archaeology. Madgearu, *Military Organization on the Danube*, pp. 142-5. The archeological works in question are all referenced above. William of Tyre, 2.4, p. 126. Also proposed by Magdalino as a "no mans land", Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 134; Madgearu posits that this description is more likely to apply to the situation during William's lifetime in the late twelfth century, rather than the situation during the passage of the First Crusade that is being

taken into account however, the evidence reveals a policy more complex than simply creating a no-man's land (and indeed comparisons with the contemporary eastern frontier are equally not as simple as they first appear).[223]

The economic evidence demonstrates that the region had been far from wealthy or productive for at least the previous century, and the population of that region was at best predominantly made up of those called *mixobarbaroi*. Indeed the region was for some time known as *Patzinakia* as our scholars point out in earlier chapters of their works, and thus outside the imperial centres of Dristra, Isaccea and Axiopolis there were very few people our sources would class as full Romans, but (in the words of Stephenson) they were rather "Christian non-Romans" who lived within imperial frontiers and were treaty-bound, and thus subject to, the empire.[224] Despite their conversion and these numerous treaties, they were however always a threat on account of being a significant, distinct ethnic group in one geographical area, and one that did not contribute much towards the empire's security or finances, in fact often being a danger to both through their joining external and internal threats, and requiring a great deal of investment in men and money on the part of the empire.

Though the archaeological and textual evidence, mentioned above, supports Stephenson and Madgearu's arguments that the number of settlements in the Paristrion declined during the rule of the Komnenoi, this evidence does not account for the nomadic tribes living there who would leave no such archaeological

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described in this section, as it is not mentioned in other late eleventh-century sources, Madgearu, *Military Organization on the Danube*, pp. 169-70.

[223] Madgearu, *Military Organization on the Danube*, p. 169; see Chapters Six and Eight for Anatolia

[224] On *mixobarbaroi*, see *AK*, pp. 205-7, and for discussion see Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, pp. 107-110.

footprint.[225] Despite a century of inhabiting the region, there are virtually no permanent settlements of a distinctive Pecheneg or Cuman culture, and the aforementioned continuing growth of Dristra and the few other remaining imperial settlements in this period imply that these continued to be the markets used by nomadic tribes when they needed Byzantine goods.[226] The fact that John pursued the invaders to their wagons and not to any permanent villages reinforces this, as does Kinnamos' assertion that the Turks John fought in winter 1124 "were still untrained in agricultural labours, but gulped and devoured milk, *like the Pechenegs*, and were always encamped in scatterings on the plain" [stress added].[227] Indeed, the lack of military installations such as these forts may suggest that the region had become pacified and thus no longer required an imperial garrison outside of that at Dristra. As a safe province that was no longer threatened by constant attacks it would no longer need so many military bases.

Thus, rather than being a 'no-mans land', the Paristrion had become an area more like a native American Reservation for the nomadic tribes – the similarities of these twelfth-century nomads with the nineteenth-century native Americans who were defeated militarily, bound by treaties, Christianised and then located in an area that the central government did not want for its own people due to poor farmland and lack of resources are striking, as is their history.[228] The early reservations had

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[225] Curta, *Southeastern Europe*, p. 319.

[226] Horváth makes the point that despite c.200 years of habitation on the steppe there are very few finds, with cemeteries being the only permanent sites the Pechenegs and Cumans built there, whereas in Hungary where there is more archaeological evidence we see a process of villages shifting to new sites after a short time, hinting at a semi-sedentary mode of life even when the Pechenegs had all but assimilated into Hungarian society in the 13th century, Horváth, *Steppe peoples*, pp. 19-25 and 35-6 respectively.

[227] *JK*, p. 9, p. 17; see below.

[228] K. Frantz, *Indian Reservations in the United States: Territory, Sovereignty, and Socioeconomic Change* (Chicago, 1999), pp. 10-69; Frantz also calls to mind similarities to the breakup of tribal lands by European colonial authorities in Africa, p. 51. Khazanov's classifications for nomadic adaption includes sedentarization, trade and submission typologies that match what John carried out here. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, pp. 164-227.

concentrated a cohesive ethnic group in one location, leading to successive rebellions, and so the United States government divided the tribes, resettling them in smaller, more geographically scattered reservations across the country. So too did John with the Pechenegs and Cumans: Choniates clearly states that John sent many to settle along the western borders of the empire, in villages still surviving at his time of writing (indeed, during field work in Serbia in 2014, I passed through a village with the name of Pečenog near Kraljevo) while others (such as the ones who came over to John during the winter) no doubt remained in the Paristrion.[229] Thus by dividing the Pechenegs from one geographically cohesive "*Patzinakia*" into several villages scattered across the Balkans, coupled with his international alliance system and the advanced warning bases in the Crimea, the 'nomad problem' was at last solved.[230] Indeed, in contrast to the resettlement of native Americans, these nomads had invaded the empire in the first place seeking their own lands, which John had given them along with service in his army, and so with the nomads' own support this solution became a very real success. What the nomads wanted was lands and the goods that the empire produced, coupled with an outlet for their warriors, and John gave them all of this under imperial suzerainty.[231] There is even

[229] *NC*, p. 16. Pečenog is located near Kraljevo, Serbia, at 43° 46′ 0″ N, 20° 46′ 0″ E; In this way John avoided a problem that afflicted the empire from the first large scale settling of *foederati* barbarian allies, whereby eventually the cohesive barbarian tribe always attempted to take over the land in their own right, whether Franks, Visigoths or many others. See P. Heather, "The late Roman art of client management: Imperial defence in the fourth century west," *The Transformation of Frontiers From Late Antiquity to the Carolingians*, ed. W. Pohl, I. Wood and H. Reimitz (Leiden, 2001), pp. 15-68 for an overview of the problem. John's solution may be seen on multiple occasions in following chapters as he deals with Serbian, Turkish and Armenian Cilician clients through resettlement.

[230] See Chapter One for Cherson, which in agreement with Stephenson I see as an important part of future Byzantine nomad policy for its role in information gathering, as well as a base for trade and diplomacy with the northern polities, Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, pp. 104-5; see also the similar relocation of the Serbians and Armenians.

[231] Succesful relations between sedentary and nomadic peoples are often brokered on these lines, c.f. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, pp. 198-224; Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, pp. 90-1.

a hint in Prodromos that the tribes paid tribute to the imperial fisc, making their status clearly that of an imperial client people if this rhetoric had basis in fact.[232]

The new system was to continue for as long as imperial control over the whole of the Balkans endured, with Manuel even combining the two strategies by giving four *kastra* of the province to Rus princes in the 1160s in exchange for their loyalty, whilst the nomads remained present as a description from the late twelfth century by Eustathius of Thessaloniki of the pacified "Skythians" attests.[233] This 'nomad reservation' was therefore a buffer zone between the traditionally organised imperial provinces, but it was also a region where the description of 'no man's land', or "gradual evanescence of Byzantine power" would be misleading. The income from trade at the booming imperial centres such as Dristra was not insignificant, and for the price of only maintaining a few military bases, security in the area was never higher, with loyal nomadic subject peoples surrounding these centres and serving in the imperial army, in complete contrast to the fortification-heavy Anatolian frontier.[234] Control over the lower Danube was equally essential for more effective operations on the middle Danube, and indeed freed up men and money to use in other areas, and so goes some way to explaining why John was able to achieve better results in other locations, as the Paristrion and the former nomadic threat had been neutralised on account of a glorious victory and the international diplomacy to capitalise on it. However, with this being only the first theatre of war to be settled, players and events moved fast in the other theatres, exposing some

[232] "ὅς φόρους ἐπιτέθεικε ταῖς Παριστρίαις χώραις" *Prodromos*, IV, line 226.
[233] Stephenson translates Eustathius' characterisation of the Paristrion as a peaceful region containing these nomads as a place: "where the Scythian bow does not function, and his ropes are kept unused, he brandishes them only to keep his hand in", Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 107, from "Eustathius Thessalonicensis metropolitan, Allocutio ad imperatorum Manuelem Comnenum, cum esset Myorum" *Patrologia Cursus Completus* 135, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris, 1864), p. 938; For the grant to Rus, see *JK*, p. 236, and for the Rus sources see Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, p. 258.
[234] See Chapter Eight; Curta, *Southeastern Europe*, p. 328.

weakness in this grand strategy of cumulative settlements and acquisition of secured territory and clients. During the nomadic invasion, the player in question was Venice, who through fortunate coincidence had the means to push its case for the renewal of trade privileges. Though seemingly tangential to affairs of the Paristrion frontier, the contemporaneous nature of these events must be acknowledged as a key factor in why the conflict with Venice played out the way it did, as John prioritised other theatres in succession, as can be seen over the next two chapters. At this early stage however, it can be understood why John's regime acted in the way it did in response to the Venetian threat.

The Venetian Fleet and Corfu: the Grey Lining of the Silver Cloud

Five years had passed since Alexios died in 1118, and those five years had been an unparalleled success. John had followed up on unfinished business in Anatolia and the Balkans as he pushed for the reabsorption of the Rum sultanate of Ikonion, and had decisively defeated the invading Pechenegs and Cumans, strengthening the imperial army and security along the Danube border in the process. His opening act of diplomatic firmness with the Venetians was however to have unexpected consequences in 1122 and to spoil his otherwise spotless record, as the Venetian fleet under Doge Dominico Michiel was launched eastwards in response to the defeat of King Baldwin II of Jerusalem by Ilghazi of Aleppo at the *Ager Sanguinis* (Field of Blood), and both the King and Pope Calixtus II appealed for aid.[235]

[235] William of Tyre, 12.9-12, pp. 556-62; Fulcher of Chartres, 3.3, pp. 621-3; G. L. F Tafel and G. M. Thomas, "Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig, mit besonderer Beziehung auf Byzanz und die Levante," *FRA* 12 (Vienna, 1856), 1, no. xxxviii, p. 78; Dandolo, p. 232; "Historia Ducum Veneticorum," *MGH SS* 14 (Hannover, 1883), p. 73; "Translatio Isidori," *RHC: Historiens occidentaux* 5 (Paris, 1895), pp. 322-3; D. Queller and I. Katele, "Venice

Up to this point, Venetian merchants had continued to trade in Constantinople under less favourable terms, and in the doge's appeal to his people indeed there is no mention of Byzantium, only the possibility of re-establishing control over Dalmatian towns en route.[236] The slow pace of the Venetian fleet as it went down the coast, mentioned by Fulcher of Chartres as being particularly cautious and indeed calculated by John Pryor as being 0.8 knots, meant that it would not reach Acre until midwinter if it had arrived near Corfu in September/October 1122, but when the seas proved overly treacherous to the Venetian galleys, the doge was forced to overwinter en route.[237] Fulcher of Chartres does not mention that there were any hostilities, merely telling us that the fleet wintered in Corfu, before setting out in March 1123 to continue its journey to the Holy Land via Methone and Rhodes, which were again logical places at which to take on supplies.[238] The "Historia Ducum Veneticorum" uniquely tells us that the Venetians laid siege, but aside from this reference the nature of what may have occurred in winter 1122 on Corfu is unclear.[239] Our other primary sources refer to raids, but only after they mention the Venetians seizing Tyre, and due to the lack of specific provocation on the fleet's outward journey, I would argue that if hostilities did break out at Corfu, they were on a very limited scale. In truth it would be expected that when a large fleet spends five months in a foreign port when there were tensions between the polities involved, based on the revocation of trade privileges and worries over John's policy on Hungarian or Venetian control over

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and the Conquest of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem," *Studi Veneziani* 12 (1986), p. 29; Devaney "Byzantine-Venetian Conflict," p. 135.

[236] Ibid. Evidence of Venetians trading in Constantinople between 1118 and 1122 are found in: "*Documenti del commercio veneziano*" ed. della Rocca and Lombardo, nos. 41, 42, 45 and 46.

[237] Fulcher of Chartres 3.15, p. 658; J. Pryor, "'Water, water everywhere, Nor any drop to drink': Water Supplies for the Fleets of the First Crusade," in *Dei Gesta per Francos: Etudes sur les Croisades dédiées à Jean Richard*, ed. M. Balard, B. Kedar and J. Riley-Smith (Aldershot, 2001), pp. 21-24; Devaney, Byzantine-Venetian Conflict," pp. 136-7.

[238] Fulcher of Chartres 3.15, p. 657.

[239] "Historia Ducum Veneticorum," p. 73.

Dalmatia, there might be trouble that our Venetian sources would later emphasise to make later actions seem part of a grand design; but naturally the possibility that raids were carried out both on Corfu and other islands should not be discounted.[240] It has been argued by Ahrweiler, Lilie, and Devaney that Venice may have carried out this raid due to there being no fear of reprisal, on account of the aforementioned policy of John's finance minister, John Poutzes, to have naval taxes collected and spent centrally rather than on local defence.[241] However, it has been pointed out by Judith Herrin that this policy was only instituted after 1126, in her view in response to the renewed promise that Venice would grant Byzantium naval support when it needed it.[242] I would go further and argue that localised defence fleets, though capable against pirates and smaller raids, would be entirely unable to defeat the huge Crusader fleet gathered by Venice in support of Jerusalem, and thus a large centralised fleet would be the obvious response to defending against such incursions in future, which later evidence would suggest was the model that John adopted.[243]

Regardless of the severity of the hostilities on Corfu or elsewhere, it is apparent that the worst of the damage was done by the Venetians on their return journey in 1124, which leads me to make the point that when John received news from Corfu in the winter of 1122, there must have been good reason for him not to

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[240] These sources will be discussed in full next chapter; regarding the historiography, Lilie argues for a serious attack on Corfu timed specifically while John was occupied elsewhere, and then the fleet sailing directly for the Levant, with the latter point also being argued by Nicol, and Thomas Madden, while Chalandon and Devaney remark that it is truly not clear whether there were any hostilities aside from in Corfu itself. Lilie, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 370-1; D. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice: A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 79; T. Madden, *Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice* (Baltimore, 2003), p. 16; Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, p. 157; Devaney (2010), p. 138.

[241] *NC*, p. 54; H. Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer: la marine de guerre, la politique et les institutions maritimes de Byzance aux VIIe-XVe siècles* (Paris, 1966), pp. 175-294; Lilie, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 613-43; Devaney, "Byzantine-Venetian Conflict," p. 137.

[242] "Synopsis Chronikē," ed. K. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη* 7 (Athens, 1897), pp. 220-22; J. Herrin, "Realities of Provincial Government Hellas and the Peloponnesos, 1180-1205,"in *Margins and Metropolis: Authority Across the Byzantine Empire* (Princeton, 2013), p. 86, n. 144.

[243] See Chapter Five.

act against them. Traditionally this has been interpreted as him being unable to do so, or unwilling to spend resources that would be better spent in other regions – instead I would argue that the raid was of little consequence, and that the historiography of this Venetian 'war' has traditionally seen events that occurred years apart as part of a continuum that would not have been seen by John and his government. The act of declining to renew Venice's privileges in the face of their recent abuse of their rights in 1118 and this wintering in Corfu in 1122 were indeed connected, and were an escalation of tensions, but were hardly a declaration of war, as the frequent skirmishing between Alexios (and later Manuel) and the crusaders on land and sea was not a full war, but opportunism on the part of the crusaders to test imperial defences to see if they could gain some advantage for themselves.[244] It was surely not an ideal situation for the emperor to be in, but in 1122-3, he could be fairly certain that the regional fleets would deter the worst of Venetian hostilities. Indeed the Venetians would not want to waste resources against the empire when their key purpose, supporting the kingdom of Jerusalem, was still to be undertaken. It is only when looking through the lens of 1124, if not 1204, that a teleological pattern of escalating Byzantine-Venetian tensions emerges, and thus I see the events on Rhodes in 1124 as the key turning point.

By spring 1123, John could feel free to turn to another piece of unfinished business that he had left simmering since his father's death – a settlement for the Serbian principalities of Diokleia and Raška. It is possible he may even have once more overwintered in the Balkans as no source mentions his return to Constantinople as was usual, and thus this would be the next obvious problem to

[244] C.f. First and Second Crusade skirmishing, see *AK*, 11.10, pp. 360-2; Bernardo Maragone, *Annales Pisani*, ed. M. L. Gantile, *RIS* Vol. 6 Part 2 (Bologna, 1936), p. 7; Devaney, "Byzantine-Venetian Conflict," p. 137.

tackle while he was in the region before returning to Anatolia. This business, however, was not one to be solved by only one campaign as had the nomad problem, but would take up most of the next decade.

Though John had exceeded his father and their predecessors in bringing a new settlement with the nomads to the Danube frontier, he had continued to operate within the patterns established when he ruled with his father. In the decade to come however, the changed world of the twelfth century would begin to demonstrate how renewed opportunities could bring new challenges, as the new order, and the empire's place within it, took shape.

Chapter Four

Client Management and the Crisis of 1126

The chronology following the battle of Berrhoia in 1122 has been much debated by scholars due to obfuscatory sources, which range from vague to outright contradictory when they are examined together. From Chalandon to Magdalino there is no consensus as to whether John caused, or reacted to, the various changes that took place in the Balkans, with both of these scholars stating as much in their own studies.[245] Scholars who do argue for a specific interpretation have derived their view from the relative weight they have given to the different accounts. Kinnamos and Choniates directly contradict each other in their versions of events: Kinnamos has John go off to fight nomadic Turks in Anatolia after Berrhoia, while Choniates has him immediately prosecute a war against the Serbs, almost certainly identified with the rebellious Raškan principality, while the Priest of Diokleia gives no exact dates at all, and the *Hungarian Chronicle* does not mention the Serbs in this context.[246] Kinnamos is redeemed slightly by giving relative dates that can be cross-referenced, making it the most useful source for chronology, while the *Hungarian Chronicle* can be used alongside Choniates and Kinnamos to narrow down possibilities, though with barely any court rhetoric from this period it remains the most convoluted decade of John's reign. Despite this confusion, when taking into account the broader context of events at the end of Alexios' life and their portrayal in our sources, a clearer picture emerges that may explain why, and when, these events occurred.

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[245] Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, p. 65; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 35.
[246] *NC*, p. 16; *JK*, p. 9.

This chapter will therefore first demonstrate why there would be good reason for sources to provide such vague or differing accounts, and then how an expedition that began as the next stage in completing the plans begun under Alexios, evolved into a far broader conflict during which John overextended himself, and so had to make less than ideal compromises to ensure at least some of his initiatives succeeded. The crisis of 1126 has thus far been overlooked due to the methodological standard of researching John's reign thematically, examining John's dealings with the various Serb, Hungarian, Turk and Venetian polities separately, or only in reference to one of the others. Thus it is unappreciated that John's cumulative strategy to acquire successive clients eventually overreached. The emperor attempted to acquire too many at once in these years, perhaps as a result of imperial hubris after the victory at Berrhoia. This overextension forced John to decide which conflicts he would see through, and which he would abandon. He chose Raška and Hungary at the expense of Venice and Ikonion.

Managing the Client Principality of Raška – the campaign of 1123

Historians are split into two main camps as to when the Serbian campaign occurred, giving more weight to either Choniates' or Kinnamos' dating. Makk argues for an earlier date of soon after Berrhoia in 1123/4, while most historians place it in the context of the broader Hungarian wars around 1126-9, and then there is Papageorgiou who argues that there were in fact two Serbian campaigns.[247] Fine is the main proponent for the later date, mainly on the basis that: "there was no sign

[247] C.f. dating of the Hungarian wars in Chapter Five; Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, pp. 22-7; Fine, *Early Medieval Balkans*, pp. 235-6; G. Moravcsik, *Byzantium and the Magyars* (Budapest, 1970), p. 78; Kosztolnyik, *Dynastic Policy of the Árpáds*, pp. 104-8, Tuzson, *Istvan II*, p. 139, Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 206; Madgearu, *Military Organization on the Danube*, pp. 149-50; Papageorgiou, *John II Komnenos*, p. 22; Curta avoids the date issue entirely, Curta, *Southeastern Europe*, pp. 328-9.

of Serb provocation this early", though his own account of the events of 1118 could be considered just such a provocation, particularly considering John was the commander in Raška that year. John had left the situation unresolved when Alexios' health started failing, and indeed this is reflected in the words of our sources.[248] Choniates tells us that John declared war because the Serbs "were guilty of many crimes and violations of treaties", and added that they "had always bowed to the yoke of neighbouring princes," thus their past record was most definitely being deployed as a key reason for war.[249] There is little other evidence to suggest what exactly 'rebellion' entailed in the primary sources; a refusal to acknowledge imperial suzerainty may be assumed, perhaps coupled with a refusal to provide troops for the imperial army or to pay tariffs on goods, or some other form of taxation. Similarly to the nomads or the Venetians, Raškan 'rebellion' may have been a form of negotiation for greater subsidies and benefits from the empire, holding out for a better deal from Constantinople.[250] Equally however, it may be more a matter of domestic politics, as the Raškan court competed with that of Diokleia for influence over the Serbs, similarly to the Hetumids and Rupenids in Cilicia. A combination of these factors would lead to instability in the relationship between the Serbs and the empire, particularly in the wake of the eleventh-century crisis. Papageorgiou argues that a rebellion likely occurred during the context of the nomadic invasion because the Serbs always took advantage of imperial weakness, and so while John negotiated with the nomads there was a situation ripe for explotation, particularly if John came off worse.[251] In the wake of John's success however, their agitation in fact resulted in a victorious emperor with a battle-

[248] Fine, *Early Medieval Balkans*, p. 234.
[249] *NC*, p. 16.
[250] C.f. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, pp. 90-1.
[251] Papageorgiou, *John II Komnenos*, p. 22.

hardened and numerically superior army in the region with additional motivation to move against Raška – for John not to make some show of force against the almost perpetually rebellious Serbs would be very unlikely, thus an 1123 expedition to these lands is a near certainty.

This ties in with Stephenson's argument as to why Kinnamos gives a later campaign date. Kinnamos only mentions a Serbian revolt in the context of the emperor humiliating a certain Kritoplos, who had been the garrison commander of Ras, by mounting him on an ass in women's clothing and having him ride through the market, in a similar manner to the punishment by the lash of Kourtikios, commander at Braničevo when the Hungarians took it.[252] Stephenson argues that it is included at this point in the narrative to "invite the reader to note and condemn John's poor treatment of generals," and implies that by wasting time with such things John precipitated a Hungarian attack that Stephenson posits Kinnamos portrays as a humiliation for John.[253] Thus Kinnamos' chronology is changed to suit the needs of his rhetorical goal: portraying John as "a vengeful and spiteful coward" as opposed to the "supreme military emperor", and hero of Kinnamos' story, Manuel.[254] As such this incident constitutes one of the best examples of the dangers of Kinnamos' narrative in general, while Choniates' account carries the usual opposite problem of focusing on all the victories and positives while minimizing any imperial setbacks. The only source that does appear to present a full account is the Chronicle of the Priest of Diokleia, though this consists of a long sequence of undated events. However, it is the incorporation of this source with the others that

[252] *JK*, p. 12.
[253] Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 208; See below.
[254] Ibid.

sheds the most light on these otherwise shadowy events, as the problems it throws up are more easily overcome through comparison.

The lack of dates is an issue in itself, but not an insurmountable one as Ferluga argues: the Priest often refers to the major events that we can date, such as the death of Alexios I, and then uses relative dates by telling us how many years later events occurred, and with its composition in the later twelfth century the Priest was therefore a contemporary of Kinnamos and Choniates.[255] Equally, one of his primary narrative goals was to have history justify the bishop of Bar's ecclesiastical jurisdiction over lands south of the river Cetina, a matter that barely intrudes into his account of John's reign.[256] He does perpetually favour the rulers of Diokleia rather than Raška in his narrative as a consequence, but then John and the imperial authorities would have shared such a view as the two courts represented those supporting and rebelling from imperial authority respectively. Thus though once again where historical 'truth' may be out of reach, the political dialogue of the time is provided by the Priest, as he presents events from a similar perspective to that of the emperor in favouring Diokleia over Raška, making this account more useful than Choniates and Kinnamos, who either omit or are simply not interested in regional events from the Constantinopolitan perspective. As such, his Chronicle is crucial in the interpretation of the events of both this and the following chapter.

To begin with Choniates' version of this Serbian campaign however: in contrast to this detailed record, his short account merely mentions that John inflicted a crushing defeat on the "Tribaloi (also called Serbs)", carrying off "plunder beyond

[255] The Priest's dating forms a crucial basis for the timing of the Hungarian wars, discussed at the beginning of the following chapter. For general context to the Priest, see J. Ferluga, "Die Chronik des Priesters von Diokleia als Quelle für byzantinische Geschichte," *Vyzantina 10*, (1980), pp. 431-60; the dating and possible attribution of the Chronicle to Grgur (Gregory) the bishop of Bar is discussed by Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 119.
[256] Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 119.

measure," and then just as he resettled the Pechenegs in the west, he transferred the captive "Tribaloi" to fertile lands near Nikomedeia in Asia Minor to the east.[257] It is entirely possible that this was in fact a 'population swap,' as the Pechenegs were settled in the rebellious Raškan lands, and the displaced Raškans were brought with John on his next campaign against the nomadic Turks of Asia Minor in 1124, and settled at Nikomedeia en route.[258] This policy follows Heather's model of fourth-century Roman client management in the west closely, whereby the empire maintained power on the frontier through a mixture of punitive expeditions to demonstrate Roman superiority, population resettlement, and licensing client rulers who were a subservient part of the late imperial system of the Roman Empire as it, like John's empire, attempted to deal with a change to the old order.[259]

This is a model that will be relevant throughout this chapter, but to return to the end of 1123, John had defeated the nomadic horde, conducted a successful punitive expedition against the rebellious client ruler of Raška, resettled the Pechenegs on the latter's doorstep while recruiting Raškans for the army, and then uprooted other Raškans to be resettled in Anatolia. This was all to support the defence of the frontier there against the Turks while also settling the Balkans. It

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[257] *NC*, p. 16, p. 11.

[258] There were certainly Pechenegs in Serbian lands as they took part in a Serbian rebellion in 1150, see Chapter Three. Resettling the Serbs in Nikomedia would be part of a coherent strategy of solidifying the frontier in 1124, and indeed had been done many times in the empire's history from the 7th through to the 10th centuries, as emperors Maurice, Constans II, Justinian II and Constantine V all settled Slavs from that region of the Balkans into Asia Minor to reinforce the frontier, such that there was even a rebellion by Thomas the Slav against Michael II the Amorian in the early 820s, and in the 10th century the Slavs of the *Opsikion* theme served as marines in the imperial navy as a distinct group. A community of a people known as Serbs in Asia Minor endured until at least the thirteenth century, as a city called Σερβοχώρια ('Serbian inhabitations') is mentioned in the thirteenth-century *Partitio Regni Graeci*. Choniates tells us John settled them "near Nikomedia," in Bithynia, perhaps bolstering or resurrecting the earlier community that would endure for the next century. *NC*, p. 16, p. 11; P. Charanis, "The Transfer of Population as a Policy in the Byzantine Empire," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3 No. 2 (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 142-9; *ibidem*. "The Slavic Element in Byzantine Asia Minor in the Thirteenth Century," *Byzantion* 18 (Brussels, 1946-8), pp. 69-83; Tafel and Thomas, "Urkunden," p. 475; Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, p. 402; Ramsay, *Geography of Asia Minor*, pp. 183, 210.

[259] Heather, "client management," pp. 15-68, 59 and 68 in particular; see also a similar resettlement of Armenians into Cyprus in Chapter Seven.

therefore seems natural when Choniates tells us that John literally crowned his five years of success with the coronation of his son Alexios as emperor, along with the raising of his other three sons to the rank of *sebastokrator*, equal to his brothers.[260] Whether this is another case of Choniates changing the chronology to emphasise John's triumphs, or whether the other sons were indeed made *sebastokratores* in 1123 and Choniates did not know that Alexios had already been crowned and thus amalgamated the two events is unclear, but whatever the truth of this, John welcomed the new spring riding the crest of the wave of his successes, as his plans had all borne fruit.

The Return to Anatolia in 1124

1124 saw John continue to follow the same strategy, building upon the successes of the last few years as he settled the Serbs at Nikomedeia and carried out a similar punitive campaign against nomadic Turks, that would also result in more recruits for his army. This campaign is dated by Kinnamos to "the winter", though this could mean that John went directly from the Balkans to Anatolia and it occurred in the winter of 1123, or he spent most of a year settling the Serbs near Nikomedeia and then finished the year with this campaign. The latter appears more likely considering the time it would take to reach Anatolia after the Raškan campaign, possibly stop in Constantinople to promote his younger sons to *sebastokratores*, and then to settle the Raškans at Nikomedeia before launching another.[261] This one should be interpreted as the natural progression of John's strategy: with the west

[260] *NC*, pp. 16-7.
[261] Ibid. p. 16; *JK*, p. 9; Chalandon dates it to winter 1124 due to it being after the Serbian campaign, but before John wrote a letter to pope Callixtus II in June 1124, at which point he was in the capital. However, the dating of this letter is by no means secure, and most modern scholarship tends to date the letters of John to the popes in the context of his expeditions to the east as discussed in my introduction, so Chalandon's dating is no more securely grounded than any other. Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, p. 51.

secure from both nomads and Serb insurrection, and with troops from both supplementing John's own forces, John could refocus on Anatolia. The theatres of war were linked, and thus when John was given freedom of action we can see this strategy in action.

Such a strategy was aided by the nature of 'the Turks' as far from a homogeneous group. As well as the 'state' divisions between the Seljuks of Rum, based in Ikonion, and the Danishmendids, there were various smaller polities either loosely connected or independent of them, such as the aforementioned Alp Qara's domain of Laodikeia, and many still nomadic tribes, that Kinnamos describes as untrained in agriculture "but gulped milk and devoured meat, like the Pechenegs, and were always encamped in scatterings on the plain".[262] Though we have no way of quantifying this latter group, as they rarely appear in the sources, the amount of time John spends on campaign doing nothing specifically mentioned would imply continuous operations of some variety important enough to bring him out to Anatolia, with the strong likelihood of these operations involving these nomadic tribes (who may well have owed loose allegiance to one or more 'settled' Turkish leaders), as pacifying them would be an essential part of the transformation of western Anatolia back into prosperous imperial provinces by the end of the century, as noted by Magdalino.[263] In addition to pacification, Kinnamos describes John converting them to the true faith and thus "causing an increase in the Romans' forces."[264] This would seem to have been general policy where possible: John enrolled the Pechenegs and the Serbs after he defeated them, and both they and the

[262] *JK*, p. 9, p. 17.
[263] Magdalino points out how the 13th century 'Empire of Nicaea' was built upon the successful restoration of imperial power in western Anatolia, whereby Komnenian policies facilitated the creation of this viable state for Greek speaking Christians after the fall of Constantinople in 1204; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 124.
[264] *JK*, p. 9, p. 17.

Turks are mentioned as separate divisions in John's army thereafter.[265] Thus these Turks, like the nomads and Serbs before them, were added to John's forces in the latest of a pattern that must be interpreted as a deliberate strategy.[266] Such a strategy relied upon John having freedom of action however, which ran out towards the end of 1124.

The Return of the Venetian Fleet

At the same time as this winter campaign the Venetian fleet under Doge Dominico Michele returned, victorious, from the siege of Tyre, and in October 1124 it landed on Rhodes to take on provisions.[267] Only Venetian sources and Fulcher of Chartres describe the following events, obscuring the true reasons for them. Many scholars believe that the doge left the Levant straight after the siege of Tyre with the specific intention of putting pressure on John to restore Venetian trade privileges; particularly because as in 1122 he could not reach Venice before winter. He would have to overwinter in an imperial port having stayed past late summer in the Levant.[268] Whether this was the case or not, both Dandolo and the *Historia Ducum Veneticorum* tell us that the Venetians landed on Rhodes unopposed and sought provisions, but were refused by the inhabitants.[269] The antagonism may have been mutual: Devaney has argued that Venice and Byzantium were in "a state of undeclared war" in 1124, and that John had "ordered the Venetians to be treated as an enemy," and therefore to refuse them provisions, though there is no source that

[265] *NC*, pp. 16, 29-30, pp. 11, 17.
[266] They appear in Hungary, Gangra and Cilicia: *NC*, pp. 16, 29-30, pp. 11, 17; *JK*, p. 10.
[267] Fulcher of Chartres, 3.14-41, pp. 655-761; Dandolo, pp. 233-5; "Historia Ducum Veneticorum," p. 74.
[268] Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, p. 79; Madden, *Enrico Dandolo*, pp. 16-7; Devaney, "Byzantine-Venetian Conflict," p. 139; Queller and Katele state that they merely left because the job was done and the other allies had also dispersed, rather than deliberately antagonising the empire. Queller and Katele, "Venice and Conquest of Jerusalem," p. 37.
[269] Dandolo, p. 234; "Historia Ducum Veneticorum," p. 74.

states this explicity.[270] However it is certainly true that provisioning a fleet of seventy vessels with an estimated fifteen thousand sailors would always be a major undertaking, and arrangements for this would have been made in advance if relations were peaceful, as water might be easy to come by, but food and naval supplies were not. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the doge must have engineered this situation to justify his using a fleet ostensibly on crusade in order to attack the empire.[271] I would add to this that the inhabitants of Rhodes would have been much more likely to refuse such a huge Venetian fleet provisions with winter upon them and their own mouths to feed, or indeed to accommodate them all winter themselves as no doubt they had heard news of what had happened at Corfu. Therefore there is every likelihood that this entire incident could have occurred as a result of this local refusal without any direct orders from John to treat the Venetians as enemies, particularly as the Venetians knew they had the strength to take what they wanted: the doge had everything to gain and nothing to lose in this situation, whatever John's orders or lack thereof.

Having crossed this Rubicon, the Venetians followed the sack of Rhodes by raiding as they pleased. According to Fulcher (who grieves for such sins as the Venetians committed by his own admission) they attacked Methone and Samos, scattered targets that suggest either a widely marauding fleet looking for soft targets, which the Venetians split into two, or that Fulcher merely has incomplete information; finally they wintered on Chios. They destroyed the walls of towns, seized property and took boys and girls into captivity.[272] All sources, including Kinnamos, then confirm that the Venetian fleet used Chios as a base from which to

[270] Devaney, "Byzantine-Venetian Conflict," p. 139.
[271] Ibid. p. 140; see Pryor, "Water Supplies," pp. 23-4.
[272] Fulcher of Chartres, 3.41, pp. 758-60.

plunder Lesbos and Andros in early 1125, before finally leaving on March 29th with the relics of St. Isidore the Martyr (still in Venice's San Marco) and many prisoners, and arriving back in Venice in June as the conquering heroes of both the Levant and the Aegean.[273]

John's response to these attacks is almost undetectable in our sources. Devaney and Pryor account for their success citing the lack of local naval fleets, but with the plan of John Poutzes not instituted until 1126, we must assume that the existing fleets were unable to see off the Venetian armada.[274] There is some hint that John did not ignore the suffering of the Aegean region, as in the introduction to one of the poems of Prodromos praising the emperor for his conquest of Kastamon during the Triumph of 1133, he recounts many of John's past victories.[275] Along with more familiar references to Anatolian and Balkan victories, there is a reference to a victory at Lemnos, along with a line about how John had had "as many [victories] by land as by sea and islands."[276] Though rhetorical exaggeration of the emperor's deeds are to be expected, a specific example of a victory at Lemnos is noteworthy, as John would have been too young to have campaigned against Tzachas, and short of another unknown victory against pirates the only military operations in this region would be against the Venetians. Lemnos also makes sense as a site for an imperial victory, because imperial fleets would likely have withdrawn north towards Constantinople if they were overpowered, and imperial

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[273] Dandolo, pp. 234-5; "Historia Ducum Veneticorum," p. 74; "Translatio Isidori," pp. 323-4; "Annales venetici breves," p. 71; *JK*, 281; *Pietro Giustiniani, Venetiarum historia vulgo Petro Iustiniano Iustiniani filio adiudicata*, ed. R. Cessi and F. Bennato (Venice, 1964), pp. 106-7.
[274] Devaney, "Byzantine-Venetian Conflict, p. 139; J. Pryor and E. Jeffreys, *The Age of the ΔΡΟΜΩΝ The Byzantine Navy ca 500-1204* (Leiden, 2006), p. 111.
[275] *Prodromos*, IV, lines 270-3.
[276] "Ὦ νίκη Λαοδικεινή, νίκη Σωζοπολῖτις,
ἑτέρα νίκη Σκυθικὴκαὶ Δαλματῖτις ἄλλη,
ἑτέρα δ'Ἀμωριανή, Λημναϊκὴ δ'ἑτέρα,
ἁπλῶς ὁπόσας κατὰ γῆν καὶ θάλασσαν καὶ νήσους," Ibid.

forces could most easily have been sent to Lemnos from the Anatolian coast or Constantinople were John to have launched a relief force from there, and finally because Lemnos is as much at threat from a hostile fleet operating from Chios as Methone and Samos, and so would have been a likely target for the Venetians. Though this is from but one reference to an unspecified victory at sea, there is specific mention of Axouch commanding triremes and other ships in a fragmentary encomium by Basilakes, and throughout the works of Prodromos are several mentions of John's dominion over the sea as well as the land. Although these could be considered rhetorical flourishes, they would perhaps be less likely had John not succeeded by sea at all.[277] Together with this possible military response, Dandolo tells us that John burned the Venetian quarter in Constantinople in retaliation for these atrocities, which though only mentioned in this source, sounds like the obvious response for an emperor to make, though their very presence again tells us that this conflict was seemingly not pre-planned by either John or the Doge Michele, else these Venetians would have already sought to leave the city.[278]

Whether the emperor had had a victory at Lemnos in 1125 and planned to follow this up with further reprisals, assumed that the conflict was over now that the Venetians had returned home as Devaney suggests, or indeed was planning some other response, it is certain that John did indeed respond in some way to Venetian aggression.[279] Developments in the wider world would overtake him as the eventful year of 1125 continued. Up until this point, John had been able to choose his battles and campaigns with care, unlike Alexios who was constrained to reactionary

[277] Basilakes, "λογος εἰς τὸν σεβαστὸν καὶ μέγαν Δομέστικον" *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 117; *Prodromos*, V, line 19; XI line 120; XV, lines 67-70; XVI, line 213; XVII, lines 130 and 348; XXV lines 42, 64; All referencing victories at sea, in sea battles, or dominion over the sea and islands.
[278] Dandolo, p. 236.
[279] Devaney, "Byzantine-Venetian Conflict," p. 141.

policies due to the sheer numbers and strengths of his enemies. Even in the case of the nomadic invasion, John dealt with this challenge on his own terms at a time of his choosing, to his advantage.[280] 1125 would, however, see John having to react to multiple events outside his control, having been already put on the back foot by Venetian aggression. It is with good reason that this is the least well documented period of John's reign, as from the perspective of Choniates, or even the occasionally hostile Kinnamos, there were no good choices at this point, but possibly only the least of many bad ones. Together with the Venetian challenge came three princes who offered John a chance to accelerate his plans, but it was following this strategy that would cause a crisis of overextension.

The Three Fugitive Princes of 1125 – a Poisoned Chalice?

As John planned his next move against the Venetians, three foreigners sought refuge in Constantinople. With the emperor's strategy being based around the acquisition of clients, the appearance of these three appeared to be a dream come true, potentially giving John suzerainty over all of their lands, and had they come at different times that dream may well have come about. With their arrival at the same time as the Venetians however, John's avid pursuit of such a strategy rather than focusing on each by turn would court disaster. They were Mas'ud of Ikonion, Álmos of Hungary, and Gradinja of Diokleia.

The first was perhaps the most surprising: Alexios' and John's old enemy Mas'ud of Ikonion, the sultan who had prevented the treaty of Philomelion from being implemented and the lands of Ikonion from becoming an imperial client state. According to Michael the Syrian, just as Mas'ud had killed his brother Malik Shah

[280] See Birkenmeier, *Development of the Komenenian Army*, pp. 85, 138.

to seize the throne, so too had their brother Arab, fourth son of Kilij-Arslan, rebelled against him, causing him to take refuge with his former enemy and ask for aid.[281]

The second was Álmos, great uncle to the empress Eirene-Piroska, and uncle to the current Hungarian King Stephen II.[282] Álmos' brother, the late King Coloman, had crowned Stephen at the age of four in 1105 to secure his succession, and since then Álmos had threatened his brother and nephew's throne, both in theory and in fact. Álmos had gained support from the German emperor and other neighbouring princes to stake unsuccessfully his claim multiple times, such that as Coloman approached his death in 1116 he ordered Álmos and his seven-year-old son Béla blinded, and the latter castrated though this was not carried out.[283] Álmos understandably stayed quiet after this, likely in his monastery at Dömös, until his flight to Constantinople in 1125.[284]

During Álmos' quiet years, indeed since both Stephen and John had come into their full inheritances in 1116 and 1118 respectively, Stephen had suffered one setback after another in all of his endeavours. In addition to the loss of Dalmatia to

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[281] *Michael*, 16.2, p. 608, p. 223.
[282] *JK*, p. 9; *NC*, p. 17.
[283] "Chronicon Pictum," pp. 429-30; Makk and Kristó, *Az Árpád-ház uralkodói*, p. 151; Kosztolnyik, *Dynastic Policy of the Árpáds*, pp. 101-3; Tuzson, *Istvan II*, pp. 79-81; Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, pp. 16-7.
[284] Kosztolnyik, *Dynastic Policy of the Árpáds*, p. 104 for quotation. The exact date of Álmos' flight has also been much debated by scholars, with Moravcsik and Chalandon believing that he fled immediately after being blinded around 1116. Makk establishes uncontroversial *terminus post* and *ante quem's* however, as he notes that the Hungarian chronicle tells us that Álmos fled "from King Stephen", that both Kinnamos and Choniates place Álmos' flight in the reign of John, and that he died in Constantinople in 1127. He narrows this range of 1118-1127 down however by noting that Álmos' sister Adalheid who was married to the Bohemian prince Vladislav I was welcomed at court in 1123, something unlikely if Álmos was *persona non grata*, and that Choniates tells us that the war started directly because of Álmos' flight, and that therefore it would not have been many years in advance of the war starting, meaning Álmos arrived in Constantinople around 1125. Fine also sides with this interpretation, even if he sees the entire Hungarian wars as happening earlier, discussed in Chapter Five; *NC*, p. 17; "Chronicon Pictum," p. 459; Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, p. 57; Moravcsik, *Byzantium and the Magyars*, pp. 77-8; Fine, *Early Medieval Balkans*, pp. 234-6; Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, pp. 22-3.

the Venetians in 1116, the then fifteen-year-old Stephen had been defeated by the Bohemians at the battle of the River Olšava after negotiations between Stephen and Vladislav I of Bohemia broke down, Hungary and Bohemia having been at war intermittently since 1108.[285] Stephen next attempted a raid for plunder into Austria in 1118, which though initially successful was followed but a similarly devastating counter raid by Leopold III of Austria in alliance with Bořivoj II of Bohemia, which led to continuous raiding along Stephen's western and northern borders throughout the reign.[286] Even Stephen's Rus policy, which followed that of Coloman in being hostile to Vladimir of Kiev after Euphemia was divorced, snatched failure from the jaws of victory, in that despite marching into Rus in 1123 in support of Yaroslav's claim to Kiev, in alliance with Volodar of Premsyl and Vasilko of Terebovl, Yaroslav died at the start of the siege and Stephen's lords forced him to return home. The *Hungarian Chronicle* uses an invented speech by a certain Cosma Pázmány asking him who he would install in Rus, as none of his lords wanted it, and if he wanted it himself they would return home and elect a new king, leaving him to fight alone.[287] Stephen had therefore not had the most successful reign as 1124 dawned, a year which was to see the end of the five-year armistice with the Venetians over Dalmatia. He could be forgiven however for thinking that his luck might be about to change – Stephen had recently married a Norman princess of Capua, forming an alliance that in Stephenson and Makk's view, must have been directed against the Venetians in preparation for the recovery of Dalmatia, while Tuczon has noted that the *Chanson de Geste d'Aspremont* even relates that the pope crowned Stephen king of Apulia and Hungary, which though false does provide

[285] *CFHH*, pp. 136, 224-6, 531-2, 805-7; "Chronicon Pictum," pp. 434-7.
[286] Ibid. pp. 90, 156, 259, 315, 504, 559, 1764. Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, p. 19.
[287] "Chronicon Pictum," pp. 437-9; Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, pp. 19-20; Tuzson, *Istvan II*, pp. 125-8.

evidence of a link between the two states on the international stage in contemporary accounts.[288] The Venetian fleet under doge Michele was occupied in the Levant and so would be unable to intervene in Dalmatia, whilst John would also favour his rule over the Venetians due to their actions in Corfu, so there was never a better time for Stephen to reclaim the Adriatic coast.[289] Though initially successful, as demonstrated by Stephen's granting of privileges to Trogir and Split as his father Coloman had done before, the return of the doge in 1125 with his fleet reversed all of his gains, so that yet again Stephen was left defeated and humiliated.[290]

As Makk advocates, these continuous defeats meant that by 1125 the Hungarian nobility began to consider even a blind King Álmos a better man than Stephen, a possibility that became more concrete when the nobility even referred to electing a new king in Rus, and the situation was not helped by the fact that Stephen had no direct heir aside from his nephew, Saul.[291] Whether Álmos' still desired the kingship by 1125, and therefore made an active choice to go to Constantinople for support, or whether he went for sanctuary to prevent Stephen finishing the job his father had started, is impossible to tell from the sources.[292] Either way, his presence

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[288] Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 204; Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, p. 20; R. Bossuat, *Extrait des chansons de geste* (Paris, 1935), p. 39; Tuzson, *Istvan II*, pp. 84-5.
[289] Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, pp. 156-8; Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, pp. 204-5; Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, p. 20; Tuzson *Istvan II*, p. 56.
[290] "Chronicon Pictum," p. 434; *CFHH* (1937-43), pp. 209, 688, 1172; *Codex Diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae II*, ed. T. Smičiklas (Zagreb, 1904), pp. 37-8; Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 204; Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, p. 21; Tuzson, *Istvan II*, p. 56; Kosztolnyik, *Dynastic Policy of the Árpáds*, p. 107; I also agree with Makk that the suggestions of Deér that John and Stephen being allied at this point are completely unsubstantiated in any source. J. Deér, *A Magyar törzsszövetség és patrimoniális királyság külpolitikája* (Kaposvár, 1928), p. 109; H. von Kretschmayr, *Geschichte von Venedig* I (Gotha, 1905), p. 224.
[291] The chronology is not clear, but from Tuzson's interpretation: in 1127 some Hungarian lords selected Saul, son of Sophia, Stephen's sister, to be Stephen's heir, but this was contested by other noblemen. Thus there was possibly a conflict going on amongst the nobles of Hungary during Stephen's future war with the empire, though whether this was full open warfare is debatable. Tuzson, *Istvan II*, pp. 135-6.
[292] Makk believes he was biding his time throughout, Tuzson that because Álmos was half-Greek, "spoke Greek and had relatives there," naturally he would go there, and Kosztolnyik portrays Álmos as a "refugee." Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, pp. 22-4; Tuzson, *Istvan II*, p. 140; Kosztolnyik, *Dynastic Policy of the Árpáds*, p. 105.

there was a sword of Damocles above the beleaguered Stephen‘s head, although as with Mas’ud this provided as much danger as opportunity for John.

On top of formulating a response to Venetian aggression and the decision of what to do with these two powerful men, John needed to decide what to do when, in 1125 Uroš I of Raška, son of Vukan, made his move to restore Juraj to the throne of Diokleia. This led to the arrival of the third of the fugitive princes, Gradinja the brother of King Grubeša of Diokleia.

The Priest of Diokleia tells us that since John had campaigned against Vukan in 1118, Grubeša had reigned in peace for seven years, which if true would put the year of the events he next describes at 1125.[293] He tells us of a successful attack by Juraj and Uroš on Diokleia, leading to Grubeša being killed and Juraj finally reclaiming his place as ruler of Diokleia.[294] In order to prevent yet another imperial intervention in favour of another branch of the family, Juraj invited Grubeša’s three brothers to court under oath and gave them lands, but his ploy was unsuccessful and two of the three brothers escaped to the *doux* of Dyrrachium while the third was imprisoned. The *doux* is called “Pirigordi[us]” by the Priest, a figure who Chalandon identifies as a relation of a “Pyrrhogeorgios” mentioned twice by Kinnamos.[295] This followed a dance that was becoming well rehearsed for the family by this point, as the fugitive Diokleian princes once again requested imperial aid against Juraj from the *doux* of Dyrrachium, Pyrrhogeorgios.[296] The Priest then

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[293] *Priest*, XLV, p. 174.
[294] Ibid; Fine, *Early Medieval Balkans*, p. 233.
[295] This later Pyrrhogeorgios was *primikerios* at the court of Manuel and a commander during the 1146 campaign against Ikonion, and was again at court in 1158/9, and was possibly the father of the family member mentioned by Kinnamos in Stephenson’s opinion: *Priest*, XLV, p. 176; *JK*, pp. 44, 184; Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, p. 73; Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 184.
[296] Fine notes the bias of the Priest once more here, as the account mentions Juraj as a tyrant who planned to treacherously imprison the brother despite his oath, favouring as he does the descendants of Branislav over the descendants of Bodin: Fine, *Early Medieval Balkans*, p. 233; *Priest*, XLV, p. 176.

relates that Pyrrhogeorgios gathered an army, and marched with the brothers into Diokleian lands – and it is here we have our answer as to why this does not appear in our Greek sources, as John himself was not the commander.

As mentioned in the Introduction, due to the nature of Kinnamos and Choniates' works, they rarely mention events unconnected to the actions of John himself, as these do not fit the goals of their narratives. Equally, it was hardly in John's interest for it to be reported that he had lost control of the situation in the Serbian polities, and so it is not so unrealistic that as with Mas'ud, Gradinja's arrival goes unreported by Kinnamos and Choniates, who indeed assign no event at all to the year 1125. The Priest on the other hand mentions how both Gradinja and Pyrrhogeorgios come to Constantinople, the latter following the occupation of much Diokleian territory and Juraj blinding both the third brother of Grubeša who did not flee, along with Michael the son of the old Diokleian King Vladimir, who had allegedly been working with the empire and who quite naturally blamed Juraj's mother for poisoning his father.[297] It is not stated as such, but is likely that Pyrrhogeorgios and Gradinja, as one of the two surviving fugitive brothers of the late King Grubeša, travelled to the capital to update the emperor on the situation in 1125, and to seek John's blessing and imperial support for Gradinja's bid for the crown of Diokleia.

Thus John and his regime were left with the choice of where to distribute imperial resources: to focus on defeating the Venetians at sea, or on offering aid to Mas'ud of Ikonion, Álmos of Hungary or Gradinja of Diokleia.

[297] *Priest*, XLV, p. 176.

The Choices of 1125

We have no way of knowing whether the three princes arrived together, and thus whether John had the option to deal with each one in turn or whether from the start he had all of them at court. What resulted was that John prioritised supporting these princes above that of further offensive operations against Venice, as we have no further information regarding any actions, military or diplomatic, related to them in that year, possibly because John believed the conflict may have been resolved now that the Venetian fleet had returned west.[298] This would be particularly likely if the emperor had won some naval victories against them, and furthermore it is reasonable to conclude that John chose supporting these princes as they were more likely to become loyal client rulers than the Venetians, or indeed they would be more useful clients to have against future enemies.

For Mas'ud, we have no information as to any agreement that may have been made, though the obvious terms of the treaty would have been that John would aid Mas'ud in becoming sultan of Ikonion once more in exchange for Ikonion becoming a client of the empire, in effect enforcing the treaty of Philomelion as agreed with Mas'ud's brother Malik Shah. Such a possibility would have been irresistible, and even if Mas'ud were to betray John, it would still keep the Turks of Anatolia fighting each other, rather than raiding imperial territories, and indeed would keep the Turks divided so that the emperor would be free to resume campaigning in Anatolia. Without more information it is difficult to determine to what extent this occurred, but Michael the Syrian does mention such a case, giving strength to this representation of events. He tells us that John was happy to encourage divisions between the Muslims, and so he welcomed Mas'ud and

[298] Devaney (2010), p. 141.

contributed money so he could continue his struggle against his brother Arab.[299] This was a win-win situation for John, whatever occurred, and his funding contributed to keeping his Anatolian frontier quiet until he was ready to make further conquests in 1130.

For Álmos, a more considered approach was taken. Kinnamos, Choniates and the *Hungarian Chronicle* tell us that he was warmly welcomed at court, with John regarding him "favourably and receiv[ing] him with kindness."[300] More than this, he was given lands in Macedonia to support himself and his followers, at a place allegedly called Constantinia after Álmos' newly assumed Greek name, Constantine.[301] Kosztolnyik interprets this as the imperial court establishing a "hub of Magyar opposition…/on its territory," and the fact that in 1129 John gave shelter to Boris Kalamanos, the son of Euphemia of Kiev who may or may not have been King Coloman's son depending on her adultery, indicates that, together with his support of Mas'ud and Gradinja, John did have a policy of sheltering any claimants to neighbouring thrones who might become useful later. Such a "hub" would be of use to any emperor wanting potential leverage over his neighbour.[302] Despite this warm welcome however, no further support was given, and indeed I argue that if John did intend an offensive campaign to put Álmos on the throne of Hungary he would not have given him lands, as such a welcome implies that the Hungarian Prince would be there for the long haul, and that John was keeping his options open, rather than choosing to act immediately on behalf of this fugitive Prince, as indeed

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[299] *Michael*, 16.2, p. 608, p. 223.
[300] *JK*, p. 9, p. 17; *NC*, p. 17; "Qui ab imperatore honorifice susceptus erat. Inposuit sibi nomen Constantinus; Qui et ibi iam pridem edificaverat civitatem Constantinam in Machedonia; et multi Hungari atrocitate regis Stephani fugierant ad ipsum." "Chronicon Pictum," pp. 442-3.
[301] "Chronicon Pictum," pp. 442-3, 459; Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, pp. 22, 131; Tuzson, *Istvan II*, p. 140.
[302] Kosztolnyik, *Dynastic Policy of the Árpáds*, p. 107; Boris will be discussed further below.

there was no telling whether Stephen's regime would shortly implode, or what may occur in that troubled kingdom.

There was no such ambivalence regarding Gradinja of Diokleia however. Pyrrhogeorgios was retained at court, and the Priest of Diokleia mentions a certain "Kirialexius de Condi Stephano" being sent out as the new *doux* of Dyrrachium to support Gradinja's claim to Diokleia. This person can almost certainly be identified as Alexios Kontostephanos, the brother of Stephanos Kontostephanos who married John's daughter Anna in 1125, possibly as a move to bind the Kontestephanoi even closer to the imperial family before entrusting an army to them.[303] The Priest then tells us that the people of Diokleia hated Juraj and would not support him, and so Stephanos had no problem installing Gradinja as king, though Juraj then fled into the mountains and forests of the Serbian principalities to wage a guerrilla war against imperial and Diokleian forces, one that would continue to be a thorn in John's side until 1129, in what Fine has called: "the most destructive part of this long civil war".[304]

The fate of Juraj will be discussed below, but the issue of the chronology and a clarification of terms, must first be addressed. Traditional interpretations have

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[303] Stephanos was to be commemorated with Anna in the *Pantokrator Typikon* of 1136, putting him in the inner circle of the Komnenian clan (reinforced by Kinnamos, Choniates and the poems of Prodromos during Manuel's reign, and indeed the number of family members that appear during the reigns of following emperors; most importantly Isaac Kontostephanos was a *protonobelissimos* during the Synod of Blachernae in 1094-5, and then in 1107 was promoted to *megas doux*), and thus it is unsurprising that his brother was given the important post of *doux* of Dyrrachium and was the commander that won Gradinja his throne. Alexios could be identified with the collaborator of empress Eirene on the Pantokrator Monastery as posited by Loukaki, and discussed further in Chapter 9. M. Loukaki, "Empress Piroska-Eirene's Collaborators in the Foundation of the Pantokrator Monastery: The Testimony of Nikolaos Kataphloron," *The Pantokrator Monastery in Constantinople*, ed. S. Kotzabassi (Berlin, 2013), pp. 191-201; *Pantokrator Typikon*, p. 45; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 501; Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 184; *NC*, pp. 77-8; *JK*, pp. 96-7; *Prodromos*, LIV; C.f. Tr. *NC*, pp. 433-4, and *JK*, p. 268; I. Jordanov, ed, *Corpus of Byzantine seals from Bulgaria*, vol. 1 (Sofia, 2003), seal 361, pp. 235-6; *AK*, 8.8, p. 378 for Isaac Kontostephanos' promotion, *AK*, 13.7, pp. 403-4.

[304] Regarding the guerilla campaign: "Rex autem cum suis per montana et per silvas huc illuc fugiens latitabat," *Priest*, XLV, pp. 176-8; Fine, *Early Medieval Balkans*, p. 233.

sought to examine the three accounts of a Serbian campaign, put them together and then deduce when this expedition occurred, as discussed at the opening of this chapter. In this, they seek to amalgamate Choniates' account of a short, victorious raid immediately after Berrhoia, Kinnamos' description of a fortress falling to the Serbs in the context of the Hungarian conflict, and the Priest's detailed descriptions of the cut-throat family politics of the heirs of Bodin of Diokleia and the princes of Raška, which took place over many years. Comparing them directly in this way, it is apparent that these sources are not describing the same events.[305] The timing of Choniates' account leaves no time for a protracted campaign of occupying fortresses in Serbian lands. This is in addition to the low probability that the imperial army would have been effective at executing a protracted campaign immediately after Berrhoia (indeed both John and Axouch had been wounded there), on top of resettling nomadic tribesmen and then heading straight back to Anatolia. Whereas a swift show of force, taking home plunder and swapping their Pecheneg captives for Serbian ones, would have been the best possible use of an army that had already been together for a year, anxiously staying together over the winter in preparation for fighting the nomadic horde. This dramatic show of force, coupled with the prestige of defeating the nomads (c.f. the Priest giving John the epithet 'Cumanus'), and the resettling of nomadic peoples on Uroš I of Raška's doorstep was a good plan for hopefully settling Raška and Diokleia down as imperial clients once more.[306] Naturally it was not to be, as Uroš and Juraj bided their time until the next moment of imperial weakness in 1125, and then the events

[305] Papageorgiou first advocated this possibility, deducing that there were two separate campaigns described by Kinnamos and Choniates rather than one. Incorporating further information from the Priest of Diokleia, the campaign of Stephanos Kontostephanos should be included in addition to those John was physically present at, making this three separate campaigns. Papageorgiou (2010), p. 22.

[306] *Priest*, XLIII, p. 172.

described by the Priest occurred, in accordance with his internal dating. Following this, the fall of the fortress of Ras described by Kinnamos is most likely to have occurred at the climax of Juraj's guerrilla campaign in 1129, as such an initiative, though embarrassing to John according to Kinnamos, would also draw Juraj out into the open, facilitating his capture.

Clarification of these events also necessitates the argument that using the term 'Serbia' is unhelpful with regard to John's reign, especially when scholars such as Fine advocate that 'Raška' and 'Serbia' become interchangeable during the 12th century.[307] This approach minimises the continuing importance of Diokleia as the centre of imperial support in a region that was not any sort of proto-Serbian state, but two entirely separate courts that competed for political control in the region that occupies what would later become Serbia. Though Raška would eventually win that battle, and it was that court which continued to act as the centre of resistance to imperial rule, the teleological association of Raška with Serbia in the historiography confuses the realities of power on the ground. The same problems have previously been encountered when it comes to analysing our sources, as the differing accounts of the Priest of Diokleia and the Greek chroniclers would be easily reconcilable if the target of the expedition as either Diokleia or Raška was specified. Interpreting the evidence therefore, we know that the Priest's chronicle is the chronicle of *Diokleia*, focusing on that principality, and thus there would be little reason to include a punitive expedition against Raška by John in 1123 if it did not have an impact on Diokleia in any way. Additionally, Choniates and Kinnamos compress their accounts of John's campaigns against both the Turks of Anatolia and

[307] Fine, *Early Medieval Balkans*, p. 225.

Hungary, and thus it should be no surprise that they have done the same with dating here.[308]

Having clarified both terms and chronology, it is apparent that in 1125 John had a number of balls in the air, as he continued to hold firm against Venetian aggression, financed Mas'ud in his campaign to retake Ikonion, welcomed Álmos to his court whilst keeping an eye on developments in Hungary, and sent Kontestephanos to ensure the stability of the new Diokleian King Gradinja's rule. John had chosen to gamble, playing every card he had to attempt to gain clients in the Serbian principalities and Ikonion, influence and stabilise Hungary, and demonstrate imperial superiority against Venice by not conceding their demands. Unfortunately for John, his gambles did not all pay off.

The Rebellion of Gabras and Peace with the Venetians: The Crisis of 1126

As 1126 began, we do not know how much doge Michele knew concerning how stretched John's resources were. According to Dandolo's *History* however, he was outraged enough at the burning of the Venetian quarter of Constantinople that he demanded all Venetians shave their beards lest they be mistaken for Greeks, and then launched raids on imperial possessions in the Ionian sea, plundering Cephalonia and seizing the relics of St Donatos from Corfu.[309] Whether these targets were chosen for their proximity to Venice and its Adriatic territories, or whether John had begun amalgamating the localised fleets into a navy capable of taking on the Venetians in the Aegean is unknown, though from the fragmentary encomium to Axouch, we know that John did construct a fleet in response to other

[308] C.f. similar compression in their accounts of John's Anatolian campaigns in Chapter Six; for Hungary, it has been noted previously by Kosztolnyik, *Dynastic Policy of the Árpáds*, p. 115, and will be discussed further in the following chapter.
[309] Dandolo, p. 236.

threats on another occasion, and the date of the centralisation of naval revenue would suggest a coordinated response was underway, even as he continued to support the three princes.[310]

Nevertheless, however well such a policy was working, or whatever plans he may have had to take the fight to the Venetians, in 1126 John received a huge shock to his regime in the form of an open rebellion by *Doux* Constantine Gabras of Chaldia.

Though his Serb clients had been troublesome throughout, and he had faced down the Philopation conspiracy in his first year, this was the first direct challenge to his regime from the governor of an imperial province of a scale not seen since the dark decade of the 1090's under Alexios, as referenced in the *Muses*.[311] Indeed, Alexios had had direct trouble with the Gabras family before, as Constantine's father Theodore's daring recapture of Trebizond from the Seljuks and brief rule of the province as his personal fief had always worried Alexios. This led him to keep Theodore's son Gregory as a hostage in Constantinople, and when Theodore endeavoured to free him Alexios had to imprison Gregory and threaten to arrest Theodore as a rebel too.[312] Theodore redeemed himself through death in battle against the Danishmendids in imperial service, and his younger son Constantine was given the now family seat of Trebizond and the theme of Chaldia in 1119 after serving loyally as *strategos* of Philadelphia during the final years of Alexios' life.[313] With imperial power strong and John's star rising, Constantine appears to have stayed loyal, but with the wheels starting to fall off John's regime in 1126 he made his move. The dating of his rebellion is hidden in the Greek sources, with Kinnamos

[310] Basilakes, "λογος εἰς τὸν σεβαστὸν καὶ μέγαν Δομέστικον" *Orationes et Epistolae*, pp. 116-9.
[311] *Muses I*, lines 294-5; *AK*, 9.2, pp. 261-3.
[312] *AK*, 8.9, pp. 255-7.
[313] Ibid. 9.6, p. 340, 14.3, p. 435; Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, p. 153.

letting it go unmentioned, and Choniates following his usual *modus operandi* and only mentioning it in the context of John setting off to deal with it in 1139, merely saying Constantine "had long held Trebizond subject, governing that city as a tyrant."[314] We do, however, have a date contained in a monody by Theodore Prodromos for his teacher Stephen Skylitzes, who had been made Metropolitan of Trebizond in 1140, which tells us the province had been detached for fourteen years before his arrival, giving us a clear date of 1126.[315] This dating is confirmed by Michael the Syrian, who tells us that Mas'ud's attempt to gain further support for his bid to regain Ikonion had born fruit as he had married Ghazi Danishmend's daughter, and together they would both drive Arab from Ikonion, and then campaign against the now rebellious Gabras, establishing a *terminus ante quem* of c.1128.[316]

In 1125, John had decided to continue supporting all potential clients, but by 1126 he was overcommitted and his strategy had to be tempered and curtailed by the reality of the situation. Campaigning against Juraj, backing Mas'ud, giving shelter to Álmos and war with Venice was already stretching himself thin, but with Gabras now in revolt the strands that held his empire together looked as if they were fraying – something would have to give, and so he chose the lesser evil and sued for peace with Venice.

Only one Venetian source tells us that John sent ambassadors to negotiate a peace, following a standard paradigm of glorifying the doge through the humiliation

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[314] *NC*, p. 34, p. 20.
[315] L. Petit, "Monodie de Théodore Prodrome sur Etienne Skylizès métropolitain de Trébizonde," *IRAIK* 8 (1971), p. 3; this argument was first advanced by Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, pp. 37 and 84, and C. Cahen (1966), pp. 145-9.
[316] *Michael*, 16.2, p. 609, p. 224; this campaign of Ghazi and Mas'ud against Gabras will be discussed further next chapter, and below as it must have happened after Ghazi and Mas'ud campaigned against both Arab in Ikonion and Thoros of Armenian Cilicia.

of the emperor, but the negotiations appear to have taken place in Constantinople as the text of the Chryosobull stipulates that the Venetians must follow what their ambassadors swore an oath to, and committed to writing, in John's presence.[317] The text of John's Chrysobull to the Venetians is contained within an 1147 Chrysobull from Manuel's reign, and from its terms it would seem that both sides gained and lost. As the Venetians had demanded all along, John restored the generous trade privileges his father had first given them, and in addition John undertook to treat them with the respect due to allies who had put themselves on the line to defend the empire during his father's reign.[318] As with the empire's other neighbours, the nomads and the Serbs, Venice thus appears to have fulfilled its own strategy of causing trouble until it attained a better deal.[319] In exchange however, the Venetians did not only promise to become allies and indeed servants of the emperor once more in a general sense, but also to perform some specific services for the empire that unfortunately are not mentioned in the text, though they were to carry them out as if they had been requested by agents of the Pope, and must follow their oath to the empire fully, as promised by their emissaries, and as made in writing.[320] The results of this peace were that John never again had any problem with Venice, indeed during embassies to the German emperor in 1135 and 1140-2 the Venetians supported John's policies in securing an anti-Norman coalition, and John's conquest

[317] Devaney interprets these events as John making a simple cost/benefits call and deciding it was not worth his while building and training a better navy – but with a navy possibly already being organised the signing of a peace was less a result of Venetian intimidation, and more the fact that neither side had much to gain any longer, and indeed John merely had more to lose by continuing to fight if he let other situations get out of hand. Dandolo, p. 237; Devaney (2010), p. 141; "Emperor John II Komnenos, chrysobull to the Venetians," *Regesten der Kaiserkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565-1453, 1*, ed. F. Dölger (Munich, 1924), no. 1304; *FRA* 12, 1 (1856), no. xliii, pp. 95-8; See below for text regarding the oath and the written copy.
[318] *FRA* 12, 1 (1856), no. xliii, p. 96.
[319] C.f. previous chapters and Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, pp. 90-1.
[320] "simul autem et propria quedam seruitia per scriptum et jusjurandum conuenientes seruire Imperio meo et Romanie, uelut facta ab apocrisiarijs eorum symphonia latius de his tractat…/ Verum tamen debent et Venetici eam, que per factam scripto conuentionem a legatis eorum promissa sunt, jurejurando Imperio meo firma seruare incorrupta." Ibid. pp. 97-8.

of Antioch, as first noted by Papageorgiou.[321] Indeed, Doge Michele's successor in 1130, Pietro Polani, was decidedly pro-imperial in outlook as he squared up to renewed Hungarian aggression in Dalmatia, did not participate in the Second Crusade, and despite some domestic resistance, endeavoured to support Manuel I against the Normans in 1147 in exchange for the same guaranteed privileges, while trade between the two powers grew.[322]

Scholars have interpreted this peace as everything from a humiliation for Byzantium as John pursued a "needless war," to John restoring the balance that the Venetians had upset with their insults and unlawful behaviour before 1118.[323] Even seen in the best possible light, the Venetian war was hardly a great success for John, and even if his obstinacy in not coming to the negotiation table earlier had cost lives and materials, he had established the principle that trade privileges were something earned through service to the empire, and not an inalienable right for the Venetians. The Venetians had followed a similar pattern to the other imperial neighbours in 'rebelling' until a good deal was offered, and John was forced to offer that very deal in order to pursue his own strategy to acquire more clients. The catalyst for John making the peace may have been Gabras' rebellion compounding the rest of John's efforts in Anatolia and the Balkans, but despite deciding that this was the ball he would be happy to drop he did so by getting the best deal possible for the empire. Equally, the pre-1126 imperial navy's failure to defend against the Venetian fleet had brutally demonstrated that the old order of the eastern Mediterranean had

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[321] These will be discussed further in Chapters Seven and Eight; Papageorgiou, *John II Komnenos*, pp. 19-20.

[322] Dandolo, p. 242; "*Documenti del commercio veneziano*" ed. della Rocca and Lombardo, nos. 53, 54, 56, 57; Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, pp. 321-2; Lilie, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 22-4; Devaney, "Byzantine-Ventian Conflict," pp. 143-4.

[323] Devaney (2010), p. 142; Dumbarton Oaks exhibition, *God's Regents on Earth: A Thousand Years of Imperial Seals*, curated by Jonathan Shea, found at: http://www.doaks.org/resources/seals/gods-regents-on-earth-a-thousand-years-of-byzantine-imperial-seals/rulers-of-byzantium/john-ii-komnenos-1118-43; *ODB*, pp. 1046-7; Papageorgiou, *John II Komnenos*, pp. 18-9.

changed, and in order to succeed in the new order it would have to evolve, and thus John adopted a new naval policy of having one centrally controlled fleet that would be more suitable for supporting his operations over land, and would be the numerical equal of a large fleet such as that used by the crusading Venetians. Full analysis of this fleet must await further research, but the support John would receive from his fleet in both his Balkans and eastern campaigns testify to it being fit for purpose.

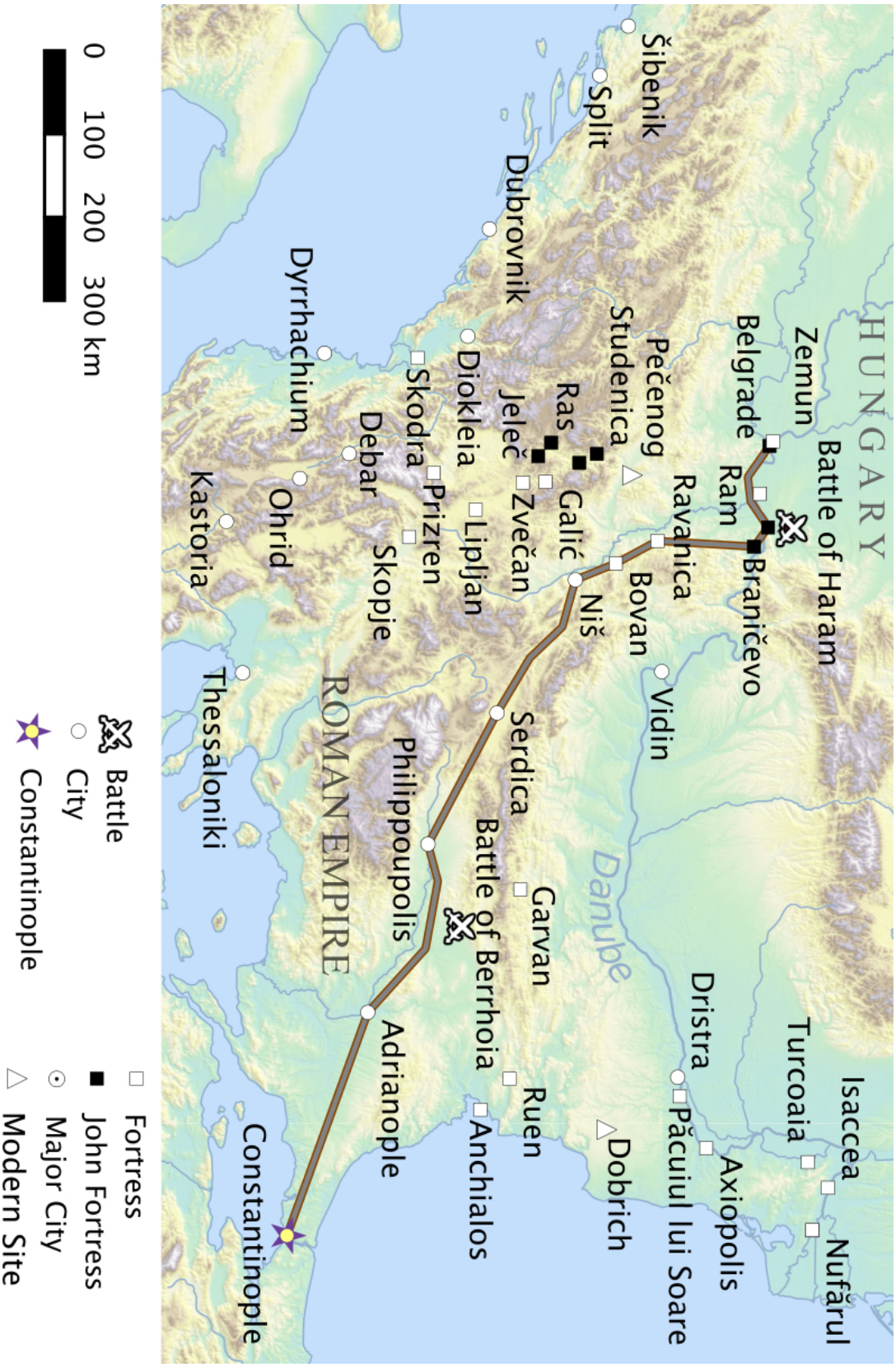
John would have to work his way out of the 1126 crisis before he could use such a fleet however. Between Venice, the continuing guerrilla war against Juraj, Mas'ud's bid for a return to Ikonion, and rising tensions with Hungary, John was overcommitted. With Gabras now in rebellion as well, making peace with the Venetians was the lesser of many evils. Prosecuting a campaign against a power that could easily become an ally once more bore no comparison to the potential gains of settling clients in Anatolia and the Balkans, or indeed the potential losses if he took his eye away from Hungary or allowed others to believe they could rebel with impunity. So John made peace with the Venetians meaning he could now focus upon other problems and opportunities, and use his time and resources far more effectively. In truth 1126 reveals both the best and the worst aspects of an empire of client management whose success and failure was based on the loyalty and treachery of those clients.

Concerning these projects, Kontostephanos continued to carry out operations against Juraj, likely involving the building and restoration of imperial fortresses in the area, while Mas'ud and Ghazi Danishmend drove Arab from Ikonion, though their war was not over as Arab fled to the court of Prince Thoros Roupen of Armenian Cilicia, maintaining a state of uncertainty and warfare in Anatolia that

Gabras' rebellion had even further exacerbated.[324] However it was the situation with Hungary that was to explode in 1127, delaying direct action against Gabras, as while John was negotiating with the Venetians and keeping an eye on Mas'ud and Gradinja, his treatment of Álmos had not gone unnoticed by Stephen of Hungary.

John's decision to try and have it all, supporting all three princes while waging war with Venice had resulted in the crisis of 1126, and though he had weathered the storm by making peace with Venice, he was now in uncharted territory, facing challenges unlike those he and his father had faced. John had taken the first step to secure the empire's place in the new order of the Balkans by seeing off the nomadic invasion, and committing to enforce imperial hegemony over both Diokleia and Raška. To see this policy through to the end, and to return to John the freedom of action necessary to continue his strategy, it would mean war with Hungary.

[324] *Michael*, 16.2, p. 609, p. 224; C.f. fortress building, see Chapter Eight.



Map Three: Balkans

Chapter Five

The Lesser Evil: The Raškan Insurrection and the Hungarian War

Since the marriage of John and Piroska-Eirene, politics between Byzantium and Hungary had taken on a more personal dimension, indeed the aforementioned presence of Hungarians at the young Alexios' coronation reflects their being there at court even before Prince Álmos' arrival. Indeed Tuzson has proposed that the Hungarian court was divided between Norman and Greek factions following Coloman and Álmos respectively, based on their matrilineage: thus relations may well have been as much a domestic issue as a foreign issue for the Hungarian and imperial courts.[325] Greek and Hungarian sources provide a variety of reasons for the outbreak of war, though all of these are short-term causes that do not reflect that Byzantium and Stephen had been in a state of rising tension since Alexios' lack of aid to Stephen over Dalmatia, exacerbated by Stephen's lack of military victories of any kind leading to domestic instability, and then in 1125 John's welcome to Álmos. In addition to this tacit support of Álmos, the transition to open war as Stephen crossed the Danube had other causes.

Choniates tells us there was both a "specious and ostensible cause" and a "hidden cause" for the outbreak of war, the latter of which was the true one. [326] However, as the war continued in tandem with Juraj's continuing guerrilla war, it becomes apparent that neither of these causes would have maintained the war until the end of the decade. Both John and Stephen's goals evolved as circumstances

[325] Tuzson, *Istvan II*, especially pp. 78 and 137-41. Makk and Kristó believe that Álmos was in fact also the son of king Géza's first wife, rather than his unnamed Byzantine one, based on his birthdate and that she returned to the empire after his death. Tuzson's argument could however still be valid due to Álmos siding with that faction regardless of his ancestry. Makk and Kristó, *Az Árpád-ház uralkodói*, p. 125.
[326] *NC*, p. 17, p. 11.

changed. This highlights once again why events of John's reign should be examined chronologically, in context, as they can only be truly understood as a product of their time. Through this understanding, John's final settlement of his western provinces can be interpreted.

Countdown to War

This "public cause" for the war related by Choniates was that Hungarian merchants who had come to the imperial town of Braničevo on the Danube had been attacked and "the worst of crimes had been done to them."[327] Makk and Moravcsik point out that John's recent war with Venice had had an economic dimension, even if it may not have been the primary cause for its outbreak, and that therefore John may well have had an economic policy that cannot be gleaned from analysis of the surviving sources. The two scholars note that the land route from western Europe to the Levant went from Hungary and then through the imperial towns of Belgrade, Braničevo, Serdica, Philippoupolis to Constantinople on the ancient Roman road, and that control over the trade on this route may well have been a significant factor in tensions between the empire and Hungary, for the people, if not for the rulers.[328] The importance of this road for military use is also mentioned by both Makk, and more recently in Madgearu's study on Byzantine military organisation on the Danube, who points out the danger that 'Serbian' (read

[327] Ibid.
[328] Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, pp. 21-2; Moravcsik, *Byzantum and the Magyars*, pp. 77-8; see Map Three; Tuzson posits that these merchants may in fact have been Flemish, operating under Norman overlordship in the Hungarian border provinces, and that therefore actions against them were in fact part of a Byzantine-Norman dynamic rather than necessarily a Byzantine-Hungarian one. This adds to Tuzson's theory that the war was motivated by the Norman party at Stephen's court; Tuzson, *Istvan II*, pp. 137-40. The presence of Hungarian traders in Constantinople is attested from the reign of St Stephen of Hungary in the early eleventh century, in the travels of Benjamin of Tudela in the 1160s-70s. "Vita maior Stephani regis Ungariae", ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH (S)* 11 (Hannover, 1854), p. 235; Benjamin of Tudela, *The itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: critical text, translation and commentary*, M. N. Adler (London, 1907), p. 16; Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, p. 54.

as *Raškan)* defection would have on that military road, and the security of the entire imperial frontier in the Balkans based on that road.[329] Reinforcing the plausability of these theories is however the fact that Choniates is mentioning this at all, as even if it seems a "specious and ostensible" cause by his reckoning, it may not have been an untrue one. In fact, the possibility for such border tensions playing a key role in Stephen deciding this was the war that would finally establish him as a successful monarch is fairly high, as if he could humble the emperor, then that would undo all the failures of the first decade of his reign, finally consolidating his ever-weakening position at home.

There is one final possible cause of the war mentioned only in Hungarian sources, and that is the involvement of the empress, Piroska-Eirene.

The *Hungarian Chronicle* tells us that the war began when Eirene expressed her opinion on the relationship between Hungary and the empire. In the *Chronicle*, she informs Stephen that she regarded him as "her [liege]man," and that "even the emperor chastised her for speaking out of turn. However, when he heard this the king considered it a terrible slight and mustered an army," which went on to invade Greece and devastate it with "fire and sword".[330] There is no other source for this

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[329] Ibid; Madgearu, *Military Organization on the Danube*, pp. 147-50. Madgearu also points out that by the late 12th century this whole region was referred to as the Paristrion, implying perhaps that the Paristrion as a 'military', stripped down province that was otherwise a reservation for subject peoples had extended along the Danube by that point. This is a source dated to 1193, but it does tell us that this road was the *sine qua non* of imperial control in the Balkans, and so any trouble along it was cause for concern by the imperial government. Tornikes, *Lettres et Discours*, letter 342/3; its role in trade has also been noted by A. Laiou, "Regional Networks in the Balkans in the Middle and Late Byzantine Periods", *Trade and Markets in Byzantium*, ed. C. Morrisson (Washington DC, 2012), p. 127; see further below.

[330] "Interea imperatrix Constantinopolitana, filia regis Ladizlai nomine Pyrisk nunciavit regi Stephano dicens regem Hungarie esse hominem suum. Quam etiam contradicentum imperator castigavit. Cum autem hoc audisset rex, pro nimia reputavit iniuria et collecto exercitu in impetus spiritus sui invasit partes Grecie atque alias civitates Grecie igne et gladio devastavit." *SRH* I, pp. 439-45; tr. Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, pp. 208-9. Despite the clarity of the Latin, this incident has been misinterpreted by many Hungarian scholars, who claim that John made the remarks and Eirene in fact defended the land of her birth as independent, enraging the emperor, and that Stephen went to war to answer the insult to his aunt. Though they could be deriving this from an unreferenced source,

event, but whether it occurred or not, it is representative of the concerns of the Hungarian court; though the Hungarian Chronicle cited dates from the fourteenth century, its antecedents and sources that dated to this time or afterwards were certain to have been concerned that under John, or perhaps Manuel, the empire would recover its preeminent status in the region, and make Eirene's comment a reality. Stephenson notes how such was indeed the perceived ideal relationship between the empire and Hungary for Byzantium, as evidenced by the Holy Crown of Hungary in the eleventh century being given to King Géza I by Emperor Michael VII Doukas, and so restoring such a relationship would have been important to John's ambitions in the region.[331] If the incident is taken as fact, then it may well signify Eirene's support for Álmos as king, as Makk suggests he may well have been willing to accept imperial support if it secured him the crown of Hungary, even if it came with Byzantine strings attached.[332] The timing was not opportune however, with John occupied with Juraj's guerrilla campaign in Raška, and so Stephen may well have chosen 1127 in order to strike before John was free to work against him more actively. Alternatively the entire incident could hint that Eirene was behind the offer of sanctuary to Álmos in the first place, which would make her actions truly central to the outbreak of war. Finally if it is a justification for the war invented by the author of the *Hungarian Chronicle* long after these events, then its symbolism is such that the narrative of the war is one of the old superpower seeking

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it is equally possible this is the product of the modern day popularity of St Eirene/Piroska in Hungary, and thus unease that a member of the beloved holy House of Árpád would support the Romans against her own people. For this opinion, see Moravcsik, *Byzantium and the Magyars*, p. 79; Kosztolnyik, *Dynastic Policy of the Árpáds*, pp. 104-7, and for her current popularity see G. Nagymihályi, *Árpád-házi Szent Piroska: Az idegen szent* (Budapest, 2007), especially pp. 15-7, 61-4, 76.

[331] Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, pp. 188, 209.

[332] Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, p. 24.

to reclaim its dominant role over Hungary, and the rising power of Hungary resisting.

One final, possible, cause of the war, which links together Stephen's position as king, border tensions and trade, Álmos and the role of Eirene, was the war's timing after John's peace and renewed alliance with Venice. With that alliance, Stephen's last hope of imperial support for his claims in Dalmatia would be gone, and the possibility of a Venetian-imperial alliance to put Álmos on the throne of Hungary for both nations' benefit suddenly became a possibility, thus again Stephen had to strike if he was not to be at the mercy of the empire or his own rebellious nobles. This conjunction of imperatives makes clear why the war broke out between Hungary and the empire, how John's policies and actions interacted with those of Stephen and the wider world of political actors; from the fallout of this clash the tone would be set for the make up of the Balkans during the remainder of John's reign. Though what I have outlined above may reveal the causes of the outbreak of war, and the reasons for the war to continue as it did, the actual conduct of the war reveals more about the nature of the new order in the Balkans, something which bears closer examination in its turn.

"Fire and Sword" on the Danube

Despite his poor record of success in foreign expeditions, Stephen was no fool in his operational planning. All sources describe his opening gambit in 1127 as a decisive strike across the Danube, sacking the fortresses of Braničevo and Serdica (modern Sofia) according to Choniates, while Kinnamos adds that Belgrade was also taken, and both mention that the stones of Braničevo and Belgrade were used to

build the fortress of Zeugme near Sirmion.[333] This mention of the fortress may highlight Stephen's desperation to gain something tangible from his foreign campaigns for the first time, as though practicable by river, transporting these stones was certainly a significant endeavour over that distance, and demolishing his enemy's fortress to build his own made military sense. Equally, it reveals that Stephen was unlikely to have wanted to annexe the area, but merely to jeopardise effective imperial control as, with the fortresses from Belgrade to Braničevo to Serdica taken, the aforementioned major artery of communication, trade and logistics for the empire across the Balkans was in Stephen's hands.[334] Control of this artery, and particularly Belgrade at the confluence of the Danube and the Sava rivers, was the lynchpin of the conquest strategies of the Romans, Goths, Bulgarians, Ottomans, Habsburgs, and all wars up till the twentieth century, and thus the expulsion of the Hungarians and restoration of imperial control over these sites became John's immediate priority.

Fig. 1: The oldest part of the walls of Belgrade castle, displaying the distinctive layered red brick cloisonné masonry of the Komnenian period amongst the stone that will be commented on in full in Chapter Eight. This wall faces the confluence of the Danube and Sava Rivers and was the bastion of imperial control in the region.

[333] These attacks are confirmed in the archaeological record to this period by M. Popović, "Les forteresses du systeme defensive byzantine en Serbie au XIe-XIIe siècle", *Starinar* 42 (1991), pp. 171-5; *JK*, p. 10; *NC*, p. 17; The *Hungarian Chronicle* merely mentions Stephen "destroying the walls of Greek fortresses" in Bulgaria, with 700 Frankish troops. *SRH* I, p. 440; tr. Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 209.

[334] See Map Three. This therefore contradicts Tuzson's theory that the war was to acquire lands for Stephen's Norman subjects. Tuzson, *Istvan II*, p. 140. A number of seals have been found at the fortress of Pernik (also called Zemen), just to the south west of Serdica, which may have been one of the fortresses also destroyed by Stephen, or perhaps one of the few hold outs due to the five seals that survive from there (respectively one from the emperor's cousin Anna, three from her husband *sebastos* Manuel Botaneiates, and one from another *sebastos* Doukas – perhaps these important figures may have fled the sack of Serdica and were writing from their refuge at Pernik either during or after the war; respectively: Jordanov, *Corpus*, vol II, seal 683, pp. 390-1; idem, seals 117-9, pp. 99-100; idem, seal 197, p. 138.

Fig. 2: A view from the hilltop site of Branicevo, displaying its proximity to the Danube (and the site of the antique city of Viroconion)

The ongoing guerrilla campaign of Juraj of Raška thus became a mixed blessing, for though Hungarian advances almost certainly aided Juraj's partisans, it also meant that the empire already had troops operating in the area under Alexios Kontestephanos, likely out of the fortresses of Zvečan and Jeleč according to Popović, which could form a second line of defence to halt Hungarian advances. John was also already on the continent, based in Philippoupolis, and so was in position to direct a counter offensive.[335] The dating of 1127 is contested by Fine, who, using the dating of the Priest of Diokleia, places the entire Hungarian and Serbian wars in 1125-6, and therefore Álmos' flight and the subsequent warfare in 1125. This, however, assumes only singular Serbian expeditions, and not multiple ones as is much more likely, and would also mean that John did nothing of historical note between 1126 and 1130, which is very unlikely considering his activity during the rest of the reign. A *terminus ante quem* is established by Makk for the wars in 1129, as Stephen's ally for his second campaign, Moravian Duke Václav of Olomouc, is mentioned in a Bohemian source as having returned home from the wars and then dying four months later on February 28th, 1129/30, and therefore, short of another long period where nothing of note occurred between

[335] Popović, "Les forteresses", pp. 175-9. This also gives weight to this specific dating, as because John is attested to be at Philippoupolis when war broke out, it is unlikely that the Serb campaigns were over, else there would be little reason for him to be in the region.

1125 and 1129/30, the war should be regarded as starting with Stephen's 1127 offensive.[336]

The course of the war from this offensive onwards becomes mired in the agendas of our sources as well as the compression of multiple campaigns into one, though in disentangling these I follow the analysis made by Stephenson, which proves consistent with our sources agendas for the rest of John's reign.[337] This is first shown with regard to descriptions of John's counter offensive, in which according to both Choniates and the *Hungarian Chronicle*, John made multiple preparations for the offensive to ensure its success, while Kinnamos tells us he impetuously hurried to see the Hungarians off. This confirms Choniates' agenda to portray John as the best of emperors from which the others of the twelfth century could only decline, and Kinnamos as usual seeing John as a poor predecessor to Manuel.[338] In this case, the *Hungarian Chronicle* reinforces the account of Choniates, and John's success bears witness to his preparations.

Equally, the course of the war raises more questions concerning the objectives of the participants, as Álmos had died in September 1127/8.[339] Stephen could possibly have quit the war at this point with his objective fulfilled and plunder taken, as John may well have been happy to sue for peace with the Serbian insurrection ongoing, to say nothing of taking advantage of the continuing chaos in

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[336] Makk uses modern dating of the year changing in December/January, whereas by Byzantine years it would be the same year, therefore the slash in dates. Fine bases his chronology on the work of Radojčić, found in B. Radojčić, "O hronologiji ugarsko-vizantijskih borbi I ustanku Srba za vreme Jovana II Komnina," *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 7 (1961), pp. 177-86; Fine, *Early Medieval Balkans*, pp. 235-6; Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, pp. 26-7, also note 42 on 131; though some avoid the dating issue such as Curta, *Southeastern Europe*, pp. 328-9, and others shorten the length of the conflict to just 1127-8, Birkenmeier, *Development of the Komnenian Army*, p. 90, most agree on a 1127-9 dating: Moravcsik, *Byzantium and the Magyars*, p. 78; Kosztolnyik, *Dynastic Policy of the Árpáds*, pp. 104-8, Tuzson, *Istvan II*, p. 139, Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 206; Madgearu, *Military Organization on the Danube*, pp. 149-50; for more on Václav see below.
[337] Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, pp. 206-10.
[338] Ibid; *JK*, p. 10; *NC*, p. 17; *SRH* I, p. 440.
[339] Again with modern/Byzantine dating shown. *CFHH*, pp. 443, 1668.

Anatolia as Mas'ud and Ghazi made war on Thoros of Armenian Cilicia; but instead his forces retained control over the areas he had taken, perhaps hoping to press his advantage in the new year.[340] When John's counter offensive came, however, it would completely reverse all of Stephen's gains, as well as ravage Hungary, further destabilising his authority at home. John had used his time to order an imperial fleet to sail down the Danube, perhaps involving ships freed up for military offensives now that the Venetian threat was gone. Indeed if ships had begun to be built and the new navy reorganised the previous year, now was the first chance to use them for imperial gain.[341] Crucial to the success of the campaign was this combined use of the fleet with the army, such that it is also mentioned in Prodromos' epitaph on John's tomb, and the recapture of the lost fortresses of Sofia, Belgrade and Braničevo, together with the newly built Zeugme and Haram (Chramon), which overlooked the river crossings on the Hungarian bank.[342] Kinnamos also tells us that John gathered an allied force of Ligurian knights and Turks for the campaign, the former perhaps indicative of John's new treaties with Genoa, and the latter possibly an allied force from Mas'ud, repaying John for the aid in taking back the Seljuk sultanate from his brother Arab the previous year.[343] The recapture of Serdica is not mentioned, but can be assumed from the route taken from Philippoupolis, and from

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[340] *Michael*, 16.2, p. 608, p. 223.

[341] It is notable that Choniates and the *Hungarian Chronicle* make much of this innovative operation; indeed Madgearu calls it unique in Byzantine military history and a decisive victory, while Kinnamos does not mention it. *JK*, pp. 10-2; *NC*, p. 17; *SRH* I, p. 441; the naval operations may have been commanded by *Doux* Alexios of Berrhoia. Jordanov, *Corpus*, vol. I, seal 56, pp. 63-4.

[342] "ἤπλωσεν Ἴστρος ὑπτιάσας τὴν ῥάχιν καὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖς πλώϊμος ὤφθη ναυμάχοις," *Prodromos*, XXV, lines 41-2. In the classical Roman period, Belgrade (known as Singidunum) and Zeugme (known classically as Taurunum, also called Zeugminon and now modern Zemun) were linked by a bridge: A. Kazhdan, "Singidunum", *ODB*, p. 1904. Today the fortress of Ram has a ferry-crossing site to Hungary, as discovered during fieldwork in 2014. See final section for further discussion of these sites.

[343] "συμμαχικὸν ἐπαγόμενος ἔκ τε Λιγούρων ἱππέων, οὓς Λωμπάρδους ἡμῖν ὀνομάζουσιν ἄνθρωποι, καὶ Περσῶν." Brand takes the translation of "συμμαχικὸν," allied, to mean mercenary, but considering contemporary events with Genoese participation in the coalition against Roger of Sicily and Mas'ud, 'allied' could indeed mean 'allied,' rather than merely those Turks and Ligurians who had joined the imperial army prior to this or been paid for as mercenaries: *JK*, p. 10, p. 18; see Chapter Seven for the Italian theatre.

the lack of anything in the sources it is likely that Stephen withdrew his forces from there so as to focus more troops on defending his gains at Braničevo and Haram.[344]

Here Kinnamos is at his most cutting, as his account of the battle seeks to strip all glory from John.[345] He tells us that Stephen was ill, and therefore unable to command personally and so John had no true opponent to match him, but he sent troops and had them guard the Danube crossing on the Hungarian side. Kinnamos then tells us that John sought to defeat the Hungarians by trickery, as he divided his army, and had half pretend they were about to cross the Danube at Haram, while sending the others to cross further upstream, and therefore be ready to assault the Hungarians from both sides at the same time. Attacked on two sides, the Hungarians fled, and while crossing a river (named as the Keraš in the *Hungarian Chronicle*, which is on the Hungarian side near Haram) the bridge collapsed, killing many, and allowing others to be captured, including the nobles Akuš and Keledi. At which point, John captured the fortress of Haram "without resistance," and then withdrew back to Byzantium after strengthening Braničevo with a garrison under a certain Kourtikios. Thus John's victory in Kinnamos' opinion was against a sickly opponent and based on luck and trickery.

By contrast, the account given by Choniates and the *Hungarian Chronicle* mark the campaign as one of tactical brilliance and divine favour, though both sources compress events to one campaign ending with this battle, and thus show themselves to be twisting history for their own ends as much as Kinnamos, though in John's favour and against Stephen respectively, as opposed to against John. Choniates portrays the campaign as an irresistible advance by both land and river, with John, having rolled back the Hungarians, crossing the Danube in the imperial

[344] See Map Three.
[345] *JK*, pp. 10-1.

trireme with the army, at which point the cavalry scattered the Hungarians with a charge by his lancers.[346] This victory allowed John free rein to seize Haram and Zeugme and carry off much plunder in the process. The *Hungarian Chronicle* is the most detailed of the sources, telling us that Stephen taunted John by saying he did not deserve to be an emperor, or even king, but only a midwife, since only an old woman would be so feeble.[347] John is alleged to have replied "Certainly the king will believe he is in the company of a midwife when I sever his manhood like an umbilical cord."[348] Though Tuzson opines that such insults were customary between warring leaders, it would seem that Stephen and John were in a very personal struggle to have such an exchange noted in the *Chronicle*, as both men had their reputations as the dominant power in the Balkans on the line – as though John had beaten the nomads, defeat at Stephen's hands would lead to an unravelling of his suzerainty over his provinces on the southern bank of the Danube and with them the Serbian principalities, and this was likely to be Stephen's last chance not be deposed by his own nobles.[349] The *Chronicle* continues that the Hungarians were unable to prevent the Greeks crossing at Haram due to the Greeks setting their ships "alight with sulphurous fires," almost certainly referring to the use of 'Greek Fire,' which Madgearu notes was crucial to imperial success in not having to fight to cross the Danube, and so the Hungarians were brought to battle near the river Keraš.[350] The Hungarians were under the command of a certain Setephel, whom Tuzson identifies with a "Serefel" name that repeats in the prominent Györ family, who were of French origin with a fleur de lys on their shield design, making it likely that the

[346] *NC*, pp. 17-8.
[347] *SRH* I, pp. 440-1.
[348] "Indubitanter credit rex quod sua in presenti anus [sic] simul cum umbilico virilia incidam," *SRH* I (1937), pp. 440-1; tr. Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 209.
[349] Tuzson, *Istvan II*, p. 140.
[350] Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 209; Madgearu, *Military Organization on the Danube*, p. 149; Birkenmeier, *Development of the Komnenian Army*, pp. 90-1.

Hungarian army here did indeed have a significant Frankish, and therefore possibly Norman contingent.[351] Whether the imperial Ligurian knights were simply stronger than the Normans and charged as Choniates relates, or indeed whether the combination of Latin knights, Turks and other imperial troops bested the Franks and Hungarians, the river is alleged to have become "so infused with human blood that it appeared to flow with gore alone" and warriors threw corpses into the river to try and cross them like a bridge, likely referencing Kinnamos' account of the collapsed bridge but with far more macabre drama. Either way the result was the same: a Hungarian rout, and the death of a Count Ciz mentioned with "other fine soldiers."[352]

This blood soaked but triumphant image suits the narrative paradigms of Choniates and the *Chronicle*, showing John in the best light and Stephen in the worst by ending their accounts at this point. Choniates then alludes to "several other engagements" before peace was signed, and the *Chronicle* mentions the rulers exchanging "accusations and excuses", leaving Kinnamos, uniquely, to go into detail about these events. [353] Despite his own bias against John, his evidence has some merit when compared to earlier evidence from Hungarian sources as has been previously analysed by Makk and Stephenson.

Makk calls attention to the fact that though John withdrew from Hungarian lands, his victory at Haram had a dramatic effect on Stephen's position in Hungary, as it is mentioned that while he was ill, "the traitors elected the counts Bors and Ivan as kings."[354] Makk notes that the use of the word "comes", which I have

[351] *SRH* I, p. 441; Tuzson, *Istvan II*, p. 139; indicating that Stephen was indeed unwell during the battle.
[352] *SRH* I, p. 441; tr. Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 209.
[353] Ibid.
[354] *SRH* I, p. 444; tr. and commentary: Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, p. 25.

translated as count, indicates that they were both members of Stephen's inner circle.[355] However, Stephen was still able to maintain power when he recovered, as the *Chronicle* then tells us that Ivan was beheaded and Bors driven from court into exile in Byzantium, which Makk notes may well have been done by other members of the court rallying around Saul as Stephen's heir rather than Stephen himself, as Ivan and Bors were too power hungry in claiming the kingship themselves, rather than overthrowing Stephen for Saul. Though some scholars have identified Bors with Boris, Coloman's bastard son by Euphemia, Makk outlines how these are distinct individuals in our sources and so should not be confused. It must be noted however, that despite Álmos' death, John's court would then have had at least two pretenders to the throne of Hungary in the persons of Bors and Boris, and thus the option of supporting a Hungarian coup to place a more sympathetic ruler on the throne was still open to John.[356]

Surviving this coup appears to have given Stephen a second wind however, as his greatest domestic enemies were now neutralized, and so as 1129 turned he undertook two diplomatic offences to continue the war. Makk outlines how he called in his Bohemian-Moravian alliance with Soběslav of Bohemia, who sent troops under the command of the aforementioned Duke Václav, thus replacing Stephen's losses from the battle of Haram.[357] This alliance was coupled with an overture to the ever-opportunistic Uroš of Raška, who had almost certainly been

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[355] Ibid.

[356] Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, pp. 25-6; Boris married: "consanguineam sibi imperatoris Kaloioannis" while in Greece according to Otto of Freising, and made a play for the throne of Hungary with Polish and German support in 1132 and 1146 respectively, their son, known as Kalman in Hungarian, was also called Constantine Kalamanos in Byzantium according to Kinnamos, later became governor of Cilicia under Manuel. Boris and his family were therefore treated quite well in Byzantium throughout their lives, again showing the imperial policy of keeping options open, just in case the Hungarian king became too intractable: "Chronicon Ottonis episcopi Frisingensis", *MGH (S)* 20, ed. G. Waitz (Hannover, 1912), p. 259; JK, pp. 216, 259, 286.

[357] *CFHH*, pp. 442, 532; Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, p. 26.

supporting Juraj's guerrilla campaign since its inception, and who had bided his time for just such an opportunity to strike.[358] Stephen therefore renewed his assault upon the empire with his new allies, taking Braničevo once more, while the Raškans with Juraj's guerillas took the imperial fortress of Ras at this time, threatening security across the Balkans once more. This was possibly an even more dangerous situation than before, now that the Raškans were in full revolt.[359]

[358] This alliance was sealed by the betrothal of Uroš' daughter Ilona (Elena/Helena/Jelena) to Álmos' son, the blind prince Béla, whom the *Hungarian Chronicle* tells us Stephen found at Pécsvárad abbey on his lands at that time. According to the *Chronicle*, Stephen knew that due to his illness he would not have a son, and when Béla produced an heir of his own with Ilona he became the heir apparent to Hungary rather than the more obscure Saul, as discussed by Kosztolnyik, *Dynastic Policy of the Árpáds*, p. 108; *SRH* I, p. 443. The marriage was therefore a wholly Hungarian initiative to a potential ally two years into a war with the empire, and thus Uroš of Raška should be seen as a rebellious vassal rather than a semi-autonomous prince as in Stephenson's model, (mentioned in the final section regarding John's Balkans settlement).

[359] As mentioned above, the dating and even chronology of all of this has been the subject to fierce debate. Makk sets out the fact that the rebellion of Bors and Ivan must have resulted from the defeat at Haram, and thus Choniates' and the *Chronicle's* accounts of the conflict must be from before that battle, particularly as Choniates obliquely references "several other engagements" and the *Chronicle* too mentions continuing disagreements after Haram. The involvement of the Bohemian source provides the *terminus ante quem*, giving us a year in which the events Kinnamos describes occurred, and these are events that fit with broader incidents so that his account should be taken seriously, as seen below. The time taken for the Bohemian-Moravian auxiliaries to arrive, for the attempted coup of Ivan and Bors to occur, and for John to consider the matter resolved in Constantinople before being recalled, fit the event comfortably into 1129. Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, p. 27. The dating of the sack of Ras is of this decade, but cannot be narrowed down by any further archaeology, but the rebellion of Uroš with Juraj and Stephen together make this the most likely time that a heavily fortified imperial fortress would have been taken, and the non-involvement of the Raškans before this point make its fall unlikely. Curta and Popović argue for an earlier date based on the earlier attempt of Juraj to seize power in Diokleia, but if this were true I believe the Priest of Diokleia would have mentioned it. Curta, *Southeastern Europe*, p. 328; M. Popović, *Tvrđava Ras – The Fortress of Ras* (Belgrade, 1999), p. 404. What is certain is that the fortress was rebuilt after the war with Hungary – with an ongoing guerilla campaign I doubt that it would have stayed ruined for most of the decade considering its location and defence capabilities, as seen in Figs. 3 and 4 overleaf.

Fig. 3: Aerial view of Stari (old) Ras, demonstrating its lofty and all but unassailable position, and its control over the valleys to the south. Image from Wikipedia Commons.

Fig. 4: View from the summit of Stari Ras, looking north towards the modern city of Raška and the plain on which it sits, also showing the ruins of the town that sat at the foot of the fortress. Control of Ras would thus allow Juraj to control the entire southern plain from a position of strength, as well as block imperial reinforcements coming from the valleys to the south.

Our account of this phase of the war is coloured by Kinnamos being our only narrative source – indeed the tone is set by his mentioning that John allegedly wasted valuable time in lashing Kourtikios for losing Braničevo (despite the fact he did not abandon the walls until the enemy had broken into the city and set fire to the houses) and then humiliating Kritoplos, the garrison commander at Ras, (seized by the "Serbs") by dressing him in women's clothing and having him led through the marketplace riding an ass.[360] Stephenson notes that Kinnamos' account tells us less about whether these events actually occurred, and more about Kinnamos' narrative goals. Just as at Kastamon where he describes John's impetuousness and "great rage," whether this event occurred or not cannot be determined without further

[360] *JK*, pp. 11-2, p. 19.

evidence. The balance of probabilities might suggest that John would only have returned to Constantinople if he believed the situation well in hand after the battle of Haram, and therefore may have been understandably critical of commanders, under whose watch the entire battlefront was reversed. Whether the disciplining of John's commanders was controversial or not, it seems John had little trouble retaking Braničevo, making "haste to rebuild it."[361]

Here Kinnamos' narrative again focuses only on everything that went wrong with the campaign, seemingly linking John's maltreatment of his commanders with his failures. Winter 1129 saw the imperial troops stationed on the Danube "suffering from winter weather and lack of necessities…/in severe distress," leading the Hungarian troops to consider assaulting the weakened army.[362] John was however warned by a Latin noblewoman, "outstanding in birth and other distinction" of their intention, and so fortified what he could and made a retreat through the hill country so he did not lose his army in fighting a battle on the Danube he could not win. Despite the rough nature of this region, known as the "Evil Stair," some Hungarian troops fell upon the rearguard, and though they caused no great casualties, they made off with the awnings of the imperial tent.[363] Kinnamos' account of the Hungarian wars ends here abruptly, giving no explanation for what occurred later with the Hungarians, or indeed the Serbs. Thus this entire account would seem to be designed to paint John as being justly humiliated for his poor treatment of his commanders, and generally to portray him as a "vengeful and spiteful coward" (as characterised by Stephenson).[364] Though there are no other major sources, we have clues that what Kinnamos is saying is not all hearsay without any source – Tuzson

[361] *JK*, p.12, p. 19.
[362] Ibid.
[363] *JK*, pp. 12-3, p. 19.
[364] Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 208.

has identified the Latin noblewoman with the same or connected to the "Domina Christiana" of the *Hungarian Chronicle*, whose burning was one of many "evil things" that Stephen did that convinced Álmos that he must flee, and equally we know from the use of Bohemian troops under Václav that a second campaign involving them did indeed take place.[365]

To reconstruct a coherent narrative, we do, however, have two further events with which to compare Kinnamos' account. First is the final end of the Raškan insurrection according to the *Priest of Diokleia*, whereby *Doux* Alexios Kontestephanos finally captured Juraj, taking him to Constantinople where he died under house arrest.[366] Two seals of Juraj have also been found in the vicinity of Philippoupolis that add material evidence to this account. They are inscribed with "Geor Regis Bodini Filius", literally "George, son of King Bodin." Ivan Jordanov believes them to have been sent from captivity, perhaps a document of abdication, as that would be the only way to explain why they were found near John's base of operations, and why a Byzantine style seal in Latin naming him specifically as only the son of a a king would be there, and I agree with his interpretation.[367] Secondly, there is the *Hungarian Chronicle's* account of a peace negotiation by the main protagonists on an island in the Danube near Braničevo, and given these factors a narrative incorporating all these elements can be constructed.[368]

John seems to have favoured speed over preparation on this campaign, there is no mention of either allied contingents or naval divisions, and it appears that Stephen's diplomatic offensives had indeed wrong footed the usually militarily

[365] *SRH* I, 442; *CFHH*, pp. 442, 532; Tuzson, *Istvan II*, p. 140. Naturally she could not have both been burned and warned John, so either she was allegedly burned by Stephen later, or John was warned by one of her family if Tuzson's identification is to be believed.
[366] *Priest*, XLV, pp. 176-8.
[367] Jordanov, *Corpus*, vol. I, seals 115-6, 98-9.
[368] *SRH* I, p. 442.

secure emperor. This focus on speed may also have been because of an unexpected advantage. The seizure of Ras is likely to have proved a double edged sword for Juraj's and Uroš' cause, as though Juraj had finally made some progress, the capture of Ras brought him and his warriors out of the woods and mountains and into the open for the first time, where they could be taken on directly by imperial forces. Thus John, and his Balkan commander the *doux* of Dyrrachium, Alexios Kontestephanos, had a chance to finally end Juraj's guerilla war. Two chronologies are therefore possible: either (as Makk and Madgearu suggest) John went straight for the Serbs, knocking them out of the war, but then leaving his troops exhausted by the winter so that a strategic retreat into rough country to preserve his weary but still viable army was advised, and following his army's recovery in safer territory Stephen was obliged to negotiate, which John was happy to do so that he could focus once more upon Anatolia.[369] The alternative is that John split his forces, some immediately retook Braničevo while others supported Kontestephanos against the Serbs. The Hungarians therefore crossed the Danube in support of Juraj and Uroš, but John's rearguard action prevented his enemies from joining up, meaning the unsupported Juraj and Uroš were crushed and the Hungarians had to concede. The latter option has in its support the Priest of Diokleia's account in which Kontestephanos brings Juraj back to Constantinople in chains, as if the emperor had captured him, but if so then it would likely have been mentioned in panegyric and the chronicles as another of his glorious deeds. Other Greek sources such as the rhetorical works of Prodromos and Basilakes are woefully unspecific, only remarking how Axouch had "shut away the Tribaloi," and assorted other references to John having victories over "Dalmatians" in the same context as the Skythians and

[369] Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, p. 27; Madgearu, *Military Organization on the Danube*, pp. 149-50.

Getae (nomads), or Dacians (Hungarians). Thus these victories could refer to either or both periods of fighting.[370] Whichever of the two possible chronologies occurred, though John suffered a tactical defeat, and possible embarrassment at the awnings of his tent being taken, strategically he had won the war; Juraj was taken to Constantinople in chains, Uroš swore fealty and likely agreed once more to provide soldiers and materials at the emperor's call, while Stephen and John worked out a lasting peace on an island in the Danube.[371]

Though Kinnamos makes no comment on the Balkans settlement, in fact he never again mentions the Balkans playing any role in the events of John's reign, and the *Hungarian Chronicle* merely states that the rulers "agreed a firm peace and returned to their lands," Choniates gives us an almost sudden explanation of John's foreign policy.[372] His passage in full relates that John:

> made peace with [Hungary]. Those remaining barbarian nations along the western borders of the Roman empire against whom he had often prospered in battle he compelled to enter into friendly relations. He felt it was his duty to use every possible means to win over the nations beyond his borders, especially those who sailed down to Constantinople to trade and petition favours. He also conciliated the Italian seaboard, whence ships spread their sail for the queen of cities.[373]

This foreign policy account must of course be seen as a product of Choniates' portrayal of John as "the crowning glory, so to speak, of the Komnenian dynasty to sit on the Roman throne," and that since John, emperors had got worse, leading to disaster, and specifically disaster from those nations beyond his borders

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[370] "ὁ Τριβαλλὸς ταῖς λόχμαις ἐναποκλείεται", "λογος εἰς τὸν σεβαστὸν καὶ μέγαν Δομέστικον", Basilakes, *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 118; short of otherwise historically unknown victories over other 'Dalmatians,' this eponym must refer to the Serbs. References include: "ἑτέρα νίκη Σκυθικὴκαὶ Δαλματῖτις ἄλλη," *Prodromos*, IV, line 271; "Δαλμάτης ἠνδραπόδισται," *Prodromos*, V, line 26; "ἐμὴν ἀπειλὴν Δαλμάτης ὑπεστάλη," *Prodromos*, XXV, line 40; "ὁ Δαλμάταις πῦρ ἐμπεσὼν καὶ φλὸξ Δάκαις," *Prodromos*, XXIX, line 8; Basilakes "ἐκεῖνα καὶ Δαλμάτας ἐτρέψατο καὶ Σκύθας ἐπτόησε καὶ Νομάδας," "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 52.

[371] The duties of Uroš to John are discussed below.

[372] *SRH* I, p. 442; tr. Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 209.

[373] *NC*, p. 18, p. 12.

who all traded with Constantinople.[374] After acknowledging this inherent agenda, this policy statement does however tell us a few things about John's Balkans settlement. Firstly, that there is a separation here between "those who sailed down to Constantinople to trade and petition favours" and the "Italian seaboard." Therefore Hungarian, Serb, and indeed Dalmatian merchants must be being referred to here. We know that John made treaties with Genoa and Pisa so as to decrease the effect of the Venetian monopoly, and so this is what may be referred to in the latter part, but as for the former we must assume that John reached a settlement with Hungary, Raška, and possibly the Dalmatian cities under Venetian suzerainty. As it does not suit his narrative, we have no image in Kinnamos of Uroš swearing fealty to John as Uroš II did for Manuel, but something similar must have occurred, and indeed the ceremonial occasion may have been identical with Uroš' legal responsibilities to the emperor also agreed.[375] Both Serbian principalities were therefore settled by 1129, and Hungary does not feature again with the territorial situation as the *status quo ante bellum*, and therefore the conclusion must be that John and Stephen were able to resolve any differences between them.

As with many conflicts, the causes of the war, whether they be connected to Hungarian internal politics, merchants, empress Piroska-Eirene, or Prince Álmos, had become fairly remote, if not irrelevant three years later when the two monarchs met on an island in the Danube. Tuzson argues that because the war continued after Álmos' death, he could not possibly have been its cause, and that Normans at Stephen's court wanting new lands must be to blame.[376] Álmos had died while Stephen's star was in the ascendant, Stephen having captured much of the southern

[374] Ibid. p. 47; ibid. p. 27.
[375] *JK*, pp. 112-3; see next section for Serb settlement.
[376] Tuzson, *Istvan II*, p. 140.

bank of the middle Danube. He was hardly about to break off the war while everything was going his way, particularly with his past record. Most recent commentators note the war as an entirely defensive enterprise on the empire's part, with the only goal being to retain control of the central Balkan communication and logistics line based around Belgrade and Braničevo, with Stephenson noting that John did not consider: "Hungary a major threat."[377] Makk sees the empire as simply being caught up in a Hungarian conflict as to who would wear the crown after Stephen, and indeed possibly while he still lived, and he critiques older interpretations that see the conflict as part of a "struggle against the imperial aspirations of Byzantium in the mid-twelfth century," primarily by noting that Hungary took all the initiatives in the war and the empire merely defended what belonged to it or what was in its interest.[378] Papageorgiou notes however that more than merely preservation of territory, the empire had an interest in Hungary having a pro-Byzantine government, specifically noting John's giving of lands to Álmos as demonstrating his interest in keeping his options open should Hungary turn against him.[379] She notes that as the war ended, Stephen's successor was recognised as Álmos' son Béla the Blind whom the empire must have felt would be a safe choice for maintaining good relations. Though it would be wrong to assume that the empire had a hand in that recognition without any source, it would have at least to approve the choice due to John's support of Béla's father.[380]

My own view supports the interpretations of Makk and Papageorgiou, but additionally I would draw attention to the fact that had John been defeated then

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[377] Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 210; Birkenmeier, *Development of the Komnenian Army*, pp. 90-1; Madgearu, *Military Organization on the Danube*, p. 150; see Map Three.
[378] Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, p. 28; this specifically critiques Moravcsik, *Byzantium and the Magyars*, pp. 77, 79.
[379] Papageorgiou, *John II Komnenos*, p. 21.
[380] Ibid. Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni*, p. 28.

much of the empire's newly dominant position in the Balkans would have been lost. Though scholars have interpreted this as a 'defensive' campaign and therefore seen it as unimportant in the greater scheme of John's reign, had John faltered the consequences for the empire in the Balkans could have been dire. Both Serbian principalities may well have seceded, the southern bank of the Danube would have been lost to Hungary, and imperial power and prestige, not to mention the resources of men and materials for other enterprises, would have declined. Defeating Hungary was a necessity for the empire to find its place in the new order of the Balkans in the twelfth century, and rather than being uninterested, John actively sought a productive status quo both to secure territories and trade with neighbouring powers in the region.

After peace was made on the Danube in 1129, John could focus on the east with the knowledge that his borders were secure, his clients were loyal or at least cowed, and the reputation and strength of the empire as the regional hegemon had been restored. These years represent a combination of traditional small and medium scale operations in convincing neighbours and clients to stay obedient through punitive expeditions as Heather outlines for the late antique empire, while at the same time doing so in order to settle the area and acquire greater resources to enforce a similar settlement in the more challenging theatre of operations in the east.[381] Stephen had demonstrated that it was not a foregone conclusion that the empire would retain its place as the leading power in the Balkans. John had to enforce his rule at the point of a sword for almost an entire decade before the settlement on the Danube could be reached, and it was a process that had started with the battle of Berrhoia. This victory established the tone that John and his

[381] C.f. previous chapter: Heather, "client management," pp. 59, 68.

government wished to be set for the role of the empire in the new order of the Balkans: through the rhetorical works, his victories over these peoples are referenced in every poem as a prologue, and a foundation on which his next deeds would rest.[382] In Prodromos' epitaph on John's tomb, second only to extending the empire across the Halys and defeating the "Ismaelites" is John's defeat of the "Skythian Chimaera", the "Dacians" and the "Dalmatians," and the way in which he became master of the Danube by land and sea, by the strength of Christ.[383] From the sources, we can also see he was successful in that aim, as not until the next generation of rulers under Manuel would the place of the empire in the new order of the Balkans be challenged again, and the ability of Manuel to retain and expand that role owed much to the foundations that John laid. Before turning, as John did in 1130, eastwards to Anatolia, a deeper examination of John's fortresses in the region will demonstrate fully both John's strategic intentions in the region, and the realities of the empire at war, and at peace, on the ground in its Balkan provinces.

Control of the Balkan Frontier through Fortresses and Client Management

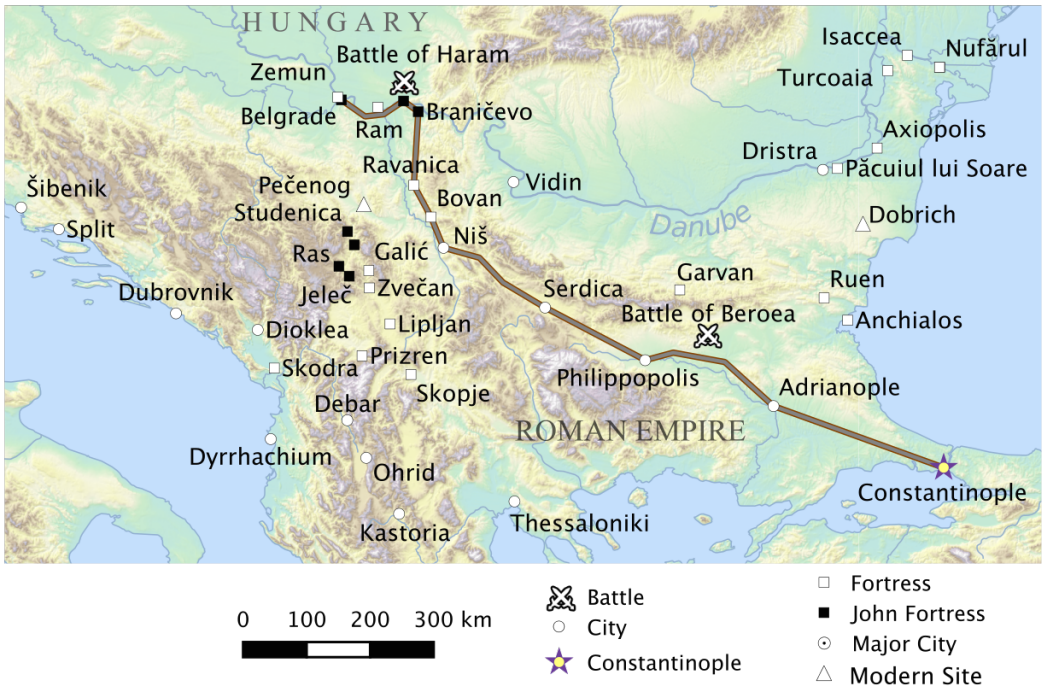
John's reign had seen a major change in the deployment of imperial resources in the Balkan provinces following the battle of Berrhoia, as where throughout the eleventh century there had been multiple garrisons and fortresses in the lower Danube to guard against the nomads, the focus was now on the middle

[382] *Prodromos*, II, line 46; Poem IV, line 53 and 224; Poem V, lines 25-7; IX, line 8; X, line 9; Poem XIV, line 18; Poem XVI, line 7; Poem XXV line 11; Poem XVIII, line 54; Poem XXIX, lines 8-9; Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα", *Orationes et Epistolae*, pp. 51-2.

[383] "ἡ δυσμικὴ δὲ τῶν Γετῶν πανσπερμία,
ἡ Σκυθικὴ χίμαιρα, τὸ ξύνθρουν γένος,
ἐμῇ μαχαίρᾳ παγγενῆ διεφθάρη·
σὺ γὰρ κατ᾽αὐτοῦ τοὐμὸν ἐστίλβους ξίφος.
ἐμοῖς Δάκης ἔκαμψε ταρσοῖς αὐχένα,
ἐμὴν ἀπειλὴν Δαλμάτης ὑπεστάλη.
ἥπλωσεν Ἴστρος ὑπτιάσας τὴν ῥάχιν
καὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖς πλώϊμος ὤφθη ναυμάχοις,
καὶ τοῦτο, Χριστέ, σῆς παναλκοῦς ἰσχύος." *Prodromos*, XXV, line 35-43.

Danube, and the south of modern day Serbia. The Paristrion was now treated as a nomad reservation, under imperial control through military bases on the Danube, but otherwise left to nomadic clients, and a similar strategy was used on the middle Danube, while the two Serb principalities were ruled through the king of Diokleia and the prince of Raška.

Fortresses at Isaccea, Axiopolis and the city of Dristra secured the lower Danube after Berrhoia, the middle Danube was secured in a similar way by neighbouring fortresses at Belgrade, Braničevo and Ram, while Serdica further to the east (modern Sofia) is located in a valley surrounded by mountains on all sides in the centre of modern Bulgaria. Nothing remains of the imperial fortress of Serdica, but its location at the confluence of viable routes through the region made control over it essential for communications and logistics, as well as power projection, in this region south of the Danube.



Map Three - Balkans

Belgrade, Braničevo and Ram, however, all overlook the fertile floodplain of the Danube basin, and in addition to controlling the Danube and the northern end of the mountain valleys that lead to the south of modern day Serbia, the lands surrounding these fortresses would be valuable, making them targets for plunder by Stephen.

Fig. 5: View from Branicevo showing the fertile plains along the Danube, particularly valuable compared to the mountain passes further to the south that are far less productive for agriculture.

Indeed, in addition to the Danube, Braničevo overlooks the ruins of the classical and late antique city of Viminacium, which though partially excavated is mainly covered by farms today, and thus the likelihood of valuable villages and farming in the area during the twelfth century is high, suggesting its value to both John and Stephen.

Fig. 6: The rebuilt amphitheatre of Viminacium in the midst of modern farmland on the banks of the Danube. The fortress of Branicevo lies on the hill slightly to the west of here. For Braničevo see Fig. 2.

The fact that Ram was built just a short distance to the north of Braničevo along the Danube, in prime farming country, compounds the suggestion that this was a region the empire was very keen on safeguarding, both because it was a

natural border for the empire and for its produce. Equally the building of the fortress of Haram (unfortunately not surviving) on the northern bank of the Danube by the Hungarians demonstrates the interest both Hungary and the empire had in this region, and why the battle took place in that location. Equally, the width of the Danube in this region makes it easy to see how John utilised the navy to great effect during this campaign.

Fig. 7: View of Ram and the Danube. Much of what remains is a later Ottoman rebuilding, but the plot of the fortress appears to have been consistent, and its location at the tip of an outlying rocky spur makes it very unlikely the Komnenian fortress would have been differently located

Belgrade itself is at the confluence of the Danube and Sava rivers as well as on the aforementioned military road that led across the width of the Balkans to Constantinople. Today Zemun, where Stephen built his counter fortress, is a suburb of Belgrade and during both the classical Roman period and from the Ottomans until today, there has been a bridge between the two towns and the fortresses that guard them, as mentioned above. As such, this location was an extremely likely candidate for the site of the merchant troubles that are meant to have presaged the

Hungarian war, and thus was the natural location for Stephen to cross the Danube and plunder (see Fig 1 for photograph of Belgrade castle).

In guarding the Danube, John was following ancient precedent in treating it as the empire's 'natural' frontier for their Balkan provinces, a policy echoed by court rhetoric that often focused upon rivers as the boundaries of the empire.[384]

The Balkan situation was more complicated than a simple geographical border at the Danube however, as exemplified by Diokleia and Raška. Though the latter principality was inherently rebellious in this period, when imperial power was strong Uroš I did serve the emperor, and this was a model that was to continue into the reign of Manuel and beyond.[385] This power was projected through a number of military installations throughout Raškan lands, such that even if the prince of Raška was administering the land, militarily the empire was in control. Popović has identified at least the fortresses Zvečan, Jeleč, and Ras itself as being imperial installations during the 12th century in this region, providing a fortress network that (unlike the fortresses in the Paristrion) can be compared to that on the eastern frontier in Anatolia, providing the area with greater security through control of the lines of communication and logistics, as part of a strategy of defence in depth.[386]

Zvečan dominates the land around it, that is the modern breakaway region of north Kosovo, as well as overlooking the main crossing of the River Ibar (at its confluence with the River Sitnica) that separates the north from the rest of Kosovo,

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[384] *Prodromos*, IV, line 53; Poem IXβ, line 8; Poem XVIII, line 54; Poem XV, lines 41 and 88; Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 52; *Italikos*, "Monody on the Sebastokrator Andronikos" Letter 11, p. 133; "To the Grand Domestic," *Letter* 39, p. 229; discussed further in Chapter Nine.

[385] Kosztolnyik, *Dynastic Policy of the Árpáds*, pp. 236-8. And indeed before in the case of regional, ethnically distinct peoples, see J-C. Cheynet, "Official Power and Non-Official Power," *Fifty Years of Prosopography The Later Roman Empire, Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. A. Cameron (Oxford, 2003), pp. 148-150.

[386] Popović, "Les forteresses", pp. 176-80; c.f. Chapter Eight for Eastern Frontier.

which today constitutes the divided city of Mitrovica. The geography of Kosovo is that of a fertile plain almost entirely surrounded by mountains, with the exception of the river Ibar dividing the land to the north; as such, control over the fortress of Zvečan and thus the crossing of the River Ibar safeguards the entire region from any threat from the north, in addition to guarding the southern end of the mountain passes leading to modern Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria, such that Popović labels its construction as the ideal frontier fortress. Although the masonry evokes John an earlier fortress may have existed on the site used by Alexios.[387]

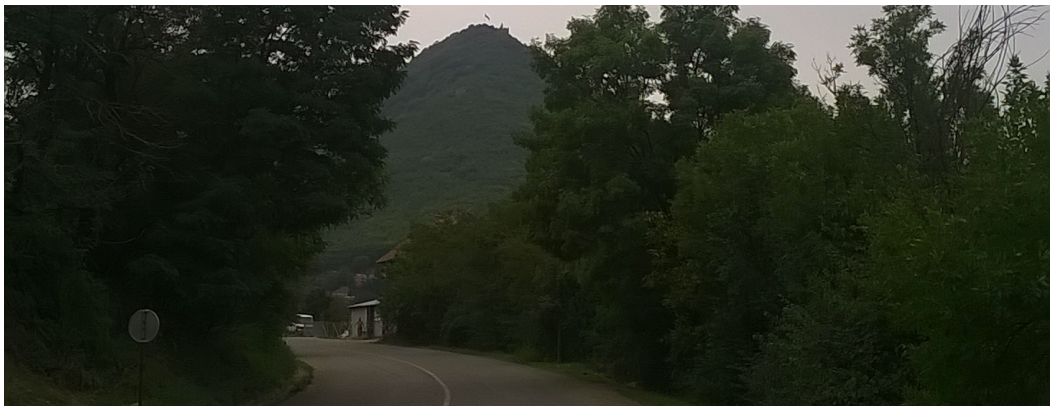

Fig. 8: A view taken from the north of Zvecan, looking south, demonstrating how invulnerable it is to attack from that direction, which itself is only a small plain before the valley passes into Serbia guarded by Ras and Jeleč.

Fig. 9: View of Zvecan from the south looking north, demonstrating it is still a worthy fortress from every side.

[387] Ibid. p. 178; its use by Alexios is posited by Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 149.

Fig. 10: Komnenian style cloisonné masonry at Zvecan.

Ras, known today as Stari Ras (Old Ras) is just to the southwest of the town of Raška itself and controls the northern end of the mountain passes, along with the River Raška that flows into the Ibar further north, and is sited on an equally impregnable spur site. Stari Ras is the only site that has been the subject of a major study.[388] Popović posits that the fortress, rebuilt by John, was designed by an adept architect, with expert form to deflect siege weapons, and elements of fortification in tune with the natural landscape, but that it was built in haste with inadequately qualified workers as shown by the sloppy construction of the western gate in particular.[389] He also notes the remains of log houses, and one building constructed of masonry with water resistant plaster in the cellar, which he suggests may be a granary as it is not a domed structure as a church would almost certainly be.[390] Twenty-six coins of four different types date from John's reign, and all come from the same layer that contains evidence of burning, almost certainly from Juraj's assault on the site when Kritoplos was commander, and John's subsequent rebuilding.[391]

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[388] Ibid.
[389] Ibid. pp. 404-5.
[390] Ibid. p. 405.
[391] Ibid. pp. 429-30; coins: pp. 693-718; see figs. 3-4

To the east of Ras, controlling the mountain valley away from the plain where the modern cities of Novi Pazar and Raška lie, on a very high location is the small fortress of Jeleč.[392] Even today this valley is very fertile with farms all along it, so controlling this region would be essential for any empire asserting its authority as the valley is also the only way to travel through the area.

Fig. 11: The river valley leading from the modern cities of Raška and Novi Pazar south towards Jeleč, are steep and treacherous today, and yet perhaps surprisingly fertile with many farms. Control of such a valley could be easily accomplished with the fortress of Jeleč, controlling both the villages and the narrow road.

Fig. 12: View of the fortifications of Jeleč, perched precariously atop the mountain, such that in my own fieldwork taking such photos after an hour's hiking proved too difficult. Photo copyright Rascovic.

Along the mountain pass north from Ras was the fortress of Studenica, which in the thirteenth century was to become the major monastic site for the new Serbian kingdom. This too lies near the Ibar River and along the fertile valley through which any army would travel north. To this Popović adds the fortress of

[392] Popović, "Les forteresses", p. 178.

Brvenik, just to the south of Studenica along the Ibar, of which very little remains but from its location at the confluence of the Ibar and the River Raška, it would also be the obvious site for a fortress as part of this network.[393] These fortresses did in fact push forward from the fortresses used by Alexios, such as those at Lipjian, Skopje, Prizren, Ravanica, Strymon, Bovon and Niš, in much the same way as John pushed forward the frontier in Anatolia by extending Alexios' previous network of fortresses.[394]

Fig. 13: View of the valley surrounding Studenica Monastery, again demonstrating its control over the river valleys of Serbia. Though there is little direct evidence of Komnenian masonry, it most definitely fits the strategic pattern of where Alexios' and John's fortresses were sited, and its immediate use as a major site by the late twelfth century suggests some prior use, as Popović has suggested.

From these fortresses it can be deduced that through fortress building John sought to physically anchor the empire to the landscape, projecting imperial power over the land through the valleys and along the rivers, and between these garrisons and Alexios Kontestephanos' campaigning during Juraj's insurrection he was

[393] Ibid. pp. 171-81.
[394] Most are mentioned by Anna Komnene, with these and others having identifiable archaeological sites; full discussion of Alexios' fortresses in Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, pp. 148-9.

successful in keeping the Raškans as part of the empire without any more trouble until the reign of Manuel. Fortress building was an integral part of John's policy in the Balkans, as it was in Anatolia such that though building up client relations was important, control of land, people and resources through these fortresses was the second most important part of this strategy.

Stephenson has previously interpreted this network of fortresses as an internal frontier, and has the rulers of Diokleia and Raška acting autonomously throughout the twelfth century, even if they were "nominally subject to the emperor's higher authority" and were within the empire's *de iure* 'natural' frontier of the Danube.[395] He sees the crucial marks of this autonomy as the division between "*themata* and *županias*…/*strategoi* or *doukes* from *župans*" and the ability to conduct an independent foreign policy, though he admits that they were still in the imperial sphere of influence as a "buffer of sorts between the empire and the world beyond." Thus the two principalities of twelfth-century Serbia were imperial satellites rather than imperial clients in Stephenson's view, which is echoed by Curta with his tacit acceptance of Ras and the other fortresses as being on the "border".[396] If acceptance of imperial rule and not acting contrary to imperial interest was the sum of the Byzantine-Diokleian and Byzantine-Raškan relationship then I would be inclined to agree with him. However, there were further factors at play.

First, there was John's relocation of the "*Tribaloi*" (almost certainly Raškans) to Nikomedeia, where they were given lands, and where Choniates tells us

[395] Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 155.
[396] *Ibid*; Curta, *Southeastern Europe*, p. 328; Fine relates the events rather than analysing the exact settlement John was attempting to reach in the region.

"[John] enrolled some in the army and the rest he made tributaries."[397] Though this may have required a military victory to enforce, the ability to enrol the Raškans into his army, and others to guard his frontier with the Danishmendids, demonstrates authority far stronger than merely 'nominal.' Furthermore, it was not only raw power that compelled the Raškans, but legal agreements. We know from Kinnamos that when Manuel defeated Grand Prince Uroš II, he promised not only his loyalty, but also that: "should he [Manuel] campaign in the west, he [Uroš] agreed to attend him with two thousand men; for fighting in Asia, he would send two hundred men *in addition to the previously customary three hundred*," and indeed the Serbs were called up and fought for Manuel in 1160.[398] As this was the first conflict between Manuel and the Raškans during his reign, the agreement to supply three hundred men for campaigns in Asia must have originated with John, if not earlier, and possibly specifically refers to the Serbs enrolled by John, and mentioned by Choniates. Diokleians, too, are specifically mentioned as being part of the young Alexios' entourage during his coronation as John's co-emperor, showing them to be in the highest level of imperial service.[399] As for the idea of Raškan autonomous foreign policy, the key piece of evidence here is the marriage between Jelena (also called Helena, Ilona and Elena) daughter of Uroš I, and king Stephen II of Hungary's heir, the future Béla II, known as the blind.[400] As mentioned above, this marriage occurred in 1129 as a Hungarian initiative that places the marriage in the very specific context of Uroš being already in rebellion and Stephen wishing an alliance; thus this has less to do with Raškan external relations, and everything to do with Byzantine-Hungarian relations. Therefore the idea held by Stephenson that the

[397] *NC*, p. 16.
[398] Italics added by me for emphasis. *JK*, pp. 113 and 199, pp. 90 and 151.
[399] "σοὶ Διοκλέων καὶ Δακῶν ἔθνη δορυφοροῦσι", *Prodromos*, I, line 90.
[400] *SRH* I (1937), pp. 442-3; Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 155; Curta, *Southeastern Europe*, p. 328; Fine, *Early Medieval Balkans*, p. 236; Kosztolnyik, *Dynastic Policy of the Árpáds*, p. 108.

Hungarian-Raškan alliance implies Raškan (or indeed 'Serbian') quasi-independence does not stand up under examination of the evidence from the reigns of John and Manuel. Raška and Diokleia were client states of the empire, the former albeit a rebellious one that under the stresses of Alexios' reign or at opportunistic moments during John and Manuel's reigns would make a bid for greater autonomy. Regardless, they were both clients which by the projection of imperial power through fortresses across their land, treaties and frequent acknowledgement of their rulers, were subject to Byzantium.

Though Diokleia appears to have received no similar fortifications in this period the fortresses used in the previous century may well have still been garrisoned.[401] Indeed, two churches were built at Dyrrachium in this period, which may indicate that this province was developing from the militarised zone it had been in the eleventh century when under threat by Bodin and the Normans, into a safe imperial province, with a more reliable and loyal Diokleia to the north under Gradinja.[402] Such an analysis is reinforced by the sigillographic evidence from John's reign, such that it can be deduced that John's policies to the north allowed business as usual for the regional nobility and clergy in the western imperial provinces.[403] This created stability and prosperity for the west for the rest of his reign, and allowed the emperor to focus east from that time onwards.

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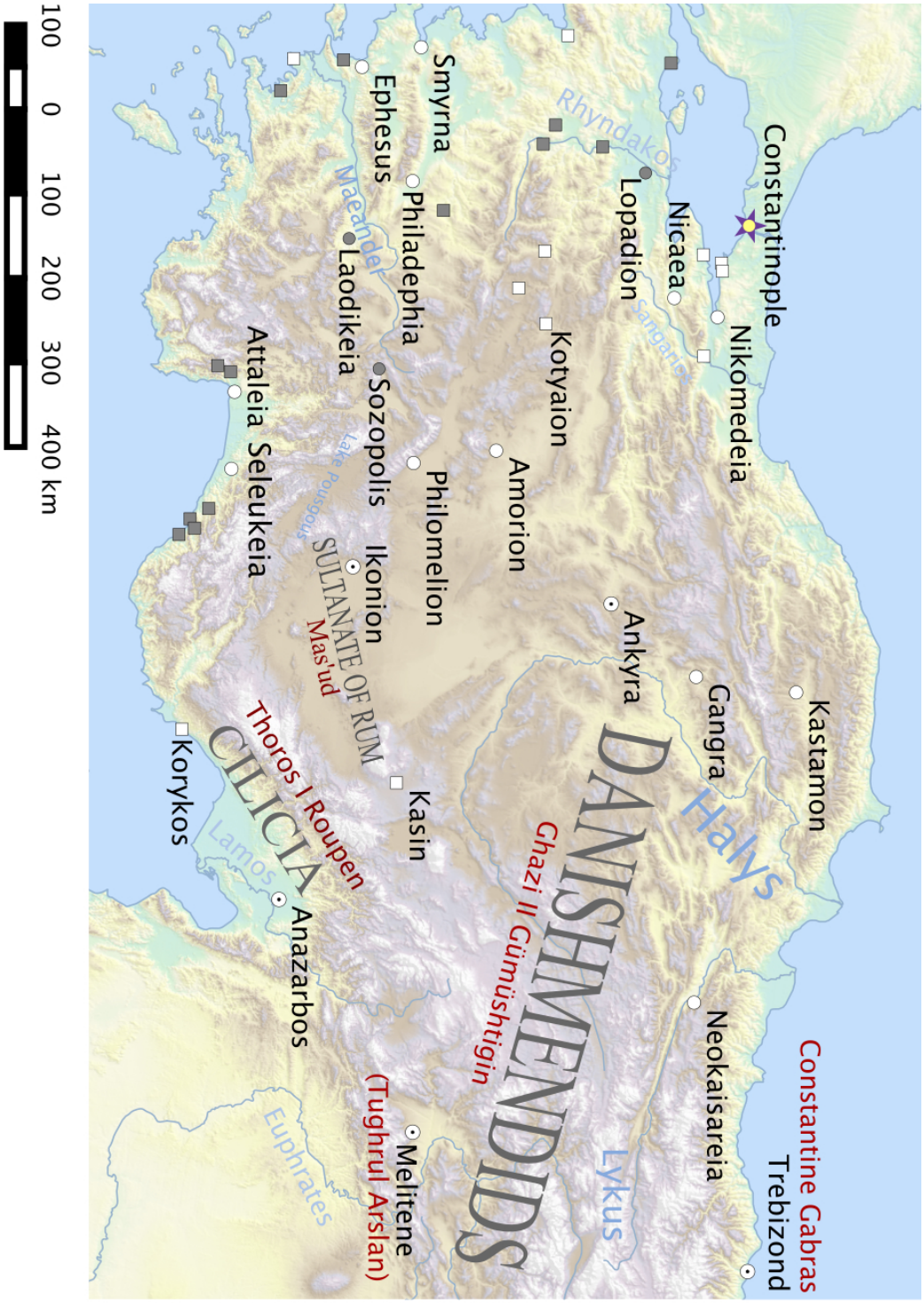
[401] Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 164.
[402] Ibid.
[403] Full analysis of which must await a broader study, but it is based upon Jordanov's corpus of Bulgarian seals with Seibt's corrections with backing from *DO* and *A Collection of Dated Byzantine Lead Seals*, ed. N. Oikonomides (Washington D.C, 1986); Jordanov (Sofia, 2003 and 2006), pp. 63-4, 154-83, 214-25; W. Seibt, "Ivan Jordanov, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria*, (vol 1., Sofia, 2003), Review," *BZ* 97 (2005), pp. 129-33; W. Seibt, "Ivan Jordanov, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria* (vol. 2., Sofia, 2006), Review," *BZ* 100 (2008), pp. 819-24.

The Way the West was Won

By the end of the first decade of John's rule, he had settled his western provinces in such a way that according to our sources, he did not return to them again during his reign. He preserved and strengthened the territories that he had inherited, and completed his father's work in settling the nomadic tribes within his lands, bringing the two Serbian clients back under his aegis, and proving to Hungary that Byzantium was still the dominant power in the region. It had not been bloodless or painless by any means: seven years of war in the Balkans, allowing a rebellion to continue in Trebizond under Gabras, and having to choose the lesser of evils and make peace with the Venetians at sea. However despite this defeat, the navy was reorganised to be more effective, and divisions of both nomadic and Serb troops had been added to the army, and so as 1130 began John could look to the east, flush with his cognomen ex virtute as 'Cumanos' and 'Skythian Bane,' and even "Kalo Ioannis," 'John the Good,' used for the first time in 1126 and again in 1127 in the Neapolitan archives.[404] His reputation, and the reach of imperial power, rode high. For the first time since 1125 he was free to act, not only against Gabras, but also those who had changed the shape of the eleventh-century empire – the Turks of Anatolia.

[404] *Regii neapolitani archive* (vol. 6., 1858), no. 596 and 600.



Map Four: Anatolia

Chapter Six

Treachery and Conquest in Anatolia

John's policies were driven by the primacy of domestic politics over foreign concerns. Only when all was well in Constantinople were conquests attempted according to what would unequivocally be in the best interests of the empire as a whole, rather than merely his regime specifically. Further to this, the choices of John's regime in this period were further shaped by the actions of traitors to his cause, delaying and disrupting John's strategy for Anatolia.

In addition to domestic politics as a central driving force, the other key dynamic of Anatolia in this period was that John was but one of many actors on the political stage. Scholars' reliance on Kinnamos and Choniates for their narrative histories has harmed as much as benefitted study of the 1130s, as their accounts focus on John and exclude the broader picture of which he was a part. Read in the light of the contemporary rhetorical court sources and the account of Michael the Syrian however, John's actions take on new meanings, and this wider pattern of events in Anatolia can be seen more clearly.

The *Chronicle* was written in Melitene by Michael the Syrian, Patriarch of the Jacobite Syrian Church in the final decades of the twelfth century before his death in 1199.[405] With his patriarchate under the rule of the Danishmendids he provides the closest account possible to a Danishmendid voice for this era, and his detailed knowledge of the politics of the Turks of Asia Minor is second to none, unsurprising given his geographical and chronological proximity to events. Equally,

[405] Michael the Syrian's biography is sketched in *Michael*, "Preface," pp. ix-xii, and further analysed by Spinei, "Michael the Syrian," pp. 169-76, who also summarises the available historiography of the patriarch.

his position as Jacobite Patriarch and bias in favour of his faith makes him peculiarly even-handed in his judgements – for though he is no friend of his Islamic overlords, he is equally hostile to the Chalcedonian Church of Constantinople and the Latins of the west, blaming lack of Orthodox receptivity to Jacobite traditions for the failure of Manuel's proposed reunification of both the Jacobite and Armenian Churches with Constantinople in 1170.[406] Equally, he appears to have had a wide knowledge of events far away in the Balkans from a certain bishop Basil of Edessa, who appears to have been present for John's victory at Berrhoia.[407] There are two candidates for the identity of bishop Basil, but it has been demonstrated that metropolitan Basil bar Çabuni was a gifted and well read writer who knew Greek and had knowledge of other lands, while the second candidate had no such talents.[408] This metropolitan rose to the Edessan episcopate at the start of the twelfth century, but then came into conflict with patriarch Athanasius VII who excommunicated and sought to bankrupt him.[409] With the Latins running the county after the First Crusade he was able to keep his see, but equally such an excommunicated Jacobite bishop could well have sought support from John for his position, so his presence in John's retinue for much of this period is perhaps likely, though we have no further evidence for it. The possibility that Michael was using Basil's lost written works as a source also adds an extra layer of reliability to his account, something that coupled with its narrative continuity compared to Choniates and Kinnamos, (which even on comparison with each other contain seemingly empty years), makes his source invaluable for understanding John's reign.

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[406] *Michael*, 19.5, lost in Syriac text though preserved in an Armenian revision and Bar Hebraeus, see Chabot, p. 334, n. 3, and tr. 334-6; Spinei, "Michael the Syrian," pp. 174-5; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 75-6.
[407] *Michael*, 15.12, p. 600, p. 207.
[408] Ibid. 15.7, p. 587, p. 185, 15.8, p. 590, p. 190; Spinei, "Michael the Syrian," p. 195.
[409] Ibid. 15.8, p. 591, p. 191, 15.9, pp. 591-2, pp. 200-1, 15.12, p. 600, p. 207.

As John entered the Anatolian theatre, his regime had weathered a crisis and emerged ready to deal with issues that had fallen into abeyance for some years. Where the first few years of John's reign had been an unqualified success, he had overplayed his hand in 1125 such that in 1126 the situation was in danger of spiralling out of control. Though peace with Venice had provided valuable breathing space, Stephen of Hungary's invasion combined with ending Juraj of Diokleia's insurrection had kept John in the west. He was thus unable to deal with Constantine Gabras' revolt, or aid Mas'ud more directly in the east. The result was that the situation had evolved into widespread, chaotic, multi-factioned warfare across Anatolia.

This lack of oversight and direct support from John had led Mas'ud to ally himself by marriage to Ghazi II Danishmend, first in order to drive Mas'ud's brother Arab from Ikonion, and then for Mas'ud to support Ghazi against Thoros of Armenian Cilicia. This alliance was of course a renewal of the previous alliance made between Mas'ud and Ghazi to secure the former's rule after he had killed his brother Malik Shah in 1117, and was followed by the two campaigning against Mas'ud's other brother Tughrul of Melitene in the early 1120s.[410] Michael the Syrian tells us that in the summer of 1127, both Armenians and some Turkish chiefs supported Thoros in his campaign against Ghazi and Mas'ud. Thoros had initial success in capturing both Ghazi's son Mohammed and a supposedly important emir Yunas in battles in northern Anatolia, the location of which demonstrated that support for Arab and Thoros must have extended across central Anatolia. Ghazi was however able to recapture his son after taking Ancyra, but Arab continued to fight and managed to capture Ghazi's other son Yagan, prolonging the conflict still

[410] *Ibid*, 16.2, p. 608, p. 223; see Chapter Two.

further until two defeats forced him to concede to Ghazi and he was then either killed, or took refuge in Constantinople in 1129 where he died (Michael the Syrian gives both deaths at different points in his narrative).[411] This conflict additionally enabled Tughrul to retake Melitene and re-emerge as a power in the east having survived Ghazi and Mas'ud's campaign of the 1120s. In the same section of his narrative, Michael remarks that there were a great number of Turks who found refuge with the Christians at that time though whether this refers to the empire, Armenian Cilicia, Georgia or merely regional rulers is difficult to say.[412] Either way, these refugees appear to be a symptom of Anatolia descending into yet more chaos.

Overall, the picture presented by Michael is one of general warfare as Ghazi II Danishmend and the competing sons of Kilij-Arslan fought over Anatolia, and, outside the protection of the empire, Gabras of Chaldia became one more of these competing 'emirs,' though isolated in Trebizond. In 1129 Michael tells us that Ghazi began annexing fortresses on the Pontic coast under the control of a certain "Kasianos," which may also refer to Constantine Gabras or one of his lieutenants.[413] This was followed by a turn eastwards as Ghazi took advantage of the death of Thoros to occupy the mountain passes into Armenian Cilicia, and having done so to retake Melitene from Tughrul once more.[414] Fresh from this success, Ghazi finally appears in Crusader, Armenian and Arabic sources as an opponent to Bohemond II of Antioch in Cilicia, who himself was taking advantage of the death of Thoros to extend the principality of Antioch's dominion north in 1129-30.[415] Ghazi's

[411] Ibid. pp. 223-4.
[412] Ibid. pp. 224-5.
[413] *Michael*, 16.3, p. 610, p. 227; Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, p. 81.
[414] Ibid.
[415] *Ibid*; William of Tyre, 13.10, p. 597, 13.28, pp. 623-5; Ibn al-Athir, p. 279; Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, (vol. VI, Oxford, 1978), pp. 134-6.

intervention had come at the request of the new Prince Leon, though what he promised in exchange for this aid is unknown, but his later penchant for breaking promises may render the issue moot.[416]

Whether John had any influence over these events while campaigning against Stephen of Hungary and Juraj of Raška is unknown, with Chalandon positing that John subsidised Mas'ud to keep the warfare in Anatolia ongoing while he was occupied in the west, but whether he had any hand in events or not, by 1130 Ghazi was close to achieving hegemony in Anatolia east of the frontier John had established by 1121, even if warfare was ongoing in Cilicia and the east against Bohemond, Gabras and Tughrul. Though not taken up by subsequent scholars, Chalandon's original judgement that John entered the anarchy of Anatolia in 1130 to intervene in the quarrels between emirs still holds true – John was but one player amongst many, and entered a stage replete with ongoing conflicts that he hoped to turn to his advantage.[417]

There is some confusion in our sources as to the exact chronology of the campaigns between 1130 and 1135: Choniates mentions two distinct campaigns, with one being in two parts separated by a winter; Kinnamos is unclear but implies either two or three, while Michael the Syrian mentions five separate campaigns, with three reaching Paphlagonia.[418] Michael's five-campaign schema is the only one that eliminates lacunae of John's reign and so is the most likely template. Not to use his outline of events leads to deducing that there were whole years in which John

[416] See Chapter Seven.
[417] Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, p. 80.
[418] Chalandon supports this view, whereby Michael is essentially correct and Prodromos, Kinnamos and Choniates provide more information on those campaigns in accordance with their own narrative paradigms. *NC*, p. 82, p. 344; *JK*, p. 13; *Michael*, 16.4-5, pp. 612-4, pp. 230-5. Prodromos, not being a historian, describes the campaigns with more detail than any of them, but does not ascribe any particular number for them, aside from at least three by implication.

did nothing noted down by anyone, and knowing John's unflagging energy in the prosecution of his campaigns for the rest of his reign, often attested by Prodromos, that would be very unusual.[419] This would once more fit the pattern established in Choniates' and Kinnamos' accounts of the Balkan wars whereby they exclude campaigns not relevant to their major narrative goals, and is in addition to the arguments that Michael wrote closer to the events geographically and chronologically, and was not inherently pro-Byzantine as discussed in the introduction. Michael's scheme also provides reasons for each campaign, and thus ties up a number of loose ends that are not anchored chronologically in Kinnamos and Choniates' narratives, but are sometimes hinted at in Prodromos' contemporary works. With the chroniclers' track record on adapting the chronology to suit their ends they, with Prodromos, should therefore be read as companions to Michael, elaborating on some of the campaigns he outlines, rather than as guides to these campaigns in and of themselves.[420] Thus taking these factors into account, a new chronology can be established, and one that reveals a conquest driven by traitors.

The First and Second Treasons: Constantine and Isaac

In 1130, John was finally in a position to do something about the only major rebellion to his rule in Anatolia: the secession of Gabras of Chaldia. Trebizond and its hinterland, recently reduced by the conquests of Ghazi in the entire Pontic region, was cut off from the rest of imperial territory by Danishmendid control over Paphlagonia, leaving John with three options as to how he could reclaim the rebellious province. Firstly, he could send troops by sea. Secondly, he could

[419] Examples include *Prodromos*, XVI, lines 38 and 65, in addition to occasions when Prodromos begs the emperor to follow a victory with stay in Constantinople so he may acclaim his achievements, advice seemingly never followed: *Prodromos*, IXγ lines 11 and 16; Xγ line 17; XI, line 219.

[420] His chronology also has the benefit of fitting the archeological evidence, c.f. Chapter Eight.

campaign in Paphlagonia, making war on Ghazi and thus reconnecting Chaldia to the rest of the empire overland. Thirdly, he could come to some sort of arrangement with Ghazi to march overland. Both the latter options would rely on John's relationship with Mas'ud, whom he had backed with financial support when retaking the sultanate of Ikonion from Arab, and who was in alliance with Ghazi. Which of these John intended to follow is unknown, though Michael the Syrian tells us that in the same year as the death of Bohemond of Antioch (February 1130), John built a town on the coast and prepared to move against "the Turks," an identification that could refer to various targets. [421]

Reading Choniates, Kinnamos, and the rhetorical works of Prodromos, it would seem that the Paphlagonian campaigns were always the grand plan after the west was settled. Eustathios' poetic likening of the Komnenoi emperors to waves crashing against the Turks has been fairly fixed in the historiographical tradition from the Byzantines themselves onwards, as if such was always John's plan.[422] In fact, securing Mas'ud as an imperial client would have been a more measured step, building upon his support of Mas'ud's restoration to Ikonion in 1126 as well as John's strategy in the Balkans. If not that, then stamping out the rebellion of Gabras would have made the most sense, as every month that rebellion continued was a challenge to John's authority as Roman emperor. Yet he did none of these things: instead Choniates and Kinnamos relate that he campaigned to take Kastamon from the Danishmendids. This led to Eustathios' analogy of a focus on the coasts, and from it Birkenmeier's interpretation of John's grand strategy for Anatolia as being entirely based upon the capture of fortified points, taking the coast first then moving

[421] *Michael*, 16.4, p. 612, p. 230; William of Tyre, 13.27, pp. 623-5.
[422] Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 124-5; H. C. H. Deluigi, *Winter in the Land of Rûm: Defenses against the Turks in Western Anatolia* (Unpublished Master's Thesis, İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, 2015), p. 49.

inland. This is despite the fact that the campaign to seize Kastamon appears the least beneficial of options, gaining John the enmity of the most powerful polity in Anatolia, without first defeating far lesser enemies.

The key to this puzzle is once again provided by Michael the Syrian: the treachery of John's brother, the *sebastokrator* Isaac and his son, also called John. This treachery goes unmentioned by Kinnamos, and is only mentioned by Choniates in the context of his prodigal return to John and the empire in 1139, when he implies that the pair were away for some years as wanderers visiting many "toparchs" such as Mas'ud, as Isaac sought to become "a Satan to John" after what Choniates insinuates was a small quarrel.[423] Choniates is clearly minimising a fairly major event here, as no minor disagreement would cause Isaac's actions, or his nine years of exile before his reunion with John. Michael the Syrian has no need to obscure anything in his portrayal however, and in his account John is just about to engage the Turks when he learns that his brother Isaac – the loyal Isaac who had supported him in his struggle against their mother and sister and had ruled Constantinople on his behalf since 1118 – had attempted with other grandees to seize the throne for himself.[424]

John immediately returned to Constantinople, and though we have no details of what occurred, Isaac appears not to have garnered enough support and fled the

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[423] *NC*, p. 32, p. 19; Isaac's exile has previously been misdated to between 1122 and 3 due to the major biographical study on him and his monastery of the *Kosmoteira* by Sinos dating it to this period. The text however notes that this has been dated using the *terminus ante quem* of the death of Piroska-Eirene, Sinos dating it to 1123, despite the poem by Prodromos dating it to post-1130. With the death of Eirene being in 1134 however (see below), Prodromos' poem makes 1130 the only secure date, and the political events surrounding it make it all but certain: *Prodromos*, II, lines 13-29; S. Sinos, *Die Klosterkirche der Kosmoteira in Bera (Vira)* (Munich, 1985), p. 9 n. 24; "Kosmosoteira: Typikon of the Sebastokrator Isaac Komnenos for the Monastery of the Mother of God Kosmosoteira near Bera," tr: N. Ševčenko, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A complete translation of the surviving founders' typika and testaments*, ed. J. Thomas, A. Hero and G. Constable (Washington D.C, 2001), p. 782.

[424] *Michael*, 16.4, p. 612, p. 230.

city with his son, arriving at the court of Ghazi II Danishmend. It can be assumed considering the crisis of 1126, the less than ideal peace with Venice, the long Hungarian and Raškan wars, and the continuing defiance of Gabras that certain Constantinopolitan nobles believed that Isaac, who had ruled in all but name as an emperor in Constantinople since 1118, should take over from his brother. The allegiance of the army and the aristocrats that served in it to John was however absolute; Issac was therefore obliged to flee in the face of John's returning army. Michael tells us that while John reordered Constantinople in the wake of the conspiracy, Isaac spent the winter in Melitene with Ghazi and Mas'ud, while also treating with Constantine Gabras to support his claim to the throne. Ghazi is also mentioned as having secured the payment of tribute from Leon of Armenian Cilicia, making all Anatolia bar the imperial west his clients, and so Isaac in addition courted him for support. He was initially successful, as his son John married a daughter of Leon and received both Mopsuestia and Adana as a dowry, though this alliance (and by extension the marriage) seems not to have lasted long as Isaac and John were forced to flee to Mas'ud in Ikonion after falling out with Leon.[425]

Michael does not specifically date these events, any more than Isaac's visits to the toparchs are dated by Choniates, but he does tell us that John's response to these intrigues after his reordering of Constantinople, was to campaign against the Turks and the Armenians after the death of Joscelin I of Edessa, which occurred in the winter of 1131 while forcing Ghazi to retreat from his siege of the fortress of Keysun in the county of Edessa, meaning that John's initial Kastamon campaign can be dated to spring 1132.[426]

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[425] Ibid.
[426] Ibid. p. 232; William of Tyre, 14 3.1-32.

That John spent over a year in the capital following Isaac's treachery is unsurprising as he needed to re-establish his authority over Constantinople. He also completed the major part of the Pantokrator monastery and reshuffled his officials while arranging marriages of other nobles to his female kin. This demonstrates how Isaac's treachery required John to grasp the tiller of the ship of state firmly once again.[427] On the international stage in Anatolia however, the impact of Isaac's betrayal was to turn polities that had been at least neutral to John, into enemies, as Isaac gained backing for his claim from Ghazi, Mas'ud and Leon as well as Gabras. This situation depicts an Anatolia full of opportunists, who in supporting claimants to the thrones of their neighbours for their own advantage saw little difference between Romans, Armenians and different Turks. Religion and ethnicity was for rhetoric after the politics had played out. John was not the only one playing rulers off against internal rivals for gain.

In this situation, Kinnamos tells us John attacked Kastamon because: "The Turks who dwelt there used to raid the adjacent area, which was subject to the emperor, and continually maltreated the Romans there."[428] Such a statement depicts the war as the Romans against the Turks, while the reality was far from clear-cut.

From 1130 onwards Anatolia had become wholly hostile to John, with even Mas'ud forsaking any promises he might have made as he supported Isaac by granting him asylum. John was therefore forced to assault Kastamon to take the pressure off imperial provinces in western Anatolia, while hoping to annexe the region so that he could press on to Gabras and Chaldia, which was a strategy designed to contain the ambitions of his brother Isaac. His betrayal shaped John's

[427] C.f. Chapter Nine.
[428] *JK*, p. 13, p. 20.

strategy in Anatolia as it forced John to confront the Danishmendids, starting with the attempted conquest of Paphlagonia, and the city of Kastamon.

The First Paphlagonian Campaign of 1132

The nature of Paphlagonia as a province under Turkish occupation is unclear, but it appears to have gone from being a wild, lawless country in the late eleventh century to one that was more clearly under the control of the Danishmendids, and used as a base for raiding the empire. Kastamon had been the family seat of the Komnenoi in Anatolia, the place where Isaac I Komnenos, Alexios I's uncle, was acclaimed emperor by his troops in 1057.[429] Nikephoros Bryennios' History describes a visit by Alexios in 1075, painting a picture of him bursting into tears at the memory of his parents while wandering the deserted halls away from his escort, such that he would have fallen victim to a Turkish ambush had his companions not re-joined him.[430] Though Kastamon had been lost by 1075, Bryennios' account also mentions that noble estates nearby such as that of Dokeianos were still inhabited and secure.[431] The region appears to have continued to destabilise, with James Crow advocating that it came under formal Danishmendid control by 1101, when Albert of Aachen records a massacre of foragers from the Crusade of Merzifon by Turks near "civitas Constamnes", that he identifies as Kastamon.[432] Whittow has demonstrated that before the Turkish invasion, "Byzantium did not have a militarised aristocracy based in the provinces", and that resisting the Turks "required …/above all a determination not to let any ground go

[429] Michael Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. I Bekker (Bonn, 1856), pp. 59-70; tr. Michael Attaleiates, *Miguel Ataliades: Historia*, ed. I. P. Martin (Madrid, 2002), pp. 46-53.
[430] Nikephoros Bryennios, *Histoire*, tr. P. Gautier (Brussels, 1975), pp. 196-7.
[431] Ibid. pp. 194-5.
[432] Albert of Aachen, pp. 600-1; J. Crow, "Alexios I and Kastamon: castle and settlement in middle Byzantine Paphlagonia," *Alexios I Komnenos-Papers*, p. 16.

by default".[433] This previously wild borderland of Alexios' reign had been ceded "by default" to the Turks in the early 1100s, and so with hostilities now open between Ghazi and John, the raids mentioned by Kinnamos would have been almost certainly launched from Kastamon, being the most defensible site in the region with easy access overland to both raid John's territories and to be supported by forces from the rest of Danishmendid territory.[434] Capturing Kastamon would therefore prevent raids on imperial lands, as well as provide an easily defendable bastion from which John could protect territory in Paphlagonia and launch further strikes against the Danishmendids.

The narrative histories of Choniates and Kinnamos are fairly brief in their accounts of the campaign, instead focusing on John's triumph in Constantinople that followed it. Niketas Choniates relates that:

> [John] marched through the provinces of Bithynia and Paphlagonia and appeared before the city. Throwing up many scaling ladders and surrounding it with siege engines, he took Kastamon. The Persarmenian [Danishmendid] satrap despaired of the situation and fled. After taking captive no small number of Turks, John returned to Byzantion.[435]

Whilst Kinnamos, aside from providing the *casus belli* with his description of Turkish raids, only tells us that:

> the emperor marched to Asia, hastening to take the city of Kastamon which is adjacent to Paphlagonia…./Stunning them by the magnitude of his preparation for war, he constrained them to yield the city and themselves to the Romans.[436]

Reading these lines, we can easily see how Birkenmeier makes his judgement about John's *modus operandi* in Asia Minor being based around sieges,

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[433] M. Whittow, 'How the east was lost: the background to the Komnenian reconquista', *Alexios I Komnenos-Papers*, p. 66.
[434] C.f. Chapter Eight, Kastamon.
[435] *NC*, p. 18, p. 12.
[436] *JK*, p.13, p. 20.

as this seems to be a clear-cut example of the emperor gathering overwhelming force, taking the strong point, and then returning home, mission accomplished, having pushed forward the frontiers of the empire and eliminated a base for raiders. Taking into account Prodromos' poems however, containing over 400 lines of additional information over two poems, in addition to two further poems on the triumph that followed the campaign, much more can be deduced regarding the capture of Kastamon. Thus Birkenmeier's interpretation of the campaign should be modified if its information is to be believed. [437]

The first Kastamon poem is written in a highly archaic and formalised style of Greek, both in hexameter and in word form, that would have been understood by only the most educated of the Constantinopolitan elite, but would likely have been delivered to the whole court who would have taken the salient points from it.[438] Many members of the court would have been on campaign with the emperor, so the contents of this poem would not have been overly exaggerated or changed, as there would be no point for those who knew what had occurred, and indeed they had possibly been interviewed as sources for Prodromos' composition.[439] Poems such as this have previously been easy to overlook compared to the seemingly clear presentations of events by Choniates and Kinnamos: they are easily dismissed as rhetorical presentations of events that have little meaning compared to a serious history. In fact this poem was the contemporary official presentation of the events of the campaign to the court. As such, its place in the political dialogue of the day is uncomplicated, and therefore useful in supplementing what we know of events

[437] These poems are fully explored in Lau, "The Power of Poetry," pp. 195-214; additionally commented on in my final chapter.
[438] C.f. Chapter Nine.
[439] In particular *kaisar* Nikephoros Bryennios who was both a member of this educated elite and part of the same literary circle as Prodromos; see above.

without much fear of 'rhetoric' influencing that knowledge. This is again in contrast to Choniates and Kinnamos, whose rhetorical goals and distance from events distort information more than these poems.

Though Prodromos does focus on the heroics of the storming of the city of Kastamon and its high citadel, and the emperor's personal qualities as the God-chosen "Stemmer of Battle" (an Homeric epithet), he also expands on the chroniclers by describing the Turkish raiders that preceded the campaign as: "running as wolves, hastily through dense thickets and woods, going after the flock, which having wandered off from its pen looks if it can find a place to hide from the ravenous wolves."[440] This paints an evocative picture of the insecurity of the population, explaining the lack of Christian "hold out" areas, and the necessity of seizing Kastamon for the security of the other imperial territories to the west. As well as the details of the surrender of the Turks, who opened the gates and then begged the emperor to spare their lives whilst he was fully armed on his horse, confirming that John brought such overwhelming forces that they had no hope of holding out, Prodromos also mentions that two fortresses named Alamos and Alazos had also been taken.[441] This part of the poem is dedicated to showing the emperor hunting the Turks through the countryside and driving them across the River Halys. This done, the army follows the dispersing Turks across the river and then plunders goods and takes prisoners before conquering Balza on its return to Byzantine territory.[442] The poem is short at under 200 lines, and though the usual

[440] "ἀλεξητῆρα…/οἱ δὲ λύκοι ὥς Πέρσαι ἀνατροχόωντο διὰ δρυμὰ πυκνὰ καὶ ὕλην ποίμνιον ἀμφαφόωντες, ὅ ῥ'ἐκ σηκοῖο λιασθὲν δίζεται εἴ τιν'ἴδοιτο λύκων ἀγρίων ἀλεωρήν." *Prodromos*, III, lines 12-3; further discussion of this literary image as an 'image of the other' is to be found in A. Papageorgiou, "οϊ δὲ λύκοι ὡς Πέρσαι: The image of the "Turks" in the reign of John II Komnenos (1118-1143)," *Byzantinoslavica* 69 (2011), pp. 149-61.

[441] *Prodromos*, III, lines 85-8 and line 53 respectively.

[442] Ibid. III, lines 100-105. Though the locations of Alamos, Alazos and Balza are unknown, Matthews and Glatz have identified "at least a dozen" fortified hilltop sites during their study of

imperial praises are made it is fairly to the point as an account of the campaign despite its high style, lending it the air of an official court presentation of events, which indeed it may have been.

Comparatively, the second poem is twice as long and is more complex in terms of literary devices. It is formally divided into *dekastichs*, that is stanzas of ten lines, and from the title we can see it is addressed to the demes in political verse, and thus would have been sung by two or more choirs to the people in a location such as the hippodrome or Hagia Sophia, possibly as part of the triumph.[443] Evidence for this can be found in many places in the poem, including the lists of the different social strata present:

Councillors and Senate…/ monks…/ scholars…/ soldiers…/ artisans…/ foreigners…/ standing together according to the choirs.[444]

In addition to numerous other references to chanting or singing, and indeed the description of the triumph and ceremony that would have been occurring while this poem was sung, the many references to the emperor as the Sun evoke facets of the later Byzantine ceremony of *prokypsis* and its emphasis on the ceremonial appearance of the emperor as light, demonstrating an evolution from the traditional *kathisma* ceremony.[445] This imagery is taken further by the stanzas devoted to

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Paphlagonia that date to the Byzantine period, thus this was certainly a province with a number of rural fortresses that should be secured by any possible conqueror. C. Glatz and R. Matthews, *At empire's edge: Project Paphlagonia: regional survey in North-Central Turkey* (London, 2009), pp. 195-7.

[443] "Εἰς τὴν ἐπὶ τῇ ἁλώσει τῆς Κασταμόνος ἐπινίκιον πρόδον τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος κυροῦ Ἰωάννοῦ τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ δεκάστιχα πολιτικά τοῖς δήμοις : On the victory of the capture of Kastamon delivered by the Autokrator Lord John Komnenos, a *dekastich* in political verse to the people", Hörandner, "Zur kommunikativen Funktion byzantinischer Gedichte," pp. 114-8.

[444] "Ὦ δεῦρο σύγκλητε βουλή.../οἱ τοῦ μονήρους
βίου.../μαθήμασιν.../πολέμοις.../τύχης.../ξένης.../σύστητε κατὰ χορούς"
Prodromos, IV, lines 240-8.

[445] Ibid. lines 31-40, 121-30, 201-210 (the latter containing the immortal lines:
ὦ φλέγε φλέγε, νικητά, φλέγε τοὺς πολεμίους, φρύξον αὐτοὺς ὡς λάχανον,
O burn burn, victor, burn the enemies, Roast them as vegetables); A. Heisenburg, *Aus der Geschichte und Literatur der Palaiologenzeit* (Munich, 1920), pp. 85-132; M. Jeffreys, "The

extended metaphors of the emperor being like the sun giving life to the empire with his rays, and how the sweat of his hard work nurtures the land.[446] This performance aspect of the triumph is crucial to understanding what it can tell us about the campaign.

Where the first Kastamon poem presented an official report of the campaign in high style to the court, the triumph and this associated deme choir poem presented the campaign to the whole populace of Constantinople, something of immense value to John in the wake of his brother's failed coup. Along with grandiose praise for the emperor, including that John is not only richer than Croesus but also a better general, not to mention guided by the Mother of God and not demons, the poem delivers to the people a lot of information, seemingly to prove why John deserved such praise.[447] His previous victories over the Dalmatians and Pechenegs and prior Anatolian campaigns, including the references to Amorion and Lemnos that are not otherwise mentioned in our narrative sources, are sung out together with a double mention of the other fortresses captured in the 20th and 26th stanzas.[448] The expulsion of the Turks and the plunder taken from across the Halys mentioned in the first poem are corroborated with a hunting metaphor used in the eighth stanza and the description of the despoiling of the land there in the 26th stanza.[449] This description is likely to have directly referred to the procession of this plunder through the city to the "divine sanctuary", probably referring to Hagia

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Comnenian prokypsis", *Parergo* n.s. 5 (1987), pp. 38-53. Macrides disputes that *prokypsis* occurred in the Komnenian era, but elements of such a ceremony are being evoked in poem by Prodromos written specifically for John's appearance at the races, where almost all of the imagery is equating John with light: *Prodromos*, XII; R. Macrides, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Contantinopolitan Court* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 407-8; from this evidence, John's reign is a period of transition regarding ceremonial such as this.

[446] Ibid. lines 31-40, 61-70, 121-130, 201-210.

[447] Ibid. lines 151-60.

[448] Ibid. lines 224-6, 270-3 and lines lines 211-2, 265 respectively; c.f. Chapter Four for Lemnos.

[449] Ibid. lines 81-90 and lines 260-9 respectively.

Sophia where the plunder would be displayed as a symbol of John's piety.[450] In the same way, one stanza is entirely dedicated to listing captured 'Satraps' (a classicising reference to contemporary Turkish chieftains) who would have been paraded as part of this procession, as direct proof of the success of the campaign.[451] Prodromos says that he himself recognised a certain emir 'Thogkril' of Amaseia, emir Alp Arslan of Gangra, and then eight more important enough to be named along with "many others".[452] At the same time, John is acclaimed for having brought the Turkish "wolves" into the light by transforming them into "guard dogs" for his citizens, thus informing us that John almost certainly enrolled some of his erstwhile foes into his army as he had with Pecheneg, Serb and other Turks beforehand.[453]

There was therefore a lot more to this campaign than simply capturing Kastamon itself. John's strategy may have focused on the siege of the primary target, Kastamon, but conquering a territory is not a game of 'capture the flag' where capturing one site yields up a province, even if that 'flag' is on a hilltop castle, so there must have been more to the campaign, and thus the strategy in play. Prodromos provides this extra information: rather than seeing the emperor marching to a city, seizing it, gaining tribute and going home (Birkenmeier's interpretation, using only Choniates and Kinnamos as sources), we can produce a far more realistic model of John's Kastamon campaign:

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[450] Ibid. line 240.
[451] Ibid. lines 230-39.
[452] "τοὺς δὲ σατράπας μάλιστα καὶ τοὺς ἐκκρίτους ὅρα·
ὅρα τὸν Ἀμασειανὸν πρὸ τῶν λοιπῶν Τογκρίλην,
τὸν ἀπὸ Γάγγρας Ἀλψαροῦς, τὸν ἀμηρᾶν Πραχίμην,
τὸν Ἐλελδῆν, τὸν Ἐλπεγκοῦς, τὸν Τζυκῆν, τὸν Ἰνάλην.
ἔχεις πρὸς τούτοις ἀριθμεῖν καί τινας ἄλλους πλείους,
Καλλινογλῆν, Ἀϊτουγδῆν, Αὐσάραριν, μυρίους·" Ibid. lines 232-7.
[453] "τοὺς λυμεῶνας καὶ φθορεῖς τὴς πολιτείας λύκους
κύνας δεικνύεις φύλακας αὐτῆς τῆς πολιτείας" Ibid. lines 177-8

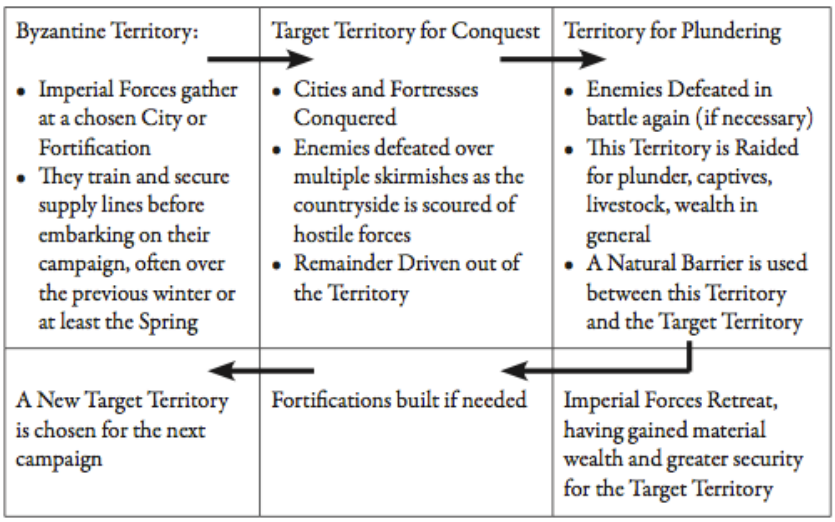

Fig. 14: Model representing John's offensive strategy in Anatolia, Lau, (2014), p. 208.

This model is in many ways proven by the fact that John did not in fact execute it to its fullest extent to secure the whole of Paphlagonia, as though the Halys was crossed and Kastamon secured from the east, it was still vulnerable from the south via the pass through the Olgassys mountains, the modern Ilgaz Dağları. As with any pre-modern army, John had up until then favoured one expedition a year, ideally returning himself to the capital over the winter, and allowing his army to return to their own homes.[454] This policy was to change after 1133, as just as he held his glorious triumph in Constantinople, the crowning achievement of any Roman general, and a necessary demonstration in the capital that John and the empire were back on track after the troubled late 1120s and Isaac's conspiracy – Kastamon was recaptured by Ghazi.

As the imperial army returned to Constantinople, Ghazi returned from the east with an army that had been almost wholly successful against crusaders there, and besieged Kastamon. Despite its strength it could not hold against such a storm, and so Ghazi gained some small revenge for John's campaign by massacring the

[454] Failing this, returning to a regional capital such as Philippoupolis. The only exception to this would be his winter camp during the nomadic invasion of 1121/2.

Roman garrison there.[455] Once again, it is Michael the Syrian who provides us with these crucial narrative details as Choniates and Kinnamos obscure or are merely uninterested in the details of what occurred in the provinces. His worth as a balanced narrator with regards Byzantine and Turkish matters in general is demonstrated here by an almost smug, ironic tone to this account as John captures Kastamon, and Ghazi takes it straight back. Michael then tells us that John lost no time in setting out again against the Turks with his sons, but while he was in Turkish territory he received word that his beloved wife Eirene-Piroska had died whilst in Bithynia, likely having followed John into the province to see him and his army off to the boundaries of the empire as the women of the court were wont to do.[456] Michael goes further to say that John's eldest son, young emperor Alexios, was also ill, and Kinnamos mentions that following his wife's funeral and the news of Kastamon's fall (though by Michael's chronology it would have fallen before John set out on campaign) John too fell ill, delaying the campaign until early Spring 1134.[457] Michael adds to this picture that Isaac's remaining supporters in Constantinople attempted to smuggle him back to the capital to take advantage of John's absence, demonstrating the continuing seriousness of the threat Isaac posed, but John was informed of the renewed plot and so had another reason to return and remain in the capital.[458] Michael also mentions that during John's illness, a Turkish army, by implication composed of supporters of both Mas'ud and Isaac with Ghazi's blessing (though the Danishmendids were still campaigning around Edessa)

[455] Choniates mentions the ethnicity of the garrison; see final section showing the impregnability of Kastamon; *Michael*, 16.5, p. 614, p. 233; *NC*, p. 19; *JK*, p. 14.
[456] *Michael*, p. 234; *JK*, p. 14; John left to build the fortress of Ancyraous when "ladies of the court departed from the city (of Lopadion)", implying it was normal for the ladies to join John at least in the safer provinces while he was away from Constantinople: *NC*, p. 19; see L. Garland, "Imperial women and entertainment at the middle byzantine court," *Byzantine women: varieties of experience*, ed. L. Garland (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 181-2.
[457] *Michael*, 16.5, p. 614, p. 234; *JK*, p. 14.
[458] *Michael*, 16.5, p. 614, p. 232.

attacked Sozopolis, but were unable to take the city and withdrew.[459] Here, Isaac may have been trying to prove himself John's military superior, portraying himself as having the 'allegiance' of the other Anatolian powers so his supporters would depose John, but with his failure to take Sozopolis John's military preeminence remained intact, drying up support for Isaac.

The necessity of a triumph rather than remaining in Paphlagonia, the death of the empress, John's illness and the renewed conspiracy all demonstrate how domestic affairs, and in particular the specific needs of the emperor, affected events in Anatolia. The assault on Sozopolis, though ineffective, also demonstrates that Isaac's betrayal had not only made the Anatolian polities hostile to John, but were also actively supporting Isaac's claim to the throne, giving John a taste of his own medicine for supporting the three fugitive princes a few years earlier, perhaps indeed inspiring Isaac to appeal to the Anatolian powers when his domestic coup failed.

Fortunately for John, events being shaped by the changing personal circumstances of major figures finally dealt him a better hand for 1134. While John recovered from illness, Ghazi died in September, even as the ambassador of the caliph of Baghdad recognised him with the title of *melik* (king), confirming his place as the pre-eminent Muslim ruler in the area that he had fought for all his life against fellow Turks, Crusaders, Armenians and the Empire; his death would mark the beginning of the end for the Danishmendids.[460] His son Mohammed was immediately beset by revolts from two of his brothers, Yaghi and Ayn al-Dawla, though being in Melitene he did not even learn of their revolt until November

[459] Ibid. p. 233.
[460] Ibid. p. 237.

according to Michael. Thus John's next campaign occurred at the perfect moment to take advantage of the new disunity of the Danishmendids.[461]

The Second Paphlagonian Campaign of 1134, and the Treachery of Mas'ud

The death of Ghazi not only meant war between Mohammed and his brothers, but also opportunities for Mas'ud of Ikonion: being married to Ghazi's daughter put him in a situation whereby he was just as much an enemy of Mohammed as his brothers, a fact noted by both Choniates and Kinnamos.[462] John therefore sent ambassadors with an alliance proposal, and though we have no details of the terms of this we know it was enticing enough to convince Mas'ud to send forces to join John's army – Kinnamos tells us specifically that "one of the nobles of his court came with an army to give hostages and join in the war."[463] This created a full alliance, and one that suggests continuity once more with the policies of John's father, who relied on Sulayman in the same way to recapture imperial cities lost to enemy Turks before making agreements with Malik Shah.[464] Indeed there is the possibility that Mas'ud had been playing both sides since John supported him in 1126, and that Mas'ud was merely following the terms of a previously existing alliance as an imperial client. His slippery nature does seem confirmed however as Isaac, previously a guest at his court and someone whom John would no doubt have wished to get hold of, mysteriously vanished from that court to emerge, according to Prodromos though not in Latin sources, in the kingdom of Jerusalem eventually

[461] Ibid. p. 238; *JK*, p. 14; *NC*, p. 19.
[462] *JK*, p. 14; *NC*, p. 19.
[463] Ibid.
[464] Frankopan, *Call from the East*, pp. 46-56.

meeting with John near Antioch in 1138.[465] Whether he was let go by Mas'ud or merely escaped once more is unknown, but either way, Mas'ud appears to have kept his options always open throughout this period, as John sought to clear up the mess created by his brother's betrayal, and from there to advance the empire's position in Anatolia.

The imperial army with its Turkish allies therefore marched to the citadel of Gangra, located south of the mountain pass to Kastamon; likely thinking that with Gangra seized Kastamon could be surrounded and easily taken afterward.[466] Our Greek narrative sources both tell us that Mohammed then carried out a diplomatic coup by winning Mas'ud back over to his side, "with letters, amongst other things," and that the Turkish troops with John left the encampment outside Gangra in the middle of the night, making this at least the third betrayal John had suffered in Anatolia.[467]

No mention is made of what John did to the hostages, though he was apparently furious and keen to chase the Turks down immediately, but was persuaded to stay by "some monks who chanced to be present" according to Kinnamos, who tells us the monks contended that he only had to be brave and he would prevail against Gangra.[468] The emperor then assaulted the citadel, but (perhaps unsurprisingly considering Gangra's natural defences) was repulsed and forced to retreat to Lopadion on the Rhyndakos to overwinter, where he was close to the frontier and could receive dispatches from Constantinople and the rest of the

[465] Prodromos notes in an encomium that he visited all the holy sites in Palestine as a pilgrim, spending a lot of his own money to bring water in channels to the Monastery of St John Prodromos on the Jordan to alleviate pilgrims' thirst. *Prodromos*, XXXX.
[466] *JK*, p. 14; *NC*, p. 19.
[467] Ibid. Quotation from Tr: *NC*, p. 13.
[468] *JK*, p. 14, p. 21.

empire easily by river.[469] Whether Kinnamos sought here to demonstrate John's piety in that he listened to the monks despite his desire to deal with his treacherous allies, whether this was a real occurrence that was the genuine reason why he made the assault after consulting the monks, or indeed whether this just explained away a tactical error, it was certainly true that John could not have laid siege to Gangra over the winter. Indeed even at Lopadion Kinnamos tells us there was hunger as John kept the army together, likely because he was expecting to overwinter in reconquered lands, or disperse for the winter, and so had not stored provisions there for his unexpected retreat, and so a gamble on a direct assault had in fact been his only option if he was not just to withdraw, having done nothing before winter set in.[470] Choniates does not even mention the incident, conforming to his usual practice of preserving the image of John as the perfect emperor by simply omitting incidents where John was not an immediate success, merely saying "and henceforth the Romans met with little success in this campaign" – a line that conveys a great deal if there was nothing good to say about the remaining military operations. [471]

This incident again demonstrates how the personal relations of the leading figures could change the outcome of a campaign immediately, as well as how flawed the chronology gleaned from reading one of the chronicles in isolation can be, as Choniates' and Kinnamos' description of two or three campaigns becomes five when these sources are compared with each other and Michael the Syrian's account. For this fifth and final campaign in the region however, John was finally able to secure Paphlagonia despite the continuous setbacks suffered at the hands of his betrayers.

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[469] Ibid. c.f. K. Belke, *Paphlagonien und Honorias*, *TIB* 9 (Vienna, 1996), pp. 196-9.
[470] Ibid.
[471] *NC*, p. 19, p. 13.

The Final Paphlagonian Campaign and the Siege of Gangra

Having stewed during the winter over these new setbacks – both losing his ally and having been repulsed from Gangra – Choniates was likely putting it mildly when he says that John "engaged Mohammed once again in battle, but now even more vigorously" when he returned to Paphlagonia in 1135.[472] Kinnamos and Choniates here give what seem to be different parts of the narrative, as aside from the easy recapture of Kastamon and the more trying capture of Gangra they give few overlapping details of this campaign.

From Kinnamos we learn that Kastamon was regained "by agreement", and that on John's arrival at Gangra the Turks there did not surrender because they were expecting relief from Turkish forces gathering near the Rhyndakos. These forces had however dispersed over the winter, and so Gangra surrendered when this became evident.[473] Choniates here mentions how the Turks were unwilling to negotiate but not why, and that John first took the surrounding area before setting up his camp.[474]

In contrast to Kinnamos, Choniates does go into detail concerning a sustained artillery bombardment that John ordered as his main tactic to take the city. He first attacked the citadel, but unsurprisingly considering its height, strength and the will of the defenders he made no progress against it.[475] He then had to switch tactics and targets to "the houses which could be seen from the hilltops on which the Romans were camped", killing those within and thus rendering it "no longer safe to walk the streets nor to remain indoors", a brutal tactic of targeting 'non-combatants'

[472] Ibid.
[473] *JK*, p. 15, p. 21.
[474] *NC*, p. 20.
[475] Ibid.

far more familiar to us in the modern era.[476] This brutality was to have the desired effect however, as on account of this, and the prior death of the ruler of Gangra (possibly the emir Alp Arslan who was captured by John in his previous Kastamon campaign and exhibited in the triumph), the Turks surrendered the city to him, and John "expelled the Turkish hordes" and posted a garrison of two thousand troops before returning to Constantinople.[477] Choniates' narrative does then continue into the future, saying that Gangra was in fact to fall to the Turks once more when "the emperor's attention was diverted with other grave issues". This unusual break from omitting John's failures could well be down to Choniates' personal experiences during the sack of Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade.[478] As one who had experienced first hand what a conflict that targeted non-combatants was like during the horrors of the fall of the Queen of Cities, recounting the deliberate targeting of civilians by even Choniates' paragon of all emperors, would for Choniates be a reason to show God's judgement upon such acts by having it undone in short order; this trope became more common in Choniates' narrative with each emperor as the *taxis* of the world broke down.[479] In John's defence, a siege may not have been a viable option due to the cisterns to be found at Gangra even today, demonstrating why an assault was necessary.

These divergent accounts are not mutually exclusive, as both sets of events could have happened, and this could merely be a case where Choniates had more information. Adding to our knowledge though is a lengthy poem by Prodromos that

[476] Ibid. pp. 20-1; see Chapter Eight; Glatz and Matthews, *Project Paphlagonia*, p. 191.
[477] Ibid.
[478] Ibid.
[479] Ibid: Choniates personal experiences are recounted on p. 328, while his lament for the city makes up most of the last quarter of his work.

has a faint echo of a Homeric tragedy about it as it echoes the *Iliad*, or indeed Aeschylus' *The Persians*. [480]

The poem opens by corroborating Michael the Syrian's chronology of three separate Kastamon campaigns (and thus five expeditions) – mentioning how John was "rushing violently upon the east, face to face with evildoers" when "insufferable pain blunts the glorious assault" when John's beloved wife the empress Eirene/Piroska had died.[481] Despite his mourning, John was required to hurry to Gangra, wishing to seize it as "the sun longs to shine."[482] Prodromos here reveals that the lord of Gangra, we assume the emir Alp Arslan mentioned in his previous poem, had "passed away, unmourned by his wife" who was now "the barbarian queen of our sons and daughters."[483] Here then is our first piece of new information, for though Choniates had disclosed that the lord of Gangra had died, he does not mention who took over the defence of Kastamon following this. Her name does not appear anywhere in the poem, but she is presented in great detail first as a savage enemy, and then at her moment of defeat as a noble queen.

At first she is contrasted with the purity of the Virgin Mary as "a raving mad bitch grinding her teeth," and when John sent "his finest men" as ambassadors, demanding that she surrender the city, she laughed and defied them. [484] She is described as a female who puts forth the strength of a man, and willingly embraces the joys of battle rather than surrendering to John. She declares that she will not

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[480] *Prodromos*, VIII.
[481] "ἀντολίηνδ᾽ἐπόρουσας ἐναντιβίους κακὰ ῥέξων"; "ὡς δέ τευ ἄλγος ἄλαστον ἀπήμβλυνε φαίδιμον ὁρμήν". Ibid. VIII, lines 8 and 11 respectively, death and her funeral being mentioned in lines 11-17
[482] "πρὸ δ᾽ἠελίου λίπεν αὐγάς", Ibid. VIII, line 24.
[483] "ὥς οἱ ἄνασσε δάμαρ φθιμένοιο ἀγοῖο, βαρβαρίδων βασίλεια ἄμ᾽υἱέσι καὶ θυγάτρεσσιν", Ibid. VIII, lines 25-6.
[484] "κούρην δ᾽ὑλάασκεν ἄνασσαν, παρθένον ἀγνοτόκειαν, ὁμοστράτηγον ἄνακτος, λυσσήτειρα κύων, ὀλοοὺς δ᾽ὑποτέτριγ᾽ὀδόντας", Ibid. VIII, lines 45-7; idem, lines 27-35 respectively.

yield as she sits secure in a lofty citadel with well-armed soldiers, and John is without allies.[485]

Prodromos then relates that these words did not alarm or anger John, despite their arrogance, in direct opposition to our narrative accounts, though he then glosses over what happens next, picking up the narrative again when John returns from Lopadion to take first Kastamon then Gangra.[486] Moving swiftly on from the failed assault to the subsequent victory would naturally be in Prodromos' and John's interest for its effect on those members of the court who were not present listening to the contemporary version of events. The only allusion to Mas'ud's defection may be the Lady's taunt that John is "without allies." Naturally Kinnamos could be highlighting John's anger as part of his possible presentation of John as less than his son Manuel, as Stephenson believes, and it could be fabricated, though any ruler would surely have been incensed by the desertion of his allies on the eve of battle, but either way the account has been adapted to John's benefit by Prodromos.[487] Whatever the truth, we can certainly see that Prodromos is presenting John here in the best possible light, even as he then presents the Lady of Gangra as an ambiguous figure who is both truly inimical to the empire, and yet a worthy enemy for John despite her being a heathen and a woman.

Staying true to the chronology of Kinnamos and Choniates, Prodromos then relates that in the spring the emperor first returned to Kastamon, on which he unleashed all the might of imperial siege engines: penthouses, tortoises, miners, "wall-destroying machines, a hail of rocks."[488] This deadly barrage was maintained for three days before the Turks surrendered and opened the gates, a description that

[485] Ibid. VIII, lines 36-44.
[486] Ibid. VIII, lines 51-7.
[487] Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, pp. 207-8.
[488] "μήχεα ὠλεσίτειχα, χαλαζοβόλει δέ τε πέτρους" *Prodromos*, VIII, line 63.

makes Kinnamos' statement that the city was taken "by agreement" seem a very dark simplification that demonstrates Kinnamos' occasional minimisation of John's achievements.[489] Following this, he takes council, and after consideration he leaves behind any soldiers who cannot travel, and though he sets up his banner underneath the walls of Gangra, he also sends his men all around the countryside, with Prodromos using the vivid simile that: "as the hare is gulped down as it is seized by the hounds, so will the fleeing Persians be seized by the sons of Ausones."[490] This confirms Choniates' reference to John taking the surrounding area first, as he did on the previous campaign to secure the entire region.[491] Prodromos then outlines a simile-heavy description of an assault upon the lower city, evoking the image of rocks and arrows falling like flour upon the city.[492] Having taken the lower city, the siege engines were turned on the walls of the citadel as well as civilian houses (confirming Choniates' description of events), at which point the Lady of Gangra is alleged to have hired an assassin to disguise himself as a fugitive, get close to John and kill him with a blade – only for him to be wounded by an arrow, an outcome which foiled this last gamble.[493] At this point she gives a speech on how she will be a sacrifice for her people, becoming a slave so that they might live; she shaves her hair and puts dust upon her head, descends to the city to surrender to John, who goes to the cathedral to celebrate his victory, and is then acclaimed by his troops as being the only true equal of Alexander for his victories.[494] The final fate of the Lady goes unmentioned as John returns to Constantinople in late 1135, but the epic scope of Prodromos' tale presents these events in the most dramatic way possible,

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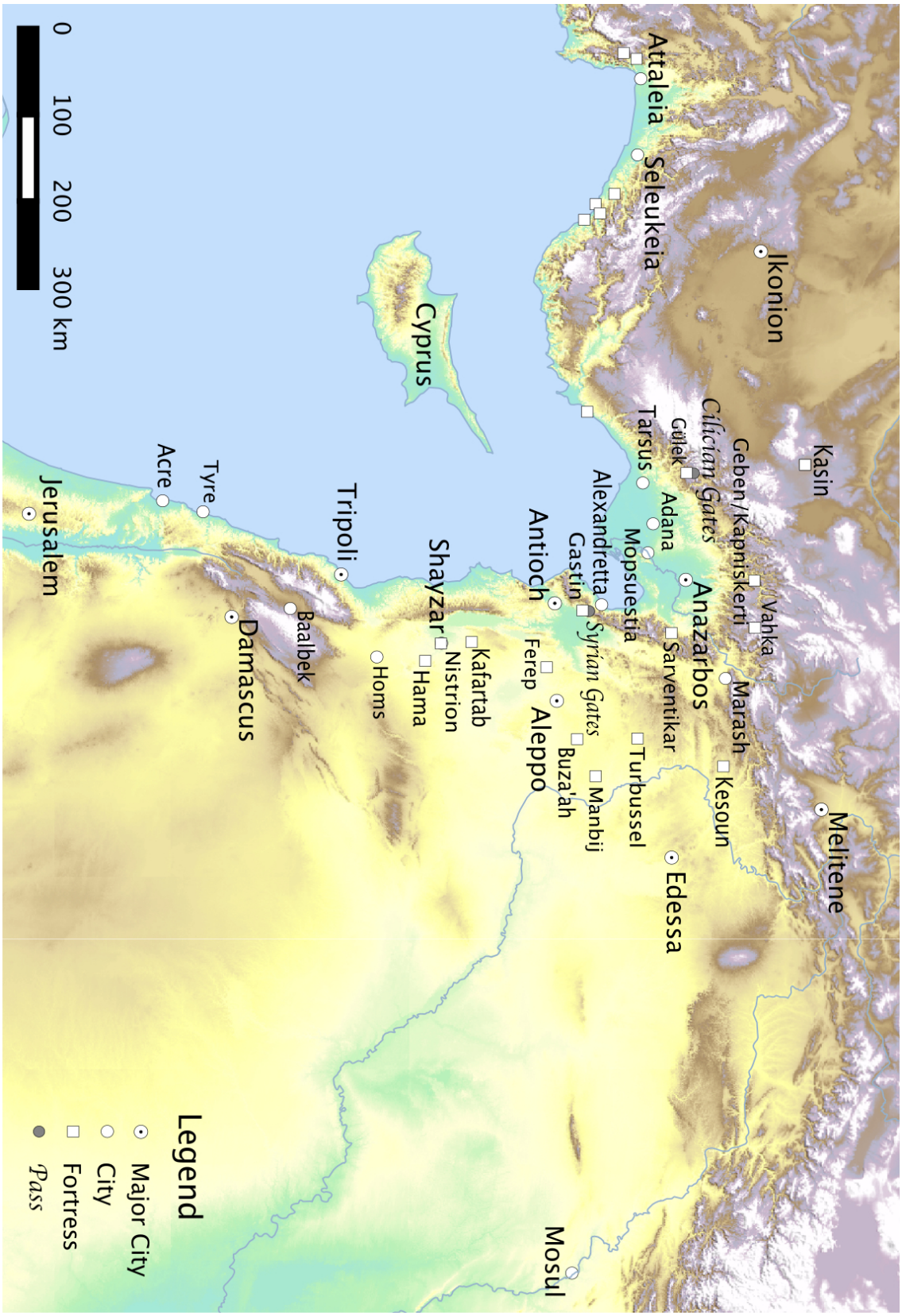
[489] *JK*, p. 15, p. 21.
[490] "ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς δασύπουν κεκαφηότα κύνες ἕλοντο, ὣς ἄρα καὶ φυγάδας Πέρσας ἕλον Αὔσονες υἱοί", *Prodromos*, VIII, lines 93-4.
[491] *NC*, p. 20.
[492] See images at end of section; *Prodromos*, VIII, lines 123-46.
[493] Ibid. VIII, lines 176-230.
[494] Ibid. VIII, lines 249-63 and 285-92 respectively.

justifying both John's heroism as ruler and reason for the campaign to the court at home.

Such a presentation would have been particularly important in the capital at this time, as contemporaneous with the start of Isaac's exile we have a number of Prodromos' poems encouraging the emperor to stay in Constantinople.[495] John had spent almost his entire time in the field countering the Danishmendid threat through multiple Paphlagonian campaigns, and only with the death of Ghazi did the province look secure. This did not last however, as Ghazi's death not only led to a four-sided civil war between the three sons of Ghazi and Mas'ud, but also resulted in a multi-sided conflict including the empire, Armenian Cilicia, and a number of more local forces from nomadic Turks to Greek- and Latin-speaking outposts. With the situation in such a constant state of flux, it is unsurprising that one of the parties would seek to gain advantage by seizing imperial territory, and such a strike was to come from Prince Leon of Armenian Cilicia, a strike that John decided to counter with a full invasion.

The events of 1130-35 were shaped by a combination of Isaac's betrayal, Gabras' rebellion and Mas'ud's treachery, together with the death of empress Piroska-Eirene, the illness of John and his heir, and the dynamic between the sons of Ghazi. This was an era where the personal, domestic situational politics of leading figures shaped events far more than any other factor. As 1136 began however, John could take initiatives unconstrained by the primacy of domestic politics again, leading to his great eastern campaign to Cilicia and Syria.

[495] See Chapter Nine for full analysis of these poems.



Map Five: Cilicia and the Levant

Chapter Seven

The Great Eastern Campaign for Cilicia and Syria

John's expedition to the east from 1136-1139 was among the more ambitious endeavours of his reign: an endeavour whose objectives have been much debated by scholars. The large volume of sources available has led to conflicting accounts and thus interpretations that are often further complicated by the conflation of this campaign with John's second expedition east. Each expedition had its own individual context, and John's goals must be seen as an evolving set of priorities as each stage of the three-year campaign presented new opportunities and challenges.

The primary cause of this campaign was that John had for a long time had motive with the treaty of Devol still outstanding, and with his western provinces settled and Anatolia in chaos at the death of Ghazi, he now had opportunity to press his claims to Cilicia and Syria in person. As before, his strategy consisted of using military force to subdue local client rulers such that he could then use those rulers to supplement his army for further campaigns.

This period more than any other demonstrates how the entire narrative of John's reign can change when not only the contemporary court orations on this campaign, but also Latin, Arabic and Armenian chronicles are included. All of these must be studied with their own caveats. Beginning with the Latin sources: while Orderic Vitalis died in 1142 and thus his account ends in 1141, William of Tyre wrote at the end of the century; both have as one of their key objectives a determination to convince Christians to work together so as to secure the Holy Land. As such, any act that unites Christians and takes the fight to the Saracens is praiseworthy. However they are also pro-Latin in outlook and mistrust the "Greek"

for being too close to the Saracens (Orderic much more so than William), and thus have the potential to undermine the Christian cause. Orderic thus presents a schizophrenic picture of a cowardly emperor who is worthily beaten in battle by the brave Raymond, but it is still a worthy event when Raymond submits to him in order to end forty years of war amongst Christians.[496] William of Tyre by contrast holds him up as the model of what a Greek, and indeed a Christian, should be like, making him a paragon by which both contemporaries and their successors should be measured, and thus is almost over complimentary – similar to Choniates' own portrayal.[497] The opinions of the Armenian sources are more easily divided by date, as the contemporary Matthew of Edessa is very complimentary about John, seeing him as a deliverer from both Latin and Turkish oppressors, while the continuation by Gregory the Priest and the *Chronicle* of Smbat Sparapet were written under the nascent kingdom of Armenian Cilicia, and so John becomes the oppressor himself.[498] The Arabic sources meanwhile are the mirror to the Latin ones, and they seek to demonstrate that when Muslims unite they can throw back the Crusaders; some of these sources are however written a full century later, and though they may be based on lost contemporary histories, should be treated with care. Our best source is Ibn al-Athir, who almost certainly wrote at the end of the twelfth century, but this text (along with a separate history of the Atabegs of Mosul) was written expressly to glorify the Zengids due to Ibn al-Athir's gratitude for the favour shown his family by the dynasty.[499] His account therefore contains the best detail due to his family's close proximity to events, but is the most likely to contain omissions and alterations. Ibn al-Adim shares many of the same pro-Islam biases, but due to

[496] Orderic Vitalis, pp. 502-9.
[497] William of Tyre, 15.1, pp. 674-5.
[498] *Matthew of Edessa*, pp. 6, 225; *Gregory the Priest*, pp. 241-2; *Smbat Sparapet*, pp. 9-37.
[499] Ibn al-Athir, pp. 2-3.

writing a history of Aleppo does not share Ibn al-Athir's eulogising of Zengi, causing him to point out moments where Zengi let down the Muslim cause.[500] Between these diverse accounts and the Greek sources however, a new history is possible, and with it new explanations for what John was doing during this great expedition.

Its origin lay in the turn of the year 1135 to 1136, which saw two major developments in the wake of John's successful Paphlagonian campaign: the arrival of an embassy from Antioch, and an incursion into Pamphyleia, specifically the siege of Seleukeia by the forces of Leon of Armenian Cilicia.

The Antiochene Proposal, the Siege of Seleukeia and Western Diplomacy

There is no particular month given by Kinnamos for the arrival of the Antiochene ambassadors in 1135, but if they came by ship then John is likely to have met with them late in the year after he had returned to Constantinople from his final Paphlagonian campaign, raising the possibility that the embassy could in fact have been sent earlier and been awaiting the emperor's return, or it is even possible that he received them while on campaign. The ambassadors proposed marriage between Constance (heir to the principality of Antioch after the death of Bohemond II at the hands of Ghazi's forces back in 1130) to John's youngest son Manuel, and with that marriage the absorption of the principality into the empire.[501] Since Tancred's refusal to hand over Antioch on the death of Bohemond I as the treaty of Devol promised, the principality had been in rebellion against the emperor, as

[500] Ibn al-Adim, "Chronique d'Alep," *RHC Historiens orientaux* (vol. III, Paris, 1884), p. 674.
[501] *JK*, p. 16.

Bohemond had sworn to both John and Alexios.[502] An opportunity to secure the imperial claim to Antioch by marriage would certainly have appealed to John, and with the empire's western provinces secure and the sons of Ghazi at war with each other, he was as free as he could have wished to secure his claim. Even before the year was out the emperor appears to have started preparations for an extensive expedition to the east, on the one hand gathering together a large army of diverse peoples and provisions at which William of Tyre marvelled, and on the other engaging in extensive diplomatic initiatives in the Latin west.[503]

These initiatives were primarily focused on Italy, with the aim of aligning John with the Italian maritime republics, the Papacy and the German emperor against the expanding power of the Normans of southern Italy. Our knowledge of these events is enhanced through German and Italian chronicles, such as the *Annalista Saxo*, the "Annales Erphesfurdenses," southern Italian chronicles such as Falco of Benevento and Alexander of Telese, as well as the Venetian and Pisan Annals. The annals mainly consist of collections of dates and facts, and though it can be deduced that sources such as the *Annalista Saxo* drew on over 100 other documents, rarely are attributions made.[504] As such, these sources represent our most effective window into contemporary events, as they were likely compiled in the 1120s and 40s, but precise, secure information remains elusive. The southern Italian Falco and Alexander go into great detail, but each has a natural bias against and for the Normans respectively, as Falco was a papal scribe and increasingly takes the papal position of seeing the Normans, and Roger in particular, as barbarians as

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[502] See nos. 33-5, Chapter One. D. A. Parnell, "John II Comnenus and Crusader Antioch," *Crusades - Medieval Worlds in Conflict*, ed. T. Madden, J. Naus and V. Ryan (Farnham, 2010), p. 151.
[503] William of Tyre, 14.24, p. 662.
[504] K. Nass, *Die Reichschronik des Annalista Saxo und die sächsische Geschichtsschreibung im 12. Jahrhundert* (Hanover, 1996), pp. 179-207.

his chronicle continues, while Alexander was commissioned by Roger II of Sicily's half-brother to write his almost hagiographical account.[505] Between these two contrasting sources a great deal of information can be gleaned, though neither concern themselves much with John and the empire and so evidence must often be inferred with reference to other sources.

1130 had seen the death of Pope Honorius and the beginning of a schism in the western church (as Pope Innocent II competed for recognition with Anacletus II) that had transformed the agreement the papacy and the western emperor had made at the Concordat of Worms, into a "defensive alliance against the Norman monarch," which had led to an expedition by Emperor Lothar against Roger of Sicily in 1132.[506] Prior to the schism the papacy had needed the Normans as allies against the German emperors and their own rebellious populace, but with the end of the investiture controversy through the concordat, it was the Normans who emerged as the primary threat to papal lands and power.[507] John sent an embassy to Lothar in 1135, and another to Pisa, containing Venetian envoys as well, which according to the *Annalista Saxo* were all aimed at an alliance and friendship between the empire

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[505] Alexander of Telese: *Alexandri Telesini Abbatis Ystoria Rogerii Regis Sicilie Calabrie Atque Apulie*, ed. L. de Nava, comm. D. Clementi (Rome, 1991); Falco of Benevento: Falcone di Benevento, *Chronicon Beneventanum*, ed. E. D'Angelo (Florence, 1996); V. von Falkenhausen, "The South Italian Sources," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 132 (2007), pp. 95-121; G.A. Loud, "The Genesis and Context of the Chronicle of Falco of Benevento", *Anglo-Norman Studies* XV (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 177-98. Falco in particular was an eyewitness to many events, and his change in tone concerning Roger reflects how non-Norman contemporaries interpreted these events. There is also Romuald of Salerno, who is less useful for John's reign and has a Salernitan bias to everything, but is useful for corroboration. See G. A. Loud and T.E.J. Wiedemann, (ed), "The Chronicle of Romuald of Salerno," *The History of the Tyrants of Sicily by "Hugo Falcandus"* (Manchester, 1998), pp. 51-3; idem "History Writing in the Twelfth-Century Kingdom of Sicily," *Chronicling History: chroniclers and historians in medieval and Renaissance Italy*, ed. S. Dale, A.W. Lwin and D.J. Osheim (Pennsylvania, 2007), pp. 29-54.

[506] J. G. Rowe, "The Papacy and the Greeks (1122-1153)", *Church History Volume* 28 (1959) Part 1, p. 115; G. A. Loud, "The Papacy and the Rulers of Southern Italy", p. 116.

[507] G. A. Loud, "The Papacy and the Rulers of Southern Italy", *The Society of Norman Italy*, ed. G. A. Loud and A. Metcalfe (Leiden, 2002), pp. 154-62.

and Lothar against Roger, the so-called tyrant of Sicily.[508] Such an alliance would keep Roger busy in Italy, and thus unable to attack imperial territories while John was in the east, and would likely have had the secondary objective of smoothing over any qualms the western powers may have had over John's annexation of Antioch.[509]

Early 1136 saw both the Antiochene proposal and this diplomatic activity being followed by news of the siege of Seleukeia in Pamphyleia.[510] John had been occupied in Paphlagonia since 1130, and so it is perhaps no surprise that the ambitious Leon, who had slowly been attempting to add the Cilician plains and coastlines to his existing mountain domains, would seek to take advantage of the Emperor's preoccupation in northern Anatolia to take this strategic fortress on the coastal road.[511] Unfortunately for Leon, with Gangra conquered, and Mohammed, his two brothers and Mas'ud at war, John was at liberty to meet this attack head on, marshal his already gathering army and make for the southern coast that very year, causing Leon's forces to retreat.[512] Winter of 1136 therefore saw John on the south coast at Attaleia, taking ship there according to al-Athir in response to the calls for aid from the Latins, where he was likely to have received replies from his original

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[508] "pacem et amicitiam et auxilium contra Rokkerum tirannum, qui partem Romani imperii et terram Grecorum nimis vexevarat," Annalista Saxo, *Die Reichschronik des Annalista Saxo*, ed. K. Nass (Hanover, 2006), pp. 601-2; Bernardo Maragone, *Annales Pisani*, VI Part 2 (Bologna, 1936), p. 10; "Annales Erphesfurdenses", *MGH (S) rerum Germanicarum VI*, ed. H. Grundmann (Munich, 1969), p. 540; R-J. Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, 1096-1204, (Oxford, 1993), pp. 113-14; dating for the *Annalista Saxo*: Nass (1996), pp. 179-207.
[509] Parnell, "John II Comnenus and Crusader Antioch," p. 152.
[510] *JK*, p. 16; *NC*, p. 21.
[511] R. Edwards, *The Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia* (Washington DC, 1987), pp. 221-9
[512] *Ibid*; the court sources make it plain that John did have to fight through Pamphyleia and not merely travel through it: *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην τὸν Κομνηνὸν καὶ πορφυρογέννητον ἐπὶ τοῖς κατὰ Συρίαν ἀγῶσιν αὐτοῦ," p. 247; Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα κῦρ Ἰωάννην τὸν Κομνηνόν," *Orationes et Epistolae*, pp. 54-5.

embassies to the west, and in turn sent another embassy back to Lothar that arrived in 1137, bringing gifts.[513]

The *Annales Erphesfurdenses* (of uncertain date, but likely written after the *Annalista Saxo*) note that this embassy was concerned that Sicily had seized "Africa" from the empire, in addition to Apulia and Calabria, and had attacked the Venetians.[514] Lilie believes this note to be a possible misunderstanding of "Imperium Romanum," as both empires had claims on southern Italy, and that Africa is included merely to make Roger seem more of threat (and thus more glory to Lothar for defeating him).[515] Though this interpretation could be correct, the source does reflect the contemporary political situation, whereby Venice under its new doge Pietro Polani found itself once more in alignment with the empire against the Norman threat. John's claims on Italy would have also seemed particularly threatened due to the contemporaneous siege of Naples by Roger, as Sergios VII of Naples was the last ruler in the region who still used Byzantine titulature, and whose chronicle was still dated according to John's reign, and so was the last bastion of any form of imperial influence in the peninsula.[516] Coupled with that, Roger's conquests in Africa could well have contributed to a fear of further Norman

[513] Ibn al-Athir, p. 337; "Annales Erphesfurdenses," p. 540; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 114.
[514] "Annales Erphesfurdenses," p. 540.
[515] Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 114.
[516] Alexander also mentions the duke unsuccessfully attempting to gain aid from Pisa, and so these alliance structures were not only bilateral with the empire. *Alexandri Telesini*, Book III, 19-Book IV, 6, pp. 147-60; Falco of Benevento, pp. 176-8; *Regii neapolitani archive* (vol. 5., 1858), nos. 457-8, 462, 464-7, and all subsequent entries mention John, and names Sergios as: "domini sergii in dei nomine et minentissimus consul et dux atque domini gratia magister militum et imperialia protosevasto", which though mainly ancestral titulature dating back to antiquity, the use of imperial *Protosebastos* only dates back to Alexios who granted his father John VI the title in return for an alliance against the Normans, no. 580; von Falkenhausen, "The South Italian Sources," p. 107.

expansion and so would have been equally troubling to John as well as the Papacy, the maritime republics and the German Empire.[517]

Lothar responded favourably to the embassy, as did his successor Conrad, sending Bishop Anselm of Havelberg to Constantinople as the German ambassador for the remainder of John's reign. Through him, diplomatic initiatives such as the betrothal of Conrad's sister-in-law Bertha and religious initiatives such as theological discussions with Niketas of Nikomedeia were channelled.[518] Though Dunkle has demonstrated that the written account of these dialogues cannot be an accurate transcription due to the impossiblility of certain sources being available to Anselm in 1136, Anselm's portrayal of eastern Christians and their theology as reconcilable with the west suggests a favourable outcome to his embassy and warming relations as a result of his visit at least.[519] Pisa also received 200 silk pallia from John plus a renewal of the privileges granted to them by Alexios in 1111, and Lilie dates the expansion of Venetian trade privileges to include Crete and Cyprus to 1137 as well, which together with the subsidies for Lothar demonstrates that John spent considerable resources on this alliance.[520]

Fortunately for John, he was successful in this diplomatic activity, freeing him from paying close attention to the west and allowing the expedition east. Pisa sacked Amalfi in 1135, and from late 1136-1137 Lothar led an expedition into

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[517] H. Houben, *Roger II of Sicily A Ruler between East and West* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 78-9.
[518] J. T. Lees, *Anselm of Havelberg*, (Leiden, 1998), pp. 40-7 and 164-282; Anselm von Havelberg, *Anticimenon*, ed. and comm. H. J. Sieben (Münster, 2010); J. M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 1986), p. 1802.
[519] B. Dunkle, "Anselm of Hevelberg's use of authorities in his account of the Filoque" *BZ* 10 (2012), pp. 695-722; also "Introduction" of Anselm von Havelberg, *Anticemenon*, pp. 13-42.
[520] Pisa: Maragone (1936), p. 10; Venice: Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, nos. 95-98, 124; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, pp. 113-7; Papageorgiou, *John II Komnenos*, p. 20.

southern Italy.[521] The German emperor relieved the siege of Naples and conquered most of Apulia including Bari, possibly supported by Byzantine troops as well as subsidies, implying John thought the campaign important enough to commit soldiers as well as funds.[522] Lothar's luck then turned, as he fell out with the pope over Apulia, his army revolted, and in spite of impaling more than 500 men to restore discipline he was forced to retreat, according to Kinnamos, and upon his return north he died in the Alps on the 4th December.[523] This allowed Roger to retake all of southern Italy and Sergios of Naples swore his allegiance to him to prevent another siege.[524] Though naturally a blow to the alliance as a whole, these events were not against John's interests: had Roger been soundly defeated it would have led to the possibility of Lothar or the Papacy being able to enforce their claims to southern Italy while John was otherwise occupied. This weakened all parties, kept the situation in southern Italy open for exploitation by John in the future and, most importantly, kept all of these powers occupied while John travelled east.

However, John's good fortune was not to hold on all fronts, as even before he entered Cilicia he learned that Constance had been married to Raymond of Poitiers.[525] Though Kinnamos tells us the proposal had come from the "principal personages in the land," other nobles evidently did not relish the prospect of absorption into the empire, and so conspired with Fulk of Jerusalem to marry Constance to Raymond.[526] William of Tyre obliquely refers to this proposal when

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[521] Falco of Benevento, pp. 175-206; *Annalista Saxo*, pp. 602-11; Romuald of Salerno, *Chronicon*, ed. G. Andenna (Salerno, 2001), p. 223; *JK*, p. 90; the most comprehensive account is presented in R. Rogers, *Latin Siege Warfare in the Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 116-8.
[522] Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 38. The reference to Byzantine troops as well as subsidies in Lothar's army is interpreted by Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, p. 210.
[523] Ibid.
[524] "Confestim magister militum Sergius civitatis Neapolitanae ad suam convertiture fidelitatem" Falco of Benevento, p. 196.
[525] *JK*, p. 16.
[526] *JK,* p. 16*,* p. 22.

he relates that John was indignant that this marriage, and thus the disposition of Antioch, had been arranged without his knowledge or consent.[527] The reason for this is likely to involve the internal politics of Antioch between Alice, Bohemond's widow, and her opponents, and therefore there is every likelihood the proposal came from her before she was politically outmanoeuvred, though no source states this explicitly.[528]

The withdrawal of this proposal has caused Harris to believe John was therefore motivated by revenge for his eastern campaign, remarking on John's "fury" at the failed marriage as a key reason for his expedition against Antioch.[529] Our sources agree, however, that John had been preparing for this expedition for most of the year, as the diplomatic activity attests even if the account of military preparations is to be doubted, and so vengeance for a spurned proposal should hardly be seen as a major reason for this campaign. The expedition could well have had enforcing the marriage as a goal, but as John and Manuel would prove with their expeditions to Syria, the marriage was but one way for the Emperor to legitimise suzerainty over the Crusader lords, and there were a great many things drawing John to Syria while Anatolia was secured by Danishmendid infighting.

Indeed, there is one source that tells us that John may also have embarked on this expedition specifically to fight the Muslims of Syria as well. There is a letter from a Jewish doctor in Seleukeia to his relatives in Cairo, dated to the 21st July 1137, while John would have been nearing Antioch (indeed the letter states that it

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[527] William of Tyre, 14.24, p. 662.
[528] William of Tyre casts multiple aspersions on her character, claiming she attempted to disinherit her daughter and rule herself, though we have only William's word for any of this information. Full discussion of Alice of Antioch is made by N. Hodgeson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land in Historical Narrative* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 181-2.
[529] J. Harris, *Byzantium and the Crusades* (London, 2007), p. 82.

had already fallen, changing the dating given by William of Tyre).[530] In the same section mentioning, "they have already taken Antioch," the doctor reveals that he has asked "our commanders [unfortunately unidentified] to take along any medical books for me, from Aleppo or from Damascus, which might fall into their hands."[531] As well as demonstrating a great deal of patriotism for the imperial cause with the use of the term "our commanders," though it appears he had been honoured by local leaders, and was so prosperous that the letter is encouraging his relatives to leave Cairo and join him in the empire, this implies that John's commanders were already thinking about conquering Aleppo and Damascus. Naturally, this could well be nothing more than soldiers boasting to the doctor that of course they would bring him some books when they had conquered Aleppo and Damascus, or indeed they could have been under orders to imply John was only heading east to fight the heathens. Despite this, the possibility definitely exists that John had always intended to fight the Muslims of Syria, or indeed that he expected to make some sort of deal with Raymond, or finally that John intended to conquer as much as he could, and that a lot of options were on the table. Without more information we cannot be certain, but the probability of this merely being a 'revenge campaign' is very low.

John had motive on account of the the treaty of Devol, and opportunity due to Ghazi's death and the subsequent Anatolian chaos, and so by taking diplomatic steps to free himself from western concerns he could commit to a lengthy eastern campaign. In addition to there never having been a better time prior to 1137, the marriage proposal implied that at least some in Antioch favoured imperial suzerainty, his treacherous brother Isaac was still at large in either Cilicia, Antioch

[530] S. D. Goitein, "A Letter from Seleucia (Cilicia): Dated 21 July 1137," *Speculum* 39 (1964), pp. 298-303.
[531] Ibid. p. 300.

or Jerusalem, and Cilicia itself was ripe for the taking. 1137 would also have been particularly attractive for an eastern expedition for one further military reason: in late 1136 the region had been thrown into yet more chaos through the capture of Prince Leon of Cilicia by Raymond of Antioch.[532]

Cilicia in 1136-37: A Land in Chaos

Since the Turks had overrun much of Anatolia in the late eleventh century, Cilicia had become increasingly chaotic, a fact not so much related by our sources as proved by their disagreement as to who ruled different parts of it. With the establishment of the principality of Antioch, the Latins had claimed much of Cilicia and enforced their rule over the major cities, only to lose much of it to Thoros II.[533] Bohemond II had then attempted a reconquest in 1130, and Ghazi was called in by Leon, killing Bohemond, but Ghazi was unable to follow up this victory in force due to John's capture of Kastamon which brought Ghazi back north. Unsupported by Ghazi, Leon was however able to capture Mamistra, Tarsus and Adana in 1131, and add Sarventikar to his conquests in 1133, an important fortress that guarded the Amanus pass.[534] His hold over the territory was nevertheless weak, and our sources mention bandits and pirates in the region, in addition to enclaves of Turks, Latins, and people whom the Greek sources call "Isaurians" who were still loyal to

[532] Lilie has previously noted that Isaac may well have been a cause of this expedition, and has linked the marriage of Issac's son and Leon's daughter to Italikos' accusation that Leon had usurped imperial rights from John that had to be reclaimed. *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς," p. 255; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 110-1.

[533] There is a great deal of uncertainty who ruled what in this entire period – Thoros conquered Anazarbos c.1111, but sources disagree concerning whether it was previously owned by the Latins or the empire, or an independent lord who owed allegiance to neither. This uncertainty is typical of the period. *Matthew of Edessa*, pp. 200-19; *Smbat Sparapet*, pp. 38-53; J. Ghazarian, *The Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia during the Crusades The Integration of Cilician Armenians with the Latins* (Richmond, 2000), pp. 113-5; Edwards, *Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*, pp. 5-6. G. Dedeyan, *Les Arméniens entre Grecs, Musulmans et Croisés* (vols. I and II, Lisbon, 2003), pp. 593-614, 716-28 respectively.

[534] *Smbat Sparapet*, p. 53; William of Tyre, 13.27, pp. 623-4; Ghazarian, *Kingdom of Cilicia*, pp. 115-6; Edwards, *Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*, p. 6.

Constantinople.[535] Leon's fragile rule was tested as one of Raymond's first actions as the new Prince of Antioch was to renew Antiochene claims in the region, in alliance with Baldwin of Marash, one of the leading nobles of the County of Edessa and the previous ruler of Sarventikar. Despite this Leon was able to gain the support of Count Joscelin II of Edessa, his nephew by marriage, likely fearing he too would be forced to bow to Antioch, and together they defeated Raymond's forces.[536] In his triumph however, Leon consented to a personal meeting with Baldwin of Marash to agree a peace, during which he was treacherously seized and imprisoned in Antioch.

These events highlight the puzzle of who ruled what and when in Cilicia, which is a complex problem, and one that is both a historiographical and source issue. Armenian histories in particular tend to be over-teleological regarding the development of the Kingdom of Armenia later in the century, seeing its roots in this period, for which they find evidence in both Choniates and Armenian sources that were all written once said kingdom had become a reality. Furthermore some historians draw continuity from ancient precedents all the way to the modern Armenia, seeing any Armenian action as part of their move to nationhood.[537] Such a clear teleology is however untenable in the 1130s, with the region one of chaos and possibility, rather than an Armenian state in waiting.[538] Kinnamos does not mention who owned what, while William of Tyre tells us that Antioch had ruled the province

[535] See below for note regarding Isaurians.
[536] William of Tyre, 14.3, p. 635.
[537] *NC*, p. 21; *Smbat Sparapet*, p. 53; Nicolle, *Crusader Warfare*, pp. 161, 182; Ghazarian, *Kingdom of Cilicia*; Edwards, *Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*.
[538] R. Hovannisian and S. Payaslian, (ed), *Armenian Cilicia* (Mesa, 2008), pp. 1-93, with papers by R. Hovannisian and S. Payaslian, R. Hewsen, A. Bozoyan, G. Dédéyan and C. Mutafian respectively that all address this issue; Lilie expresses doubts, and thus along with the sources I support his view, Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 106. Dedeyan agrees with Lilie, and presents as many sides of the story as possible without passing clear judgement: Dedeyan, *Les Arméniens*, pp. 593-614.

undisputedly for forty years.[539] The contemporary Greek court sources merely evidence further confusion, chaos, and competing claims, as the rhetors of Constantinople seem to have had little idea as to who exactly governed what.[540] The only thing these sources and the later confusion reveal is that John's campaign was aptly timed to sweep this confusion away and restore Cilicia to his rule.

Indeed, the situation in Cilicia then disintegrated still further when Leon's three sons fell out in their father's absence, leading to the eldest, Constantine, being blinded by his brothers, until they too were also possibly captured.[541] Considering John had heard the news of Constance's marriage before he reached Cilicia, it is likely that the emperor was very well informed that Cilicia was now at its most vulnerable to any conqueror, and this was his chance to be that conqueror.

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[539] *JK*, pp. 16-17; "per annos quadraginta a principe Antiocheno sine calumpnia possessam," William of Tyre, 14.24, p. 663.

[540] Italikos' Oration on the campaign tells us that Tarsus was under the control of "Keltic barbarians" while Anazarbos was under the control of Armenians: *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς," p. 253. Prodromos' Oration mentions the defeated peoples of the whole campaign to include Italians, Syrians, Latins, Persians, "Isaurians and sorrowing sons of Kilikia" ("καὶ σὺν Ἰσαύροις τοῖς πικροῖς καὶ σὺν παισὶ Κιλίκων"), which though naturally including Syria as well as Cilicia, implies that there was a difference between "Isaurians" and the "sorrowing sons of Cilicia" that was not merely geographical: *Prodromos*, XI, lines 133-6. Indeed Kinnamos even calls this expedition John's "Isaurian wars": *JK*, p. 16. Basilakes also mentions John clearing the roads of bands of robbers, specifically "Skironas and Pitokamptes" in references to two mythological bandits who Theseus killed when he journeyed from Troezen to Athens: Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 56; Italikos also mentions clearing the roads and taming the mountains multiple times, implying a great deal of chaos, though in a more rhetorical way: *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς," pp. 247. Throughout the accounts, there are occasionally clues based on what name sources give to sites, such as the Armenian toponym Geben, used by Kinnamos amongst otherwise Greek toponyms, hinting strongly that this site was therefore Armenian: *JK*, p. 20; Edwards, *Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*, p. 129, n. 10.

[541] Ibid. 14.24, p. 663; *Smbat Sparapet*, p. 53; though Sparapet believes that the Antiochenes won the battle and then captured not only Leon but also Leon's other sons after Constantine was blinded. William of Tyre's account (used above) is seen as the more trustworthy, due to Sparapet's naming of the prince of Antioch as still being Bohemond, William's greater chronological proximity to the events, and indeed the circumstances surrounding Leon's release, as discussed below. Matthew does not mention these details: Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, pp. 103-8.

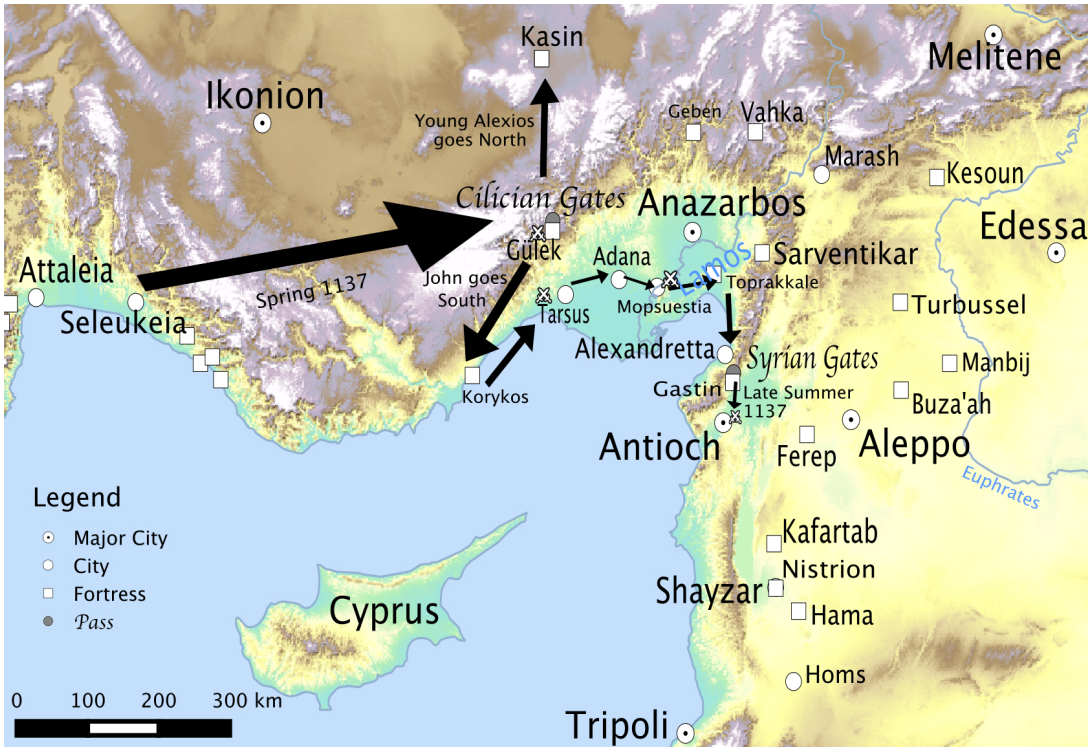

Fig. 15: Eastern Campaign, Spring/Summer 1137

The Conquest of Cilicia

Historians have traditionally portrayed John's campaign as an unparalleled success, with no army willing to meet the Emperor in the field, and only one siege, that of Anazarbos, of any real challenge, and that it was in Syria that the real test, and the real goal, lay.[542] Some of this speed was due to John's baggage and equipment being carried by ship, but even with this advantage a more careful reading of the sources reveals that it was not as easy as these dismissive accounts usually claim.[543] There are also clues as to why the province was loyal to John for the rest of his reign after being independent of the empire for so long. The contemporary court sources would no doubt have approved of these accounts, but

[542] Ghazarian, *Kingdom of Cilicia*, p. 116; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 37-8; Birkenmeier, *Development of the Komnenian Army*, pp. 48, 91-2; Parnell, "John II Comnenus and Crusader Antioch," p. 152; Lilie gives the most accurate account, though he omits the battle at the Cilician Gates related by Basilakes: Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, pp. 117-9.
[543] Ibn al-Athir, p. 337.

within the texts we see hints that it was not all completely straightforward. Equally, comparing the information in the three orations on this campaign by Prodromos, Basilakes and Italikos to Choniates, Kinnamos, Matthew and Smbat Sparapet, demonstrates that the narrative histories take considerable liberties with both the chronology and the events themselves, and thus are no more reliable than the court rhetors for the events of the campaign. As such, equal if not more weight should be given to the former sources.

Far from putting an uncontested army in the field, (for instance Choniates' account states that he encountered no resistance) John seems to have engaged in an immediate military action when bringing his army through the Cilician Gates (the modern Gülek Pass through the Taurus mountains**)**.[544] Despite its encasement in classical parallels and Choniates' account to the contrary, Basilakes' contemporary oration here provides information on both a siege and battle at the Gates that go unmentioned by any other source, aside from perhaps by allusion in the similarly contemporary orations of Prodromos and Italikos who mention other engagements in addition to the sieges described by the chroniclers.[545] Despite the rhetorical form, these contemporary rhetors are unlikely to have invented this engagement as Leon would hardly have left the main pass into Cilicia unguarded after his offensive and John's response, and indeed a fortress is located at the Gates in accordance with their descriptions that Leon would surely have garrisoned.

Basilakes compares the Cilician Gates to a greater reverse Thermopylai, whereby not merely 300 but a great number of assumedly Armenian enemies, threw

[544] *NC*, p. 21; Nicolle, *Crusader Warfare*, p. 190; See Map Five.
[545] Italikos specifically mentions "bringing down onto the plain from the heights of the mountains," in accordance with Basilakes' account, while Prodromos' only mentions battles in Isauria and Cilicia more generally. Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 56; Italikos, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," p. 249; *Prodromos*, XI.

stones down at John's army from high in the mountains, and from an unnamed fortress.[546] The oration then goes on to say that with the favour of God the enemy was led on to open ground where John's forces were able to destroy them, capturing the commander of the unnamed fortress in the process, and forcing its surrender. From its location at the Cilician Gates and its description as a very high castle, this fortress is likely to be Gülek Kalesi, which appears "like the nest of some prehistoric bird almost 1600m above sea level," some 2km southwest of the Gates.[547] If so, then this marked an auspicious opening for the campaign, as John had captured the Gates without a troublesome siege, though this was due to his skill and no small measure of luck, rather than lack of opposition, as the narratives of both the chroniclers and modern scholars have previously stated.

Fig. 16: Photo of the Cilician Gates from 1930, photo copyright Ahmet Ersungur.

[546] Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 56.
[547] Edwards, *Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*, pp. 138-40; the first record of this fortress (as Kuklak) is not until 1199, but as the obvious site to defend the pass the likelihood of a fortress existing before this date is strong, and even if not the site of it would be the natural place for the Armenians to place troops to ambush John; F. Hild and H. Hellenkemper, *Kilikien und Isaurien*, *TIB* 5.1 (Vienna, 1990), pp. 132 and 323-4.

Fig. 17: Fortress of Gülek atop the Cilician Gates, photo copyright Erhan Cirik.

Having taken the Cilician Gates, John's army advanced all but unopposed on the Cilician plain, and Choniates, Kinnamos and William of Tyre all relate the emperor making short work of capturing Tarsus, Adana and Mamistra before confronting his first real challenge at the siege of Anazarbos.[548] William of Tyre adds a generalised note that John seized cities, and fortified towns and castles of the

[548] Choniates does not mention Mopsuestia and has John capture Adana then Tarsus. Kinnamos gives the order of attack as Mopsuestia, Tarsus, then Adana, while William of Tyre mentions Tarsus, Adana then Mopsuestia: *NC*, pp. 21, 25; *JK*, p. 16; William of Tyre, 14.24, p. 663. Examining the geography, if John went eastwards then Tarsus, Adana and Mopsuestia as William describes would be the most logical, and indeed this follows the account of the court sources. See Map Five.

province nearby, while Italikos' oration adds some specifics. He relates four engagements prior to Tarsus: the capture of the port of Korykos, an incident where cavalry crossed the river Lamos, another where a place called Askara was overwhelmed with arrows, and finally John's (now thirty year old) co-Emperor Alexios seizing the acropolis of a certain Ankyra, which Gautier and Ramsay equate with the stronghold of Kasin on the Anatolian plain to the north of the Syrian gates.[549] Such a strike north onto the plain not only gave a hinterland to the newly reconquered region of the Cilician Gates, but also began to encircle Ikonion, drawing a noose around Mas'ud that John's later campaign in Cappadocia would seek to tighten.[550]

At the same time as John's advance across the Cilician plain over that spring and summer, news of his conquests reached Antioch. Accordingly, an alliance was made between the captive Leon of Cilicia and Raymond of Antioch to resist the emperor, on the conditions that Leon would hand back his conquests on the plain, that is Mamistra, Adana and Savantikar, along with 60,000 dahekans (gold or silver coins), leave his sons as hostages, and ally with Raymond against John.[551] Though Leon was released, whether he actually handed over these cities to Raymond or not before John conquered them in unknown, though it seems unlikely given the time scale even if he did mean to fulfil his promise. This is unclear in our sources. However, the lack of inclusion of Tarsus or Anazarbos in that list makes it plain that

[549] This is on account of the Arabs also referring to a town by that name in the region in 776. A reference to the Ankyra in Galatia or Phrygia makes no sense in context. *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," p. 251, n 28-32; Ramsay, *Geography of Asia Minor*, p. 356; Korykos in particular is the major fortress on the road between Seleukeia and Tarsus: Edwards, *Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*, pp. 161-7; *TIB* 5.1, p. 191.

[550] See Map Six and Chapter Eight. Though seemingly far to the north from what is traditionally assumed by historians to be the limits of John's campaign, Kasin is on a flat, direct road only an hour's travel by car from the Gates, and so is geographically easier to travel to then many of John's conquests on this expedition do far despite the distance as the crow flies, and would be important in securing those conquests by controlling both ends of the mountain pass from Cilicia to the Anatolian plain.

[551] *Smbat Sparapet*, p. 53.

these were clearly in the hands of the Franks and Armenians respectively, which is noted in the contemporary court sources.[552]

John asked the inhabitants of Tarsus to surrender, calling on their shared Christianity as well as notifying them they were surrounded, but on their refusal he brought up siege weapons. A barrage of missiles convinced them to surrender, at which point John is said to have treated them well, making them allies, "ξύμμαχοι," and it seems Adana and Mamistra, located not far from each other then surrendered, with John "receiving their weapons."[553] Such seems to have been John's favoured approach throughout this campaign – a display of strength, ideally accomplished with siege weapons and thus with no loss of his soldiers, followed by clemency and peaceful absorbtion of his former enemy.

Only Anazarbos refused to follow this pattern, and indeed there is in this one case agreement in all our sources as to events. John faced his first true challenge of the campaign here, as William of Tyre, Choniates and the court sources all note: this was the greatest city in Cilicia at that time, protected not only by high walls on a hill, but with siege engines atop those walls and well trained and equipped men within, and the site today reflects their descriptions.[554]

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[552] The rulers of Tarsus are noted by Basilakes to be a mixture of Cilicia's "ancient citizens and remaining natives" and "Kelts." Italikos is not as clear, but mentions poetically that John went from "barbarian Kelts to barbarian Armenians, from Tarsus to Anazarbos": Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 57; *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," p. 251.

[553] "ὦ μάχης ὁμαιχμίας ἀπογεννώσης καὶ μαιευομένης τὸ φίλιον" is also used a description for John's new relationship with Tarsus by Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 59. Italikos takes great pains to note John's mercy, and how unlike Alexander he did not kill everyone when he took a city, and received friendly greetings from them in return. The quotation regarding the weapons specifically refers to Mopsuestia, but by extension to all the cities in that area, "Μόψου πόλεις ὅπλοις ἑλάμβανες." *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," p. 252. For the fortress at Mopsuestia see Edwards, *Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*, pp. 198-200.

[554] *NC*, p. 25; *JK*, p. 17; William of Tyre, 14.24, p. 663; Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 60; *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," p. 254; Edwards, *Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*, pp. 65-72; *TIB* 5.1, pp. 178-85.

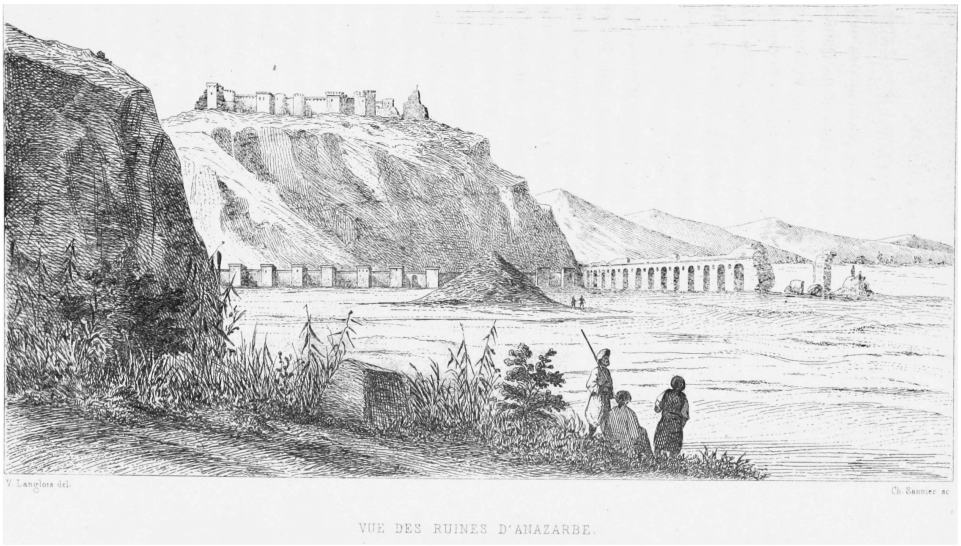

Fig. 18: View of Anazarbos from 1861, V. Langlois, *Voyage dans la Cilicie et dans les montagnes du Taurus, exécuté pendant les années 1852-1853 par ordre de l'Empereur* (Paris, 1861), p. 507.

Fig. 19: Anazarbos Today, photo copyright K. David Smith.

Choniates relates the opening engagement, whereby John sent forward a Turkish division that had recently aided in the conquest of Gangra to ascertain where the loyalties of the Armenians lay.[555] Though we cannot know whether John knew the details of Leon and Raymond's recent alliance, it is possible this was the first Armenian stronghold he had encountered, and so a peaceful absorption of Leon's Armenians back into the empire was a possibility if John's previous victories had been against independent Turks, Latins, 'Isaurians' or other

[555] *NC*, p. 25.

Armenians, just as Uroš of Raška had sworn to his cause once John had brought some force to bear. Whether John was misguided to use the Turks, or the Armenians were determined to resist him, the Turkish division was set upon by a sally from those inside the city, who defeated them and pursued them, only retreating themselves when confronted by the remainder of John's army.[556]

The emperor therefore brought siege weapons up as he had before. Unlike other cities however, the Armenians within Anazarbos launched missiles back at them, both stones to kill John's soldiers, and burning pellets to set fire to the siege engines.[557] Choniates also tells us that they sallied out once more to destroy yet more siege engines, and taunted John from the walls.[558] Kinnamos relates that John then fell into a rage, as indeed only Kinnamos ever tells us that John did, until his son Isaac suggested that the siege engines should be covered by brick hoardings to stop them being set alight by the Armenian missiles.[559] The same strategy is mentioned by Choniates, Italikos and Basilakes, though they do not attribute the idea to anyone, and merely give John the credit.[560] With his siege weapons secured, John was able to breach the walls of Anazarbos in multiple places, and though Kinnamos merely says the defenders surrendered, both Italikos and Choniates refer to a retreat to the citadel, with Choniates referring to two assaults before they bent the knee to John.[561]

With the capture of Anazarbos, Leon's wife and children fell into John's hands, though the sources disagree on whether Leon was present. He may well have

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[556] Ibid. pp. 25-6.
[557] *JK*, p. 17; Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 60; *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," p. 254.
[558] *NC*, p. 26.
[559] *JK*, p. 17; Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 60; *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," p. 254.
[560] Ibid; *NC*, p. 26;
[561] *Ibid*; *JK*, p. 17.

also been captured there and sent back to Constantinople with his family (and an icon of the Virgin previously taken from the empire according to Matthew of Edessa) or he may have escaped.[562] Finally he may not have been present at all, and was taken only with the later capture of Vakha, or he may have come to the Emperor voluntarily.[563]

All our sources bar Kinnamos and Ibn Al-Athir then record that John continued towards Antioch after the capture of Anazarbos; Kinnamos alone mentions that John intended to lay siege to Vakha, the other major Armenian stronghold left in Cilicia, but on hearing Raymond had returned to Antioch from the kingdom of Jerusalem decided he should go straight there and take Vakha later.[564] Ibn Al-Athir mentions that John also seized the strong fortress of Tell Hamdun (modern Toprakkale), located at the confluence of routes between Anazarbos, Mopsuestia, Sarventikar that guarded the Amanus pass and Alexandretta, and therefore a natural inclusion to John's conquests.[565] Ibn al-Athir also relates that John relocated the inhabitants of the fortress to Cyprus, presumably replacing them with a Greek garrison. Thus John's conquest of Cilicia bears all the hallmarks of his successful incorporation of both nomadic and Serb peoples in the 1120s, and the Turks of the frontier and Kastamon in the 1120s and 1130s.[566]

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[562] Italikos mentions that Leon escapes while his family was seized: *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," pp. 255-6. Gregory the Priest has him captured at Anazarbos: *Gregory the Priest*, p. 241; Kinnamos and Choniates do not mention him either way.
[563] He came voluntarily to the emperor after the capture of his family according to *Smbat Sparapet*, p. 53, though this only after John had also captured Vakha on his return from Syria. Matthew of Edessa also implies John only removed Leon from Cilicia after Syria: *Matthew of Edessa*, p. 239.
[564] *NC*, p. 27; *JK*, p. 18; Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 62; *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," pp. 257-9.
[565] 10km east of the modern town of Osmaniye; Ibn al-Athir, p. 337; Edwards, *Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*, pp. 244-53, 242, n.9; TIB 5.1, pp. 445-7.
[566] C.f. Chapter Four, n. 256 and Chapter Six, n. 451.

Fig. 20: Fortress of Tell Hamdun (Toprakkale), photo copyright Klaus-Peter Simon, 2011.

The decision to go to Antioch demonstrates that John believed his conquest of Cilicia to already be fairly secure. In leaving Cilicia, he was comfortable allowing not only at least one hostile Armenian fortress to remain at his back (indeed two by Kinnamos' reckoning, who also mentions the strong fortress of Kapniskerti), possibly Leon at large, but also a number of cities that had resisted him forcefully, such that even with new imperial garrisons and commanders their loyalty would be considered suspect at best.[567] Though Basilakes mentions certain natives and ancient imperial citizens who welcomed them, and Lilie judges that their power was broken, John must have been proactive in undertaking certain other initiatives to gain these cities' loyalty.[568] Even Magdalino's and Edwards' suggestion that John used the rivalry of the Hetumid family of Armenian nobility against the Rupenids under Leon does not account for this totally, though it is again

[567] *JK*, p. 20; a new commander for Anazarbos is implied by Italikos: *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," p. 155.
[568] Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 57; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 118.

an example of John using local nobility for local campaigns, as he did with the Kontostaphanoi in the Balkans, and Paktarios at Sozopolis.[569]

Loyalty was gained through a combination of both military and civilian approaches. Both Italikos and Choniates are expansive in describing how John "moved barbarians and mountains, showing his right hand mightier than the mountains are secure…/placing stele" and clearing the roads of bandits as Theseus did, implying that similarly to John's Paphlagonian campaigns, there were a great many smaller engagements and skirmishes en route to the sieges.[570] John was attempting not only to capture fortified points, implying islands of imperial authority in a sea of lawlessness, but was making the effort to clear the countryside and bring security to the entire province, a policy clearly articulated by Basilakes.[571] Consequently, his authority in the region would not be limited to the cities and fortresses, which after many years of chaos would surely have welcomed a return to order. This can be seen from what little we know of his non-military actions in the region, which combine to earn John his reputation.

As outlined in the introduction, Matthew of Edessa's positive opinion of John derived in no small part from his good treatment of the Armenians. Examples of this can be seen in our other sources that describe how he was merciful to the inhabitants of captured cities, but Matthew specifically gives the example of a favourable religious policy.[572] He records that John's father Alexios had enacted a policy of re-baptising Armenian Christians, a policy for which we have no other sources, but one for which John gained Armenian goodwill for reversing, according

[569] Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 37, n. 30; Edwards, *Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*, p. 6.
[570] *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," p. 250; Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 56.
[571] Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 57; Birkenmeier, *Development of the Komnenian Army*, p. 98.
[572] *Matthew of Edessa*, p. 225.

to Matthew. Such religious cooperation is also in evidence from John's replacement of the Latin bishops of Tarsos and Mopsuestia with "heretic bishops," according to Odo of Deuil, and also the removal of the Latin bishop of Anazarbos according to Nerses of Lampron. [573] Though unfortunately for interpreting Odo, such a designation could refer to Greek, Melkite or Armenian bishops and Nerses is not specific either, whichever may have been the case the replacements would have been more local, more palatable to and likely understanding of the Armenian Christians. This conciliatory attitude towards the Armenian Church would be continued and extended by Manuel, who went so far as to push for reunification between 1165 and 79, and many Armenian proponents such as Nerses tell us about John's appointment of these bishops; the fact that Nerses himself became bishop of Tarsos in 1176 demonstrates that where John may perhaps have originally instituted "Greek" bishops, by 1176 Manuel was appointing Armenians to those same sees.[574] Indeed, Manuel unsuccessfully attempted to involve the Syrian Jacobites in these negotiations as well, demonstrating that with John's Cilician expedition began almost fifty years of an imperial policy of reconciliation towards the eastern Christians as a tool for integrating them into the empire.[575]

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[573] Tarsos and Mopsuestia: "Prius cepit Tarsum et Mamistrum et castella plurima terramque latissimam, expulsisque catholicis episcopis urbium et haereticis substitutis": Odo of Deuil, pp. 68-9. Odo's account of the Second Crusade is almost uniformly hostile to the Greeks, and so picks up any excuse to show them as heretics, and John's replacement of Latin bishops for whatever reason would certainly qualify. He relates this information as part of bishop Godfrey of Langres' speech against the Greeks when the army of Louis VII camped outside Constantinople and Godfrey believed the French should attack; Anazarbos: "Reflections sur les institutions de l'église et explication du mystère de la messe," *RHC Documents Arméniens* I (1869), p. 577; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 119.

[574] Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 75-6, n. 189; Also V. Nersessian, "Armenian-Byzantine Church Relations at the time of the Cilician Kingdom," *Treasures from the Ark: 1700 Years of Armenian Christian Art* (London, 2001), pp. 48-51; A. Terian, "To Byzantium with Love: The Overtures of Saint Nerses the Gracious," *Armenian Cilicia*, ed. R. Hovannisian and S. Payaslian (Costa Mesa, 2008), pp. 131-52.

[575] Ibid. Such a policy is in opposition to that taken with the Latin Church in the East, as titular Patriarchs of both Antioch and Jerusalem were appointed under John; see below.

Between this religious olive branch and magnanimity in victory, John conquered almost all of Cilicia. It had not been a completely effortless conquest, and indeed the following year would immediately put his hold on Cilicia to the test, but it had thus far been successful, such that he was able to continue eastwards towards Syria, and so to Antioch.

The Emperor arrives at Antioch

William of Tyre tells us that by late summer 1137, John's forces were already blockading the city of Antioch.[576] This is not unlikely, as Italikos' oration praises the young Alexios for capturing the city of Gastin, located just south of the Syrian Gates, from the "Kelts."[577] It seems likely John had sent his son and co-emperor with a division of the army to secure the gateway to Syria while he was still occupied in Cilicia, as indeed Alexios had operated independently before, capturing 'Ankyra.' This decision demonstrates unequivocally that John had no intention of halting his campaign after the conquest of Cilicia. A thorough analysis of events does, however, demonstrate that his exact intentions in Syria were less clear, and no-one could be sure whether the emperor came as conqueror or saviour.

Despite the "blockade," or at least the presence of imperial troops in the principality, Raymond had answered a call for aid from King Fulk of Jerusalem. The king was being besieged with many of the other nobles of the kingdom in the castle of Montferrard by Imad ad-Din Zengi, *atabeg* of Mosul and Aleppo.[578] According to William, on hearing of the approach of Raymond and Joscelin II of Edessa with a relief army, in addition to learning that the emperor was in Antioch

[576] William of Tyre, 14.24, p. 663 and 14.26, p. 666.
[577] "ἡ πόλις Αἱ Γάστουνίας" Italikos, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," pp. 258-9.
[578] William of Tyre, 14.24, p. 663 and 14.26, p. 666.

and fearing that he might also descend upon him, Zengi gave Fulk terms of surrender such that he and his men could leave as long as they gave up the castle. Fulk, oblivious to the approaching reinforcements, accepted. Raymond then hurriedly returned to Antioch, and according to Kinnamos he encountered Roman scouts en route who almost captured or killed him, an anecdote that again confirms that imperial troops were in the area.[579]

Both Kinnamos and William of Tyre describe skirmishes between imperial troops and the Antiochenes, as the forces of the principality barred the gates, and those of the empire camped close to the river Orontes.[580]

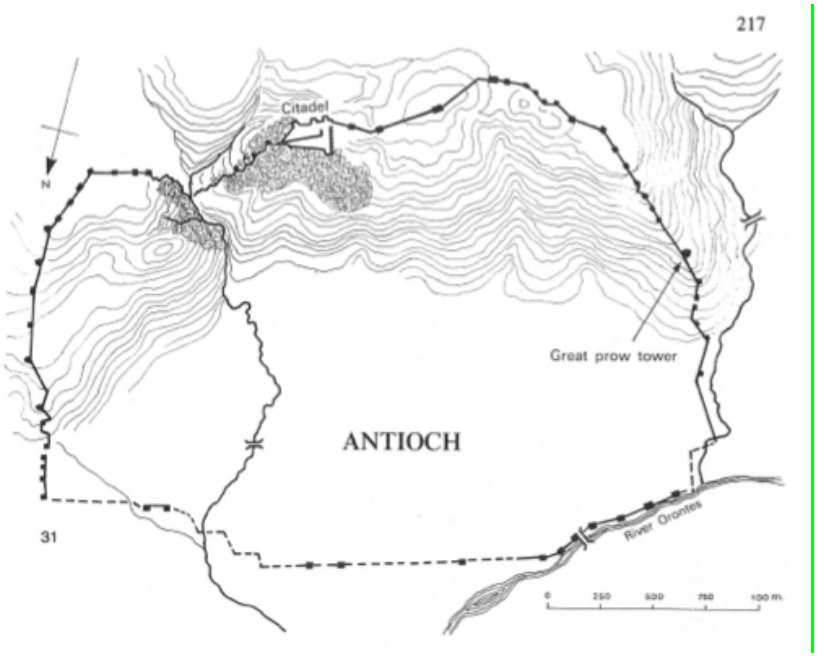

Fig. 21: Plan of Antioch from Foss and Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications*, p. 217.

[579] *JK*, p. 17.
[580] Foss, C, and Winfield, D, *Byzantine Fortifications An Introduction* (Pretoria, 1986), pp. 216-7 and 224.

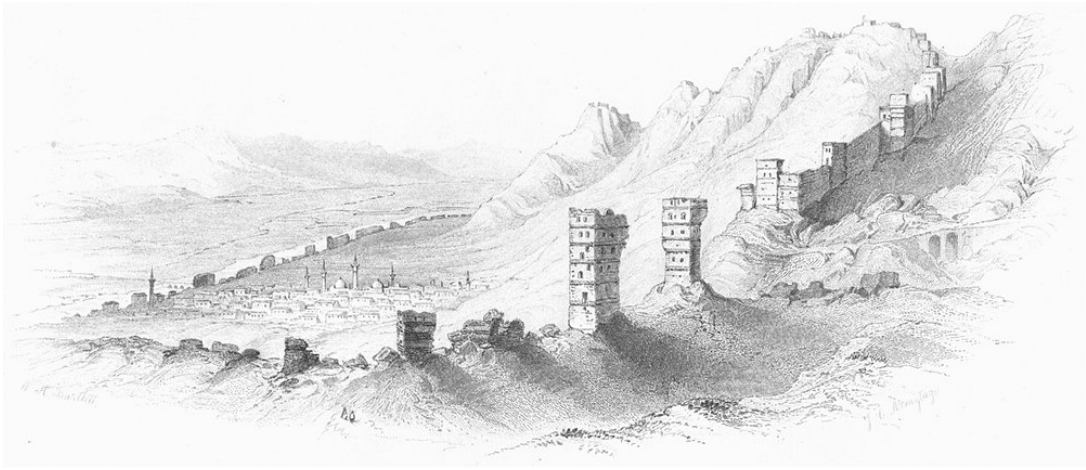

Fig. 22: Drawing of the walls of Antioch by W.H. Bartlett.

Where William is more general in referring to sallies, Kinnamos relates a specific incident where some imperial foot soldiers were picking fruit in the orchards when the Antiochenes attacked them; then when reinforcements arrived, the Latins retreated to the city – leading the Romans to begin siege operations.[581] William describes how war engines threw giant stones, while archers and slingers picked out targets on the walls as they scouted for places to undermine the defences.[582] Basilakes refers to a battle at the River Orontes with Roman phalanxes, involving an ambush and a counter ambush that led to the whole river running red, though he mentions no siege. Indeed, earlier in his oration he states that John had no intention of launching "flaming missiles of pain" at the rulers of Antioch, instead wishing them to bend their necks and become allies.[583] Italikos by comparison relates no battle, but that John did "throw lightning as a hurricane" causing the Latins to run and hide, perhaps implying the use of siege weapons.[584] The sources do not specify when exactly John took charge of matters, whether he left Vakha unconquered at news of Raymond's return, or merely at news that hostilities were escalating, and

[581] William of Tyre, 14.30, p. 670; *JK*, p. 18.
[582] Ibid.
[583] Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, pp. 63 and 66.
[584] *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," pp. 259-60.

indeed whether John himself ordered siege operations to commence or they were already in progress before he arrived. Raymond and Leon were, of course, in alliance against him, and so in many ways this Antioch leg of the campaign was a simple continuation of operations in Cilicia. Throughout this campaign, John had happily allowed cities to surrender in exchange for allegiance, and even when he was forced to attack a city he treated its inhabitants well. Basilakes' line concerning John not wishing to use "flaming missiles" when his goal was securing Antioch's allegiance therefore demonstrates that John's goal was to bring both Cilicia and the principality into the empire, preferably with no bloodshed but the threat was always there. Such a goal is presented clearly by Ibn Al-Athir, who additionally notes that John had the harbour at Alexandretta repaired.[585] As the principal port of Antioch it was unlikely to have been damaged unless the Antiochenes had done so themselves to prevent John from receiving naval support; but whether it was damaged or not, John's conquest tells us he was setting down roots to enforce his dominion over the principality. This also further confirms Ibn al-Athir's original comment that John's baggage and equipment for the expedition were being carried by ship, explaining the speed and efficiency of the conquest.[586]

William tells us that these hostilities took place only over several days, during which, according to Kinnamos, Raymond often went to the Emperor and requested a compromise whereby he would swear his allegiance in exchange for being able to rule the city in John's name.[587] Apparently he was unsuccessful in this until a council of the Romans decided to accept this proposal, an incident William relates as well, though without Raymond's prelude (i.e. suggesting it was repeated a

[585] Ibn Al-Athir, p. 337.
[586] Ibid.
[587] *JK*, p. 19; William of Tyre, 14.30, p. 671.

few times before John accepted). This description implies that either Kinnamos is presenting John as unreasonable for his usual purpose of exalting Manuel by comparison, or indeed that there was disagreement in the Roman camp as to whether to seize the city, whether to deprive Raymond of his principality, or negotiate. Though John's standard practice of campaigning with most of the imperial elite kept both friends and enemies close and gave them a shared corporate identity through the army, bringing such company carried with it the associated politics of the imperial court, and it can be assumed that two factions formed over whether to seize Antioch militarily or seek diplomatic options.[588]

It is likely that due to a combination of all three factors: the skirmish on the river, the artillery barrage and the nobles who spoke for peace on both sides, that John and Raymond finally made common cause without further bloodshed. If John had taken the military option he would not only have lost a great many troops, but also had to deal with a hostile populace and there would have been consequences for his relations with other Latin powers both east and west that would require troops that he seems to have preferred to use against the Muslims of Syria, who were usually Raymond's main enemy. Such a peaceful agreement was in everyone's

[588] Those present include John's sons Alexios and Isaac who are previously attested as fighting, as well as Andronikos (who is mentioned as having been on this campaign in his monody by Italikos); Manuel is not mentioned in the contemporary poem but his presence is claimed in an oration by Italikos after he came to the throne: *Italikos*, 44, pp. 284-6. William of Tyre and Basilakes later refer to all the sons being present at the Triumph in Antioch: William of Tyre, p. 97; Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα κῦρ Ἰωάννην τὸν Κομνηνόν," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 73. John's nephew Bishop Adrian Komnenos accompanies John "as Aaron followed Moses" according to Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν σεβαστὸν κῦρ Ἀδριανὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ σεβαστοκράτορος κυροῦ Ἰσαακίου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ καὶ αὐταδέλφου τοῦ βασιλέως κυροῦ Ἀλεξίου τὸν διὰ τοῦ ἀγγελικοῦ σχήματος Ἰωάννην μετονομασθέντα", *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 44. Italikos wrote letters to both *megas domestikos* Axouch and *logothetes ton dromos* Meles, while both Anna and Prodromos attest *kaisar* Nikephoros Bryennios as being present in the context of his catching an illness there that would later lead to his death: *Italikos*, "Μονῳδία εἰς τὸν σεβαστοκράτορα κῦρ Ἀνδρύνικον," "Πρὸς τὸν μέγαν δομέστικον," "Τῷ λογοθέτῃ τοῦ δρόμου τῷ Μέλητι," pp. 130-34, 222-4, 229-30, 232-3 respectively; *AK*, Prologue 1.1, pp. 7-8; *Prodromos*, IXXXX, lines 171-2.

interests.[589] A new agreement was signed between the monarchs, the salient points of which are related both by contemporary court texts and William of Tyre. William states that a ceremony was held in John's camp, in the presence of the emperor and the "illustrious and distinguished nobles of the imperial palace," but giving due honour to Raymond. Three things were agreed: first, that Raymond would swear allegiance and fealty to John and his heirs; second, that whenever the emperor might wish to enter Antioch or its citadel, in peace or war, he would be granted access. Third and most importantly, it was agreed that Aleppo, Shayzar, Hama and Homs would be given to Raymond, and he would relinquish Antioch in its entirety to John. In return, John would allow Raymond and his heirs to hold that territory as a perpetual fief, as a vassal of the Empire.[590]

With this agreed, John gave rich gifts to Raymond and was welcomed into the city. The court sources note enthusiasm from both the Antiochene lords and the general populace, who were presumably grateful that a peaceful solution had been found, and the imperial banner was flown above the citadel.[591] Choniates picks up his narrative here, noting how John stayed in the city for some days, while Kinnamos additionally notes that the Knights Templar and Hospitaller and others in the territory yielded to the emperor. Thus John appears to have received homage

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[589] Lilie has posited that there was a Greek-friendly faction in Antioch in addition to a 'treaty-friendly' faction in the imperial army, based on not only William of Tyre but also Orderic Vitalis' mention of an unnamed Frank who started negotiations. Orderic's version includes a daring assault on John's camp that caused the emperor to retreat and Raymond to enter the city, but that Raymond realised that John's claim was true and so yielded to him, bringing an end to forty years of war that had caused so much hurt to the Christian cause: Orderic Vitalis, pp. 502-9, vi pp. 502-9; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 121.

[590] William of Tyre, 14.30, p. 671. Italikos alludes to the treaty by reporting how the emperor compensated the Franks for the cities taken away with other cities taken from their enemies, in addition to gifts. Thus John was in no way merely seizing Frankish property without compensation: *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," p. 261.

[591] William of Tyre, 14.30, p. 671; *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," pp. 260-1; Basilakes emphasises John's piety while at the same time praising his rejection of money in, and of, itself, only wishing for allegiance and joint war against their enemies: Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα κῦρ Ἰωάννην τὸν Κομνηνόν," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 68.

from all in his new province.[592] Indeed, Choniates and Italikos mention how representatives of Jerusalem made obeisance, how Edessa's troops became John's, while Prodromos refers to Tripoli being made subject in the same way Italikos refers to the "rulers of Phoenicia giving their pledge". [593] Lilie has noted how this treaty is seen as an updating of the Treaty of Devol by Latin sources as well as Greek, as though William makes it plain that he considered Devol invalid after the 'betrayal' of Alexios, he in no way considered John's claims over Antioch invalid as a whole.[594] Despite this recognition, and the prestige John would have received from being acclaimed overlord of the Latin east, the treaty still favoured Raymond strongly, in averting certain defeat and facilitating a lawful retention of Antioch, or at least a new principality of equal value.

Scholars have sought to analyse the articles of this treaty in order to clarify why John would agree to something that favoured Raymond so strongly, when he held all the cards. They have thus far postulated three different explanations, in addition to the latent, inherent, factionalism of both the Latins and the Greeks. Lilie focuses upon John's belief that his army would indeed be able to overcome Muslim Syria, having been undefeated until now, while at the same time being wary of the ramifications in the Latin west should he seize Antioch by force, and that therefore the treaty was an acceptable risk, especially as an imperial dominated Syria with

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[592] *JK*, p. 19; *NC*, p. 27.

[593] *NC*, p. 27; *Prodromos*, XI, line 168; *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," pp. 260-1. Care must however be taken with this, as with the exception of Edessa which did indeed fight for John in the year ahead, Latin sources do not mention anything relating to John, Tripoli or Jerusalem, and that therefore both Choniates and the rhetors may be overexaggerating. It is unlikely that King Fulk of Jerusalem truly submitted to the emperor as Italikos contends, indeed he seems to have made sure he stayed away from John so that he would not be forced to so, but ambassadors from the king may well have personally given him homage. Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, pp. 124-5.

[594] William of Tyre, 14.24, p. 662; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 121.

Latin backing was certainly preferable to one without Latin backing.[595] Furthermore, Lilie calls the treaty a "diplomatic masterpiece" by Raymond or his councillors, putting them in a win-win situation.[596] Harris however interprets the treaty as demonstrating that John did not truly wish "physical dominion," only recognition as overlord.[597] Though the Greek sources do tend to focus on overlordship and the Latin ones on actual tenure seemingly to support Harris' argument, all the evidence regarding John's actions necessitate that physical ownership of Antioch was indeed his goal, as Parnell has pointed out.[598] Parnell's thesis, that is itself a development from Lilie and Magdalino, is that John's aim was to enforce the treaty of Devol and reclaim Antioch for the empire, but that he wished the Latin princes to support him in this goal, and more than this a Latin client principality of Aleppo surrounding Antioch was inherently desirable to secure his claim.[599] In addition I would argue that John's clemency was entirely consistent with his policy throughout this eastern campaign, whereby John made a great show of his clemency to those he conquered, cultivating an image of a kind and just ruler. The very fact that the treaty was so favourable to Raymond demonstrated John's legitimacy as God's chosen ruler on earth, emphasised his kindness and Christian values in a way that both increased his prestige, and paradoxically enhanced his position even more over his new subjects, who could not fault him for being any kind of illegitimate tyrant.

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[595] Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, pp. 122-3.
[596] Ibid. p. 122.
[597] Harris, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, pp. 81-5.
[598] Parnell, "John II Comnenus and Crusader Antioch," pp. 149-53.
[599] Ibid. p. 153; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 123; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 38-41; Papageorgiou agrees, and sees this as part of John attempting to present himself as a "crusader," a presentation discussed further below and in Chapters Eight and Nine. Papageorgiou, *John II Komnenos*, p. 15.

Though we cannot know for sure whether any of the historians, Greek or non-Greek, had heard or read the rhetoric of Italikos, Basilakes or Prodromos, the dynamic between the presentation of ideology and practical politics during this period, and how that dynamic was preserved in both poetry and history writing, can be clearly seen in both court and historical texts.[600] The essential nature of such ideology in practice was also to be tested when John returned to Antioch once more to find papal pronouncements on his expedition had arrived.[601]

Further to this, the twelfth century chronicler Ibn al-Qalanisi tells us that there was another clause in John's agreement with Raymond that confirms John's plans for Antioch. He relates that one of the conditions of the peace was that Raymond would allow a Greek patriarch in Antioch, a condition that occasioned the Latin patriarch Ralph of Domfront to fall out with Raymond, causing him to imprison him and plunder his house.[602] Such a condition is supported by the fact that John was maintaining titular patriarchs of both Antioch and Jerusalem in Constantinople. Indeed 1134 had seen the death of patriarch John V of Antioch and the installation of a certain Luke, though there is no mention of him joining this expedition.[603] In addition to demonstrating again that John intended Antioch to become part of the empire, such a religious policy *vis à vis* the Latin Church compared to the Armenian Church implies that where John was looking to integrate the Armenians into the Orthodox Church, he saw the need to replace Latin bishops with Greek ones in both Cilicia and Syria. Whether this was out of concern for the spiritual wellbeing of Orthodox Christians in the east, or was more political in

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[600] See Chapter Nine.
[601] See p. 259.
[602] Ibn al-Qalanisi, p. 245.
[603] V. Grumel, "Les patriarches grecs d'Antioche du nom de Jean (XI et XII siècles)," *Echos d'Orient* 32 (1933), pp. 279-99; *ibidem*, "Notes pour l'Oriens Christianus," *Echos d'Orient 33,* (1934), pp. 54-5; B. Hamilton, *The Latin Church in the Crusader States The Secular Church* (London, 1980), pp. 173-80; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 40.

nature is difficult to ascertain; indeed there is no specific mention that the Latin patriarch would be removed from office implying that some sort of religious compromise may have been proposed that was still unacceptable to patriarch Ralph. Either way, John was taking an active hand in the ecclesiastical governance of the principality and so was certainly concerned with more than mere acknowledgement as ruler as Harris posits. Such a religious policy was to have repercussions the following year for John, but for now Raymond was willing to arrest the Latin patriarch to keep John onside. Thus by late 1137 Antioch was once more part of the empire, though ruled by Raymond as a client prince, but even this stunning conquest on top of that of most of Cilicia was not enough to stop another would-be conqueror entering the field. In late 1137 Mohammed Danishmend came south to stake his claim on Cilicia and Edessa.

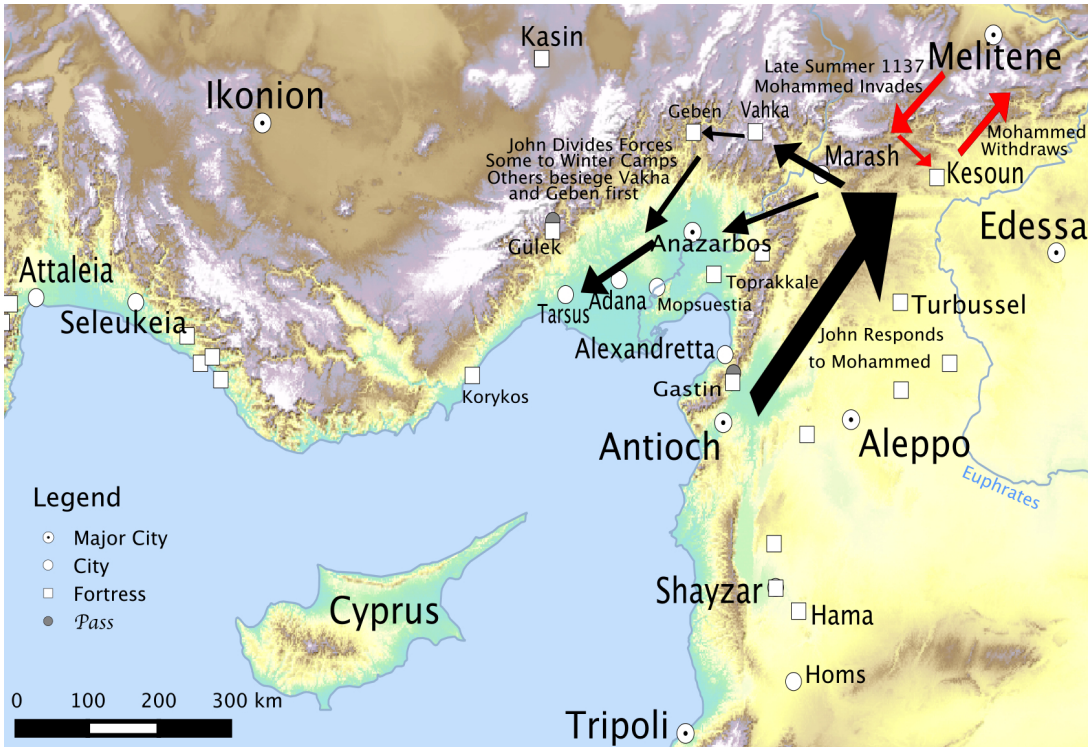

Fig. 23: Eastern Campaign, Autumn/Winter 1137.

The Autumn War of 1137

William of Tyre, Choniates and Kinnamos relate that following the submission of Antioch, John overwintered near Tarsos in Cilicia before starting his campaign in Muslim Syria, and this has caused many scholars to follow suit, with the overwintering being deemed irrelevant to the principal goal: the following year's campaign against the Muslims.[604] In fact, the autumn and winter of 1137/8 was just as important as any of the operations carried out on the expedition so far, as it put on the line not only John's position in Cilicia with the Armenians, but also the County of Edessa, and John's position in Anatolia against the still powerful Danishmendid sultanate.

Though John had secured the Cilician coastal plain before marching on Antioch, the mountains were still in Armenian hands, but their diminished state had not gone unnoticed by Mohammed Danishmend. Though his sultanate was still weaker than it had been under Ghazi, Mohammed had managed to defeat his brothers in the previous few years and now sought to secure his position further through victories in foreign campaigns, proving himself a worthy successor to his father, and he seems to have done so by carrying out a number of raids against the empire while John was away.[605] Indeed a contemporary coin of his bears the legend: "Μέγας Μέλικις πάσης Ῥωμανίας καὶ Ἀνατόλης" [Great Melik of all Romania and Anatolia/the East].[606] Such a claim thus encompassed not only his existing lands but also at least those ruled by Mas'ud of Ikonion, Cilicia and John's own Anatolian provinces, and perhaps also the lands of Mesopotamia and the Levant.

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[604] William of Tyre, 15.1, p. 674; *NC*, p. 27; *JK*, p. 19; Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, p. 134; Harris, *Byzantum and the Crusades*, p. 83; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 37-41; Parnell, "John II Comnenus and Crusader Antioch," p. 153.
[605] *Michael*, 16.9, p. 622, p. 248.
[606] N. Oikonomides, "Les Danishmendides, entre Byzance, Bagdad, et le Sultanat d'Iconium," *Revue Nusmismatique* 6 (25) (1983), pp. 198, 201-2.

With such claims to empire, the weakened remainder of Cilician Armenia would therefore be a tempting first target after his civil war victory, alongside the lands of Marash that were then part of the County of Edessa. These had been much fought over in recent years as outlined earlier in this chapter, and with Joscelin II's army only just returned from aiding Fulk, and indeed possibly attending upon John in Antioch if Italikos and Choniates are to be believed, they too were an open door for Mohammed.

Though Matthew of Edessa and Gregory the Priest confuse the dating, it is most likely that while John was at Antioch in late 1137, Mohammed invaded the lands of Marash.[607] He burned villages and monasteries, devastated orchards and cut off water supplies to the town of Kesoun and then encamped nearby to await their surrender from starvation or terror.[608] Matthew tells us that Baldwin, lord of Marash and Kesoun and vassal of Joscelin of Edessa, had begged John on his knees for aid against this threat, and so after his short stay in Antioch, John was once again on the march north to prove himself as a just overlord who could protect his new Latin clients against their aggressors.[609] Coupled with this was the still unconquered Armenian stronghold of Vakha to which John had been en route before the situation at Antioch escalated. Thus John could kill two birds with one stone with an autumn campaign comprised of these two objectives. In addition this would raise his

[607] Matthew tells us that Mohammed invaded at the start of 1137, but also that John was already in the vicinity of Antioch devastating Muslim territory. Gregory the Priest is just as vague, relating how John went from Cilicia to Antioch to Shayzar, and then saying how Mohammed came, but using now specific temporal phrases to specify when exactly this occurred in relation to John's campaigns. The contradiction can be resolved however by the timing of Baldwin's appeal to the emperor and his subsequent march north and sieges of Vakha. Lilie has pointed out that these events were exceptionally unlikely to have occurred after Shayzar as John hurried back to Constantinople while fighting Ikonion en route, and must have taken place after John had resolved his differences with the Latins and so could not have occurred during the initial Cilician campaign as Matthew's date implies. Therefore 1137-8 is the most likely date for these events: *Matthew of Edessa*, pp. 238-9, 241; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, pp. 118-9, n. 95 and 125, n. 117.
[608] *Matthew of Edessa*, p. 238.
[609] Ibid. p. 239.

reputation in the Latin east by defending the crusader states from the Turks, further confirming his legitimacy as rightful liege lord to Antioch and Edessa.[610]

Matthew of Edessa tells us that on the mere word that the emperor was coming, Mohammed withdrew north, seemingly unwilling to face the emperor in battle when he had not conquered any major fortresses to defend against him.[611] Gregory the Priest does not make the link between John's march and the Danishmendid withdrawal, only telling us Mohammed failed to take the fortress of Shuplsa, despite many assaults, and therefore he retreated, confirming that Mohammed did not conquer any major fortress in the region.[612] Lilie suggests that the major part of John's army then went to winter quarters in Tarsus, but that divisions laid siege to Vakha, and Kapniskerti (Geben), in accordance with Kinnamos' narrative.[613]

The capture of Kapniskerti is significant as it had been held by the Danishmendids since at least the First Crusade, when Godfrey of Bouillon bypassed the castle to go through the Marash to Edessa, and so its capture would not only be

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[610] Frankopan has demonstrated how Baldwin of Bouillon acted as an imperial agent in the foundation of the county of Edessa, effectively relieving Thoros as imperial governor of the isolated province. Though there is no known equivalent to the treaty of Devol with the counts of Edessa, they too were perceived as imperial clients by John: Frankopan, *Call from the East*, pp. 150-3.

[611] *Matthew of Edessa*, p. 239.

[612] Ibid. p. 241; unidentified, though Edwards notes that further exploration is doubtless needed to uncover further fortresses in this thus far poorly surveyed region: Edwards, *Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*, p. 40.

[613] Again, Kinnamos describes how this event took place on John's return to Constantinople, but it would seem unlikely for John to have used his exhausted army to besiege the Armenians after Shayzar when the Danishmendids were pressing his Anatolian frontier to the west – John had his army in the right place with the right amount of time to seize these castles at this time, and it happens to conform with every source except Kinnamos, therefore must have occurred at this time: *JK*, p. 20; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 125, n. 117. Ibn al-Adim notes how John attempted to lull the Syrian Muslims into a false sense of security with an attack on the Armenians, having supposedly sent an ambassador with his good wishes to Zengi and exchanged gifts, but this is uncorroborated and may simply evidence Ibn al-Adim rhetorically demonstrating the treachery of the emperor: Ibn al-Adim, p. 674. Choniates notes how John attacked Vakha after all the other fortresses were taken and he had become master of the country, and noted how John said he would be happy to lay siege to the city until his head turned grey and snow fell upon him, implying this time of year at least in a campaign in no way connected to John's return west, though with no exact dating: *NC*, pp. 21-2. Ibn Al-Athir places this campaign at this exact time, accordance with Matthew of Edessa and Gregory the Priest: Ibn Al-Athir, p. 337.

a blow to Mohammed, but also provide greater security for the whole of Cilicia as the castle guarded one of the major passes through the mountains there.[614]

Fig. 24: View of Kapniskerti/Geben, from Panoramio Google Maps, copyright Mehmed.

It is however the capture of Vakha that takes prominence in our sources, particularly with Choniates who was so impressed by the tale of its seizure that he relates it first in his narrative of the whole campaign.[615] As with Kapniskerti, Vakha sits on a major strategic north-south road through the mountains, and consists of a major fortress and town, with impressive ruins even today that testify to Choniates' description of the fortress as a rock made even stronger by walls. [616]

[614] *Gesta Francorum et Aliorum Hierosolimitanorum The Deeds of the Franks and the Other Pilgrims to Jerusalem*, ed. R. Hill (London, 1962), p. 25-7; Edwards, *Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*, pp. 124-9, n. 7.
[615] *NC*, pp. 21-5; The capture is also mentioned with no details by *JK*, p. 20; *Gregory the Priest*, p. 241; *Smbat Sparapet*, p. 53. The latter two do mention Leon being finally captured there however.
[616] *NC*, p. 22; Edwards, *Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*, pp. 259-65.

Fig. 25: View of Vakha from Panoramio, Google Maps, copyright adanus.

Unlike any other Armenian stronghold aside from perhaps Anazarbos, Vakha seems to have caused John's army some difficulty, as the siege continued for three weeks with no apparent progress. This could be explained if it were only a portion of John's army that was fielded against Vakha. Choniates relates how John offered surrender many times, but without mentioning siege engines at any point, so it would appear John was attempting to gain the fortress with limited manpower – a sound strategy if he wanted most of his army rested in preparation for the coming year and further operations in Syria, but perhaps not one for a swift operation against another lofty fortress.

Choniates tells us the Armenians under a noble called Constantine showed remarkable stubbornness despite their situation, insulting the imperial troops in Greek, and challenging any to single combat. John ordered his taxiarchs to select a champion, and a certain Eustratios from the Macedonian legion accepted the challenge. There followed a Homeric duel, complete with the raging Armenian and stoic Macedonian, who times his thrust perfectly to shatter Constantine's shield,

leading to both the flight of Constantine and the surrender of the fortress a few days later.[617]

With Mohammed driven off, and the northern passes into Cilicia secure against his return, John had demonstrated himself a worthy protector to his new Armenian and Latin subjects, in addition to extinguishing the last Armenian resistance. Leon and his family were captured and sent by ship to Constantinople, where the prince was to die in captivity, apparently having acknowledged that he could never have continued, caught as he was between Franks and Turks.[618] Ibn al-Athir adds that Leon offered John vast sums of money and agreed to be his subject, and so there was possibly some form of agreement set up between them according to John's usual preference for client rulers, but whether the emperor did not trust Leon to keep his oath, Leon refused, or John simply needed the political capital gained by imprisoning him, John was firmly in control.[619]

Far from resting before a return to Syria, this campaign was an essential part of the activities of an Emperor consolidating his role as imperial overlord of both Armenian Cilicia and Latin Edessa, whilst dealing a blow to Mohammed Danishmend. His use of at least one population transfer, a conciliatory attitude towards the Armenian church, and the ability to bring stability to the province that had been fought over for most of the last fifty years explains how he was able to accomplish so much in so short a time. Ibn al-Adim relates that John spent the rest of the winter between Anazarbos, Adana, and all over "little Armenia". Thus John

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[617] *NC*, pp. 23-5; see Introduction for Efthymiadis' comments.
[618] Choniates mentioned how he immediately escaped, but then was captured again: *NC*, p. 25; *Matthew of Edessa*, p. 239; *Gregory the Priest*, p. 241; *Smbat Sparapet*, p. 53. This incident again emphasises how John had use of the imperial navy for support throughout this campaign, and how the dating is again 1137/8 rather than 1138/9, as had the incident been later John would likely have brought him back himself: Ibn al-Adim, p. 674.
[619] Ibn al-Athir, p. 337.

may well have toured his new domains extensively that winter to organise its administration and bond with its nobles, a particular necessity as John was not leaving them their native ruler.[620] However, even before the winter was out, John was marching south against Aleppo.

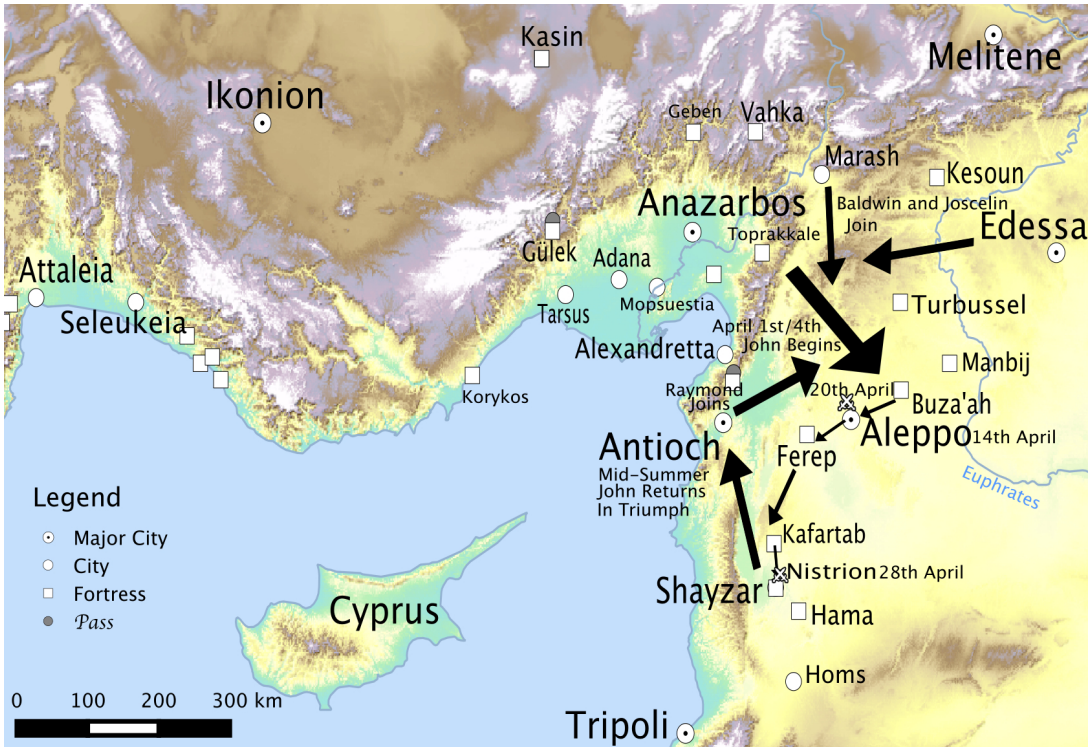

Fig. 26: Eastern Campaign, Spring/Summer 1138

The Aleppan Campaign of 1138

John's objectives for 1138 were the conquest of the Muslim lands of Aleppo, providing Raymond with a new principality to rule under John's suzerainty, and giving both Antioch and Edessa security from Muslim attack. As Lilie has noted, such a conquest would also have raised the profile of the emperor in the west to a huge extent, putting him on a par with the conquerors of the First Crusade, and enforcing the treaty of Devol as his father had failed to do, while keeping both

[620] Ibn al-Adim, p. 674.

western and eastern Latins on his side.[621] Equally, such a new province would make a reconquest of the rest of Anatolia a lot easier, with the victorious emperor thenceforth being able to draw upon his new clients for military support. In addition, John's star at the court in Constantinople could not have been higher, as the rhetors went into overdrive extolling how it had been too long since the Euphrates had known "an Ausonian Lord, a Roman Horse."[622]

Raymond seems to have begun 1138 wholly committed to the enterprise, as Ibn al-Adim records how Muslim merchants were arrested in January and February. Whether John would have approved is unknown, but it is certainly in keeping with other Latin crusader expeditions.[623] William of Tyre tells us that John resolved to make good his promise to Raymond, and that all forces were to be gathered at Antioch from the entire principality, and messengers were to be sent to Edessa.[624] William has John setting off around 1st April, while Ibn al-Adim gives the exact date as the 4th. However, William skips straight to the siege of Shayzar, missing the campaign that led up to that struggle, though it is well described by all of our other sources.[625]

John struck due east to rendezvous with the Edessan army under Joscelin, with Gregory the Priest confirming that after Easter, Baldwin, Lord of Marash, left

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[621] Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 123.
[622] Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 65; *Italikos*, "Πρὸς τὸν μέγαν δομέστικον," p. 229.
[623] Ibn al-Adim, p. 675; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 126; John appears to have no specific problem with Muslim subjects, as his dealings with both Mas'ud above, and Shayzar below, demonstrate, therefore this could well be Islamic propaganda if it did not happen, or merely a quick way for Raymond to raise money.
[624] William of Tyre, 15.1, p. 674.
[625] *Ibid*; Ibn al-Adim, p. 675; John's conquests until this point may have served no specific purpose for William's narrative, or perhaps he simply did not have the information so decided to continue straight to Shayzar – either way this reveals once more that no single narrative can provide a full account.

his lands to join John's army.[626] Having come east to the border between the lands of Edessa and Aleppo, the army's first target was the castle of Buza'ah (Piza) 10km east of the modern Al-Bab, whose name means 'the gate'.[627]

Taking Buza'ah would both extend the domain of Edessa south, and provide the obvious stepping-stone for the capture of Aleppo itself. Ibn Jubayr's chronicle entry from 1184 makes plain why John would wish the capture of this site to be his opening move, noting that Buza'ah was:

> smaller than a city, and larger than a village. It has a market…/and at its higher part there is a large and powerful fortress…/the town has a surface spring whose waters flow through a broad valley with gardens radiant with verdure and vegetation.[628]

Choniates tells us that the Aleppan forces met John's vanguard in the field with such ferocity that they were forced to retreat. When the Emperor's personal phalanx took the field however, the enemy were driven back behind the double walls of Buza'ah, leading John to bring up his siege weapons.[629] This implies John operated with an order of march, which has caused Birkenmeier to suggest that this battle came about when the leader of the vanguard attempted to seize the castle on his own, a likely scenario for the young Alexios, another noble, or indeed the new Latin clients desiring the Emperor's favour.[630] The gamble did not pay off this time, but the use of such an advance force would explain why John was never surprised

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[626] *Gregory the Priest*, p. 241; some scholars have the Edessans also meet at Antioch due to the vagueness of William of Tyre, Kinnamos and Choniates as to when the Edessans joined. If so however, the choice of Buza'ah as a first target makes little sense considering the allies later assaulted fortresses closer to Antioch, and it ignores the testimony of Gregory the Priest: Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 123.

[627] *Gregory the Priest*, p. 241; *NC*, p. 27; *JK*, p. 19; W. Stevenson, *The Crusaders in the East: a brief history of the wars of Islam with the Latins in Syria during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries* (Cambridge, 1907), p. 140; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 126. For Al-Bab see: Ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, tr. R.J.C. Broadhurst (London, 1952), pp. 259-60; G. Le Strange, *Palestine Under the Moslems: A Description of Syria and the Holy Land from A.D. 650 to 1500* (London, 1890), p. 406.

[628] Ibn Jubayr, p. 259.

[629] *NC*, p. 27; their use is confirmed by Ibn al-Athir, p. 340.

[630] Birkenmeier, *Development of the Komnenian Army*, pp. 92-3.

during his campaigns, as Manuel famously would be in the Myriokephalon campaign of 1176. The siege engines did their work yet again at Buza'ah, such that with the fortifications breached the inhabitants sued for peace; Choniates tells us they exchanged the city's wealth for their lives, while Ibn al-Adim relates that many were killed despite these terms, with four hundred becoming Christians to save their lives.[631] Kinnamos records that an immense quantity of plunder was taken, and many captives were sent to Antioch under a common born secretary called Thomas who had served since childhood, but unfortunately he was ambushed by Aleppan forces and lost his captives en route.[632] Buza'ah itself was given to Joscelin. Thus in its opening move the expedition had already borne fruit for all parties.[633] This even-handedness was of course the whole point, as John sought to demonstrate to his new clients the value of being under his aegis: through loyalty to the empire, they would only benefit.

Scholars have thus far undervalued this aspect of the expedition, and indeed of John's army as a whole, as Antioch and Edessa have previously been interpreted as allies, and John's Turkish and Pecheneg troops seen as mercenaries.[634] In addition to territorial expansion, John's expedition against the Muslims was an attempt to integrate the nobles of Antioch and Edessa into the imperial system. It was a means to engender in them the same *esprit de corps* and corporate identity he had built up in the rest of the Byzantine nobility. In addition to the brotherhood,

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[631] *NC*, pp. 27-8; Ibn al-Adim, p. 675; Ibn Al-Athir, p. 340; Ibn al-Athir adds details about the murder of Muslims after terms were given and the killing of people hiding in caves by suffocation when John's forces lit fires to smoke them out. Whether this occurred or not, it certainly aids his rhetorical case against the Christians.
[632] *JK*, p. 19.
[633] *NC*, pp. 28.
[634] Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, pp. 195-6; Treadgold, *Byzantium and its Army* (1995), p. 219; Nicolle, *Crusader Warfare*, pp. 163, 175; Birkenmeier adopts a half way house by calling them "auxiliaries" in the traditional Roman meaning, though these two were from client peoples and so should not be confused with mercenaries fighting only for pay: Birkenmeier, *Development of the Komnenian Army*, p. 140. This will be discussed further in my conclusion.

forged in the fires of combat, that the Latins would share with the Greeks, and indeed Turk and Pecheneg clients, the material gain through captives, plunder, and the conquest of cities and fortresses would keep Antioch and Edessa in the imperial orbit more securely than any treaty or oath.

This need for victories and to prove to his clients why they should remain so when the emperor left the region explains much of the conduct of the campaign that followed, as sound military practice was not followed exclusively, meaning that the primacy of domestic politics was as much in evidence here as it was in Anatolia. Choniates tells us John decided against taking Manbij, c. 36km east of Buza'ah, itself thirty kilometers west of the Euphrates, as due to its location on the open plain, with only a small fort, it could be taken at his leisure later.[635] This may, however, cover the fact that though John's march east had allowed him to rendezvous with the Edessans and to take Buza'ah, it had also allowed time for Aleppo to be reinforced by the 9th April.[636] Ibn al-Din tells us John remained at Buza'ah ten days before advancing on Aleppo, some 46km to the southwest, and thus he arrived outside its gates on Thursday 14th April.[637]

Fig. 27: Aleppo Citadel, though much of what is seen was rebuilt after Tamerlane destroyed it in the fifteenth century, its fortified position can be easily comprehended. Copyright Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme.

[635] Known classically as Hierapolis Bambyce, and Vembetz in *NC*, p. 28; Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems*, p. 500.
[636] Dating from Ibn al-Adin, pp. 675-6; Stevenson, *Crusaders in the East*, pp. 139-40.
[637] Ibid.

Aleppo was the regional prize: described by Choniates as a populous city, and by Ibn Al-Athir as the strongest Muslim fortress in Syria. It was not only the capital of the region but had been besieged twice but not captured by the crusaders in 1124 and 1129; capturing it would make John's reputation in addition to securing the whole region, as if he could take Aleppo, a number of other towns and castles would follow, as they had in Cilicia after Tarsus.[638]

As the Crusaders had discovered before, however, there was little firewood and water in the region, the lack of wood and other material perhaps being as crucial as water to the army, so John could not resort to his Cilician strategy of using siege engines to overawe the populace.[639] Ibn al-Adim tells us that on Tuesday 20th April, John attempted to assault the town, while Choniates informs us that there was one major sally by the defenders. Each chronicler claims their side got the better of the skirmish, but either way John did not enter the city, nor was he driven off, though one of his generals may have been killed according to Ibn al-Athir.[640] While attempting to survey the walls John was shot at multiple times, and Choniates makes plain that the emperor's impressions of the city were that it would withstand a very long siege, something which his supply lines would not take, and which would not satisfy his need to display the benefits of loyalty to his clients.[641]

Being unable to take the citadel without great loss of life, John therefore settled on a new strategy of seizing all of the other towns and fortresses in the region. By this strategy he could hope to more easily take Aleppo in future; with its hinterland in his hands he would have both better supply lines (their weakness

[638] William of Tyre, 12.9, p. 556 (c.f. battle of Ager Sanguinis), 13.15, p. 603; *NC*, p. 28; Ibn Al-Athir, p. 340; Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems*, p. 360.
[639] *NC*, p. 28; *JK*, p. 19.
[640] *NC*, p. 28; Ibn al-Adim, p. 676; Ibn al-Athir, p. 340; Stevenson, *Crusaders in the East*, p. 140.
[641] *NC*, p. 28.

demonstrated by the ambush of the secretary Thomas), Aleppo would be cut off from support and more likely to surrender, and his Latin clients would remain convinced of the final success of their venture.

The army therefore marched south, taking first al-Atarib (Ferep) and then Kafartab, both of which were given to counts of Antioch, appeasing them perhaps for their efforts so far and the loss of Thomas' captives.[642] Ibn Al-Athir adds colour to this account by telling us that the garrison at al-Atarib was massacred while Ibn al-Adin tells us they merely deserted. Both say there was a brief defence of Kafartab, but nothing slowed John's army reaching Shayzar on the 28th of April, with Pecheneg troops securing the well-fortified city of Nistrion as a base of operations.[643]

Shayzar was ruled by the Munqidh dynasty. In 1138 that was 'Izz-al-Din abu-al-'Asakir Sultan, whose nephew Usama Ibn Munqidh wrote extensive memoires that include a description of the siege.[644] William of Tyre and our other sources devote most of their campaign accounts to this siege, making the siege of Shayzar one of the best documented events of the century, though it is also one of the most contentious to explain with so many competing accounts.

Shayzar is located on a bluff overlooking the Orontes and was similar to Antioch with the citadel on a mountain deemed by contemporaries to be all but

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[642] *NC*, pp. 28-9; *JK*, p. 19. Kinnamos tells us Hama was taken as well, but in accordance with Lilie I see this as unlikely due to it being located south of Shayzar and not mentioned by any other source: Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 126, n. 129. In addition to being likely still under siege by Zengi, as Ibn al-Adim and Ibn al-Athir tell us: Ibn al-Adim, p. 676; Ibn al-Athir, p. 340.

[643] Ibn Al-Athir p. 340; Ibn al-Adim, p. 676; *NC*, pp. 29; Nistrion has been identified as the Gistrum mentioned by Walter the Chancellor, and thus the Hisn al-Jisr of Arabic sources: C. Tonghini, *Shayzar I The Fortification of the Citadel*, (Leiden, 2012), p. 50, n. 50. Houtsma and Arnold have identified it with a castle that in the 19th century probably used to stand on the eastern bank of the Orontes, guarding a suburb of Shayzar. If true, this would make it the perfect place from which to base troops in order to take Shayzar: "Shaizar," *E. J. Brill's Encyclopaedia of Islam 1913-1936*, ed. M. Th. Houtsma and R. C. D. Arnold (Leiden, 1993), p. 289.

[644] Usama Ibn-Munqidh, *The Book of Contemplation Islam and the Crusades* tr. P. M. Cobb (London, 2008), pp. xv-xli and pp. 11-2.

impregnable, and then walls ran down from it to the plain that enclosed the city, and suburbs surrounded those.[645] In addition to the prize that was the rich city itself, its location on the border of the Crusader states but on the Syrian plain made it the ideal staging point to secure supply lines for any future conquest of Aleppo to the north and Homs to the south, which in itself led to Damascus, and thus the conquest of all the fertile lands west of the Syrian Desert.

Fig. 28: Photo of Shayzar with the town behind, from World Monuments Fund.

With the campaign a month old, the Muslims of Syria decided to make their stand at Shayzar, with various cities all providing troops and food supplies for its defence.[646] Where Zengi stood in this conflict is unclear, occupied as he was with the siege of Hama. He may have exchanged gifts and embassies with John,

[645] Italikos calls it the "strongest place in the region": *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς," p. 263; William of Tyre, 15.1, p. 674. For an overview of Shayzar in general see W. Müller-Wiener, *Burgen der Kreuzritter im Heiligen Land, auf Zypern und in der Ägäis* (Munich, 1966), p. 57; P. Deschamps, *La Défense de comté de Tripoli et de la principauté d'Antioche: Étude historique, géographique, toponymique et monumentale* (2 vols., Paris, 1973), p. 114; Tonghini, *Shayzar*, especially pp. 2-24.
[646] *NC*, p. 29; Usama Ibn-Munqidh, pp. 11-2

implying a *modus vivendi* whereby John and Zengi could split independent Syria between them, or there was an attempt to lull Zengi into trusting John before his betrayal as Ibn al-Adin relates.[647] Alternatively, Zengi may have been aiding Shayzar as part of a proxy war rather than fighting John directly; the rhetorical tone of authors such as Ibn Al-Athir stating Islam must unite to throw back the invader may advocate the latter, but given that Zengi's involvement is not mentioned by Ibn Munquidh or any Christian accounts, I would advocate that he was waiting to see how the situation developed. Ibn al-Athir's devotion to his Zengid patrons was such that it seems likely such an incident would have been airbrushed from his account, with Zengi challenging John to open battle substituted.[648] Ibn al-Athir's quotation of poems in praise of Zengi for throwing back John emphasise his desire to portray Zengi as the one uniting Islam.[649] Contrasting Ibn al-Athir with Ibn al-Adim, we see Zengi almost being lulled into letting down the Muslim cause by trusting John, thus both our sources have their narrative goals that get in the way of interpreting Zengi's actions. Examining the situation from Zengi's perspective, it would all depend on what happened at Shayzar. Christian defeat would allow him dominion over Muslim Syria, but Christian victory would require an arrangement to be made whereby cordial relations with the emperor would be necessary to establish a new Komnenid-Zengid order in Syria, and Zengi would be able to deal with either one by simply marshaling his forces and seeing what happened at the siege. Whether such was the case or not however, Shayzar became the turning point of the campaign.

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[647] Ibn al-Adim, p. 674.
[648] Ibn al-Athir, pp. 2-3, 340-1.
[649] *Ibid*, p. 342.

The defenders first fought for the river, with Choniates remarking how their reed spears and swift horses were not enough to stop the imperial army.[650] Having then surrounded the city, John began an artillery barrage that caused immense damage to both the walls and the people of Shayzar, with Ibn Munqidh providing several anecdotes of friends killed by the siege engines.[651] Choniates refers to John dividing the army into Macedonian, "Keltic" and Pecheneg divisions and having them encircle the city, causing the defenders to retreat from the outer to the inner walls.[652] From here, John's troops stormed the wall breaches, only to have to fight house-by-house and street-by-street against the defenders, both within the city and the suburbs as the Muslims counter attacked, time and time again.[653] John is said to have arranged shifts for the troops to fight and rest to maintain the pressure on Shayzar, as well as fighting on the front line himself for which William of Tyre extolls him. William remarks on how the Emperor mixed with the ranks in breastplate and sword, untiringly fighting alongside them with his golden helmet marking him out, offering words of encouragement to all.[654]

Were it not for John's personal heroics at Berrhoia, well attested by both contemporaries and later historians, this description might seem exaggerated, but whether it is overemphasised or not, William is directly contrasting his portrayal of John with that of Raymond and Joscelin, who are described as playing games of chance in their tents, and encouraging others to join them rather than fight.[655] As such, John's heroics could be rhetorical on William's part, but as contemporaries

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[650] *NC*, p. 29.
[651] Usama Ibn-Munqidh, pp. 125-6. Bombardment also referred to in *NC*, p. 30; William of Tyre, 15.1, p. 674; *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς," pp. 263-4.
[652] *NC*, pp. 29-30.
[653] William of Tyre, 15.1, p. 675; *NC*, p. 30; Usama Ibn-Munqidh, pp. 125-6; Ibn al-Adim, p. 676; Ibn Al-Athir, p. 341.
[654] William of Tyre, 15.1, p. 675.
[655] Ibid.

and historians also agree it seems likely that even in his fifties John took an active role in the fighting. The "passive resistance" of Raymond and Joscelin goes unmentioned by other sources bar a hint by Ibn Al-Athir.[656] He tells us that Zengi may well have encouraged such divisions by writing to John and the Latins, warning the latter that they would lose everything if the emperor were successful, but also warning John as to the treachery of the Franks.[657] If this is not more rhetoric advocating the benefits of unified Islam, then it again displays Zengi hedging his bets rather than only encouraging division in the Christian army. As Lilie points out, the divisions were already present and these letters would never have been decisive in breaking up the army.[658] They did, however, allow Zengi to either claim he was working against the Christians all along should the emperor fail, or to reach an agreement with the Latins or Greeks should the campaign succeed, demonstrating again Zengi's shrewd grasp of the possible effects of this campaign.

Raymond and Joscelin may not have wished to risk themselves by street fighting in Shayzar, regardless of their personal desires for their future as imperial clients, but the fact remained that the siege had stretched overlong, with the death toll mounting over a town far less important than Aleppo, the goal of the campaign. Campaigning in midsummer in Syria would only make the water situation for the siege of Aleppo worse, even with more towns en route secured for safer supply lines, and April was already almost over. What was more, William of Tyre and Kinnamos tell us that as soon as the suburbs were taken the emir started suing for peace, offering treasure in exchange.[659] The former relates that John agreed to a short truce to evacuate women and children from the city, implying that channels of

[656] Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 127.
[657] Ibn Al-Athir, p. 341.
[658] Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 127.
[659] William of Tyre, 15.2, pp. 675-6; *JK*, p. 20.

negotiation were open between the two throughout, and that John was just as willing to act with kindness and justice to Muslims as Cilician Christians. This is noteworthy, for it recalls not only John's willingness to have Mas'ud of Ikonion as an imperial client, and thus that John was in no way carrying out a Christian 'crusade' in Syria, but was in fact out to restore the Roman empire as it had been in the early eleventh century, with the imperial territories around Antioch secured by autonomous rulers in the imperial orbit.

Aleppo itself had been such a region under Islamic rulers in the mid eleventh century, and there is no reason to suggest that John would not have been as satisfied with Islamic clients as Latin clients, as either would secure his interests in the region.[660] The continuing existence of Shayzar under a Muslim ruler, paying John tribute, would in no way break his promise to Raymond to give him a new principality based at Aleppo, and would still secure his supply lines for that siege. It would also convince other cities in the region to surrender to John as a sign that they would be well treated. Overall, the arguments against continuing to fight for Shayzar were mounting.

Where Choniates and William of Tyre attest that John could have taken the citadel had he been so minded, Kinnamos contends that the emperor accepted he could not take it, and therefore agreed to the generous terms given by the emir.[661] Such terms included a great deal of treasure, including a cross of Parian marble supposedly commissioned by Constantine, together with a sumptuous table, both of

[660] For Aleppo in the eleventh century, see M. Canard, *Histoire de la Dynastie des H'amdanides de Jazira et de Syrie* (Paris, 1953), pp. 831-838; W. Farag, "The Aleppo Question: A Byzantine-Fatimid Conflict of Interests in Northern Syria in the Later Tenth Century," *BMGS* 14 (1990), pp. 44-60; J. Haldon, *Palgrave Atlas of Byzantine History* (Basingstoke, 2005), p. 72. For a general bibliography and outline of the imperial eastern frontier in the tenth and eleventh century see A. Beihammer, "Strategies of Diplomacy and Ambassadors in Byzantine-Muslim Relations in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," *Ambassadeurs et ambassades au coeur des relations diplomatiques* 47 (2012), pp. 371-400, especially p. 371, n. 1.

[661] *NC*, p. 30; William of Tyre, 15.2, p. 676; *JK*, p. 20.

which were part of the loot seized from the tent of Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes at the battle of Manzikert.[662] There were also well-bred horses, silks, captives and other herd animals, in addition to the promise of an annual payment.[663] Choniates adds that John left after receiving word that Edessa was under threat, while Ibn al-Adin tells us that John retreated upon receiving word of a Muslim relief army approaching, such that he even set fire to his siege engines in his haste.[664] Finally William of Tyre claims John left in order to punish Raymond and Joscelin for their faithlessness, as he would not continue to labour on their behalf with no support.[665]

Most previous interpretations of John's withdrawal from Shayzar have posited that the focus on the treasure was to cover up John's failure to take the citadel, despite the passive resistance of Raymond and Joscelin.[666] Harris alone dissents, arguing that imperial prestige and giving the impression of dominance was John's key goal in order to gain recognition of his hegemony, and thus the capture of these treasures was much more important to John that any mere conquest.[667] As for the other options, the Muslim relief army mentioned by Ibn al-Adim is almost certainly a topos, demonstrating that when Islam unites any army would retreat. The threat to Edessa is more likely, as Gregory the Priest refers to "the town of Vahram," assumedly Edessa, being empty of men, and how he himself himself had to encourage the commander to take heart when Turks were in the region, and that

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[662] *NC*, pp. 30-1; *JK*, p. 20; *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς," pp. 264-5.
[663] Ibid. Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 71; *Prodromos*, XI, lines 177-80, 191-200; Ibn Munquidh additionally uses the analogy that Salah-al-Din once pillaged two castles excessively "as if he were pundering Romans," rather than treating the Christians and Jews as protected *dhimmis*, implying that when the Romans pillaged, they seized a lot of plunder: Usama Ibn-Munqidh, p. 172.
[664] *NC*, p. 30; Ibn al-Adin, p. 678; the burning of the siege engines is also noted by *Michael*, 16.8, p. 620, p. 245; Ibn al-Athir, p. 341, tells us that John merely abandoned them.
[665] William of Tyre (1986), 15.2, p. 676.
[666] Stevenson, *Crusaders in the East*, p. 141; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, pp. 127-8; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 41; Parnell, "John II Comnenus and Crusader Antioch," p. 154; Tonghini, *Shayzar*, p. 51.
[667] Harris, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 84.

later that year the town was sacked.[668] Michael the Syrian notes that a Turkish army raided Adana, taking the bishop captive and causing John to return north, which though unconfirmed by any other source confirms the evidence that John's use of the army in Syria had left some of his other conquests exposed.[669] Mohammed Danishmend may even have already returned to the region, as Smbat tells us that he advanced into Cilicia sometime in 1138, so Edessa and Cilicia might indeed have been under threat from the north.[670] William of Tyre remarks on how Joscelin was much in the emperor's council after Shayzar, perhaps referring to Joscelin wanting John to march north to secure his own lands rather than continue extending those of Raymond.[671] Whether Edessa was a factor in this retreat or not however, the court sources provide us with the contemporary rationalisations for the return to Antioch.

Both rhetors mention the plunder, but Basilakes adds the parallel that John was not fooled into making an "unsteady foothold" as Rome's true walls are not made of stones, but of "weapons and missiles and horses."[672] Though encased in high rhetorical style, this would appear to imply that Basilakes' portrayal of events was that when it came to capturing Shayzar the lives and resources would be better spent on another campaign, and that together with the treasure, taking the fight to the enemy could be counted a worthy success for this expedition in itself. He follows this by referencing Psalm 46, where God has: "worked wonders upon the earth cancelling wars as far as the Euphrates and Tigris," alluding to God working through John to bring peace through war, as John secured the empire's eastern frontier through this expedition.

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[668] Vahram being Matthew in Armenian. *Gregory the Priest*, p. 242.
[669] *Michael*, 16.8, p. 620, p. 245.
[670] *Smbat Sparapet*, p. 53.
[671] William of Tyre, 15.2, p. 676.
[672] Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, pp. 70-1.

Such political rhetoric would appear to favour the traditional interpretation that the Greek sources are covering up what was in the end a failure, even if the attempt itself did bring some benefits, but then Italikos' oration adds a new dimension. He likens the emir to Porus of Paurava and John to Alexander the Great.[673] The battle of Hydaspes in 326BC was one of Alexander's most costly victories, but the resistance shown by Porus impressed Alexander enough that he made him a satrap in his empire, incorporating the Punjab and opening up India to Greek influences. Italikos claims John took the kingship from the barbarian, then made him king again for not bearing ill will towards the empire, for John was standing up as a "guardian of all" and sought to "fasten by persuasion rulers from every side" to him.[674] The promise of yearly payments would certainly imply that John had hammered out some form of long term agreement with Shayzar, but whether he had secured the city as an imperial client or whether Italikos' oration was merely window dressing, the goal in both fact and rhetoric was the conversion of Syria into imperial territory surrounded by client rulers. Had Shayzar been conquered, it would have been given to Raymond, but the crucial city in Syria was Aleppo, and its capture the principal goal necessary to create a secure client state in Syria. John's withdrawal from Shayzar on terms was the most rational decision: winter was coming, he needed to preserve troops for the siege of Aleppo, and equally Raymond should be punished for not giving his all at Shayzar. Though not a huge victory, it was far from a defeat. The true setback to the emperor's ambitions in the region was in fact to come on his return to Antioch.

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[673] *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς," p. 265.
[674] Ibid.

Triumph and Tribulation in Antioch

The emperor's entry into Antioch was nothing short of glorious – adding yet more weight against the argument that Shayzar was an embarrassing defeat, rather than a cessation of hostilities on John's terms, and to John's benefit. This very triumph caused him to overplay his hand however, such that the he lost much of what he had gained in Syria through overestimating his authority over his Latin clients.

Choniates and Ibn al-Adim report that en route back to Antioch, some of Zengi's forces attempted to raid the army, but were wholly unsuccessful according to the former, with the sons of Zengi and the brother of emir Samuch taken.[675] The latter however notes a raid, and then further negotiations between John and Zengi, though not what exactly they concerned; with John's departure Kafartab was abandoned however, and was subsequently occupied by Zengi, perhaps implying some form of horse-trading between the rulers. This might be further implied by the fact that though Zengi finally brought Homs and Baalbek into his domain by marrying the emir's mother and Mahmud of Homs marrying Zengi's daughter, he did not attack anywhere else in Syria, so a truce may have been agreed.[676]

Regardless, the emperor's entrance into Antioch was a Roman triumph in the traditional sense, with the patriarch, the clergy and the lords of the city joining John and his son's soldiers in procession, first to the cathedral and then to the palace, accompanied by music and applause from the people.[677] During the triumph,

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[675] *NC*, p. 31; Ibn al-Adim, p. 679.
[676] Ibn al-Adim, p. 679; Ibn Al-Athir, pp. 349-50; Stevenson interprets this as Zengi prudently awaiting John's final departure. I would, however, contend that with John's departure the political situation changed, prompting Zengi's conquests, as discussed below. Stevenson, *Crusaders in the East*, p. 141.
[677] William of Tyre, 15.3, pp. 676-7; *NC*, p. 31; *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς," pp. 265-6; Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 73.

Raymond and Joscelin served as his equerries ("*Stratoris*"), and following it John was truly munificent both to lords and common citizens, sharing the wealth of his conquests thus far.[678]

More significant than these festivities and the acclamation of the Antiochenes was, however, the resolution of a thorn in John's side for the past eight years – for on the road back to Antioch John's prodigal brother and nephew, the traitorous Isaac and his son John, were reconciled with the emperor. [679] The details of the reunion are glossed over in our sources, though it seems their brother Adrian, now bishop John, was involved. It appears the emperor was happy to draw a line, with the sources remarking on their return to brotherly communion.[680] Since he had left Anatolia, Isaac had had no success in gathering any support against John, the emperor's long reign and continuing successes even in the face of disaster meant there was no appetite at home to replace him, and the long years of exile had surely worn Isaac out. Still, as long as Isaac and his son remained in the courts of imperial rivals they would always be a concern for John, so he would be well pleased by the reunion, particularly as it once more exhibited both his clemency and power as a ruler.

As he recuperated in the baths in the palace of Antioch in mid-summer, 1138, John's star was still at its zenith: Cilicia, Edessa and Antioch incorporated, Muslim towns and castles captured, and a huge amount plundered, especially from Shayzar. Now Isaac too had come back into the fold, and with a few weeks rest the

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[678] William of Tyre, 15.3, p. 677.
[679] Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν σεβαστὸν κῦρ Ἀδριανὸν," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 46; *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς," p. 265. Choniates also mentions the reconciliation, but not exactly when it occurred, listing it in his narrative after his account of the expedition was done. Prodromos writes poems referring to the *sebastokrator's* return to Constantinople with the emperor, so as Choniates suggests, the meeting must have occurred at some point before John's return, and with Isaac last placed in sources in Jerusalem, the road back to Antioch seems all but certain: *NC*, p. 32; *Prodromos*, XXXX-XXXXII.
[680] *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς," p. 265.

fight could be taken back to Aleppo, and with his clients' territory secured, their troops could join his army in Anatolia.

It was now that John made what must have appeared to him a reasonable request, but one that would undo many of his achievements in the east along with heightening external pressures. As with many of John's mistakes, this incident is all but ignored in the Greek sources, but William of Tyre relates it in full. The emperor called Raymond, Joscelin and their nobles to him, and asked that he might use the citadel to keep his war chest, and perhaps the treasure that they had taken thus far, and that he wished to base more troops in the city while he constructed more siege engines for Aleppo.[681] William notes that none of these demands were unreasonable, with no question that they had not been agreed the previous year, as John had not asked for Raymond to step down or anything unlawful, merely that this would be more efficient to continue the campaign against Aleppo. John's requests were, however, a step too far for his Latin clients. William makes it clear that asking the sons of crusaders, who had restored Antioch to Christendom by the blood of princes, to give it up to "effeminate Greeks" was beyond the pale.[682]

Joscelin is claimed to have been the ringleader standing against the emperor's demands, first asking for time to consult with other lords, and then sending out messages to the people not only relating the emperor's demand, but also that everyone would be forced to leave their homes to make way for Greeks.[683] This appears to have been because Raymond was a virtual prisoner in the palace rather than Raymond being more loyal to the emperor, but exactly why Joscelin was the

[681] William of Tyre, 15.3, p. 677. The reference that Cilicia was too far away to use as a base does, however, reveal that the newly conquered Cilician towns were considered a safe base and fully under imperial control, revealing the extent of John's success in that region at least.
[682] Ibid. p. 98.
[683] Ibid. pp. 98-100.

main resister is unknown with only William as a source. The effect was, however, the same: rioting across the city, with members of the imperial household dragged from their horses, whipped and put to the sword, a surprise for them to be sure as they had so recently been welcomed with applause and music from those same people. Joscelin spun a tale about how he himself was also attacked in an inn before he flung himself at the emperor's feet, cementing his portrayal in William's narrative as a wholly two-faced individual.[684] John responded by summoning the nobles to him and telling them that if the people were so set against his using the citadel and the city then he retracted his demand, and would withdraw to his camp outside the walls until the people were calmed once more. This retraction was however too late to repair the damage, especially because there was one further cause for the unrest not reported by William.

On 28th March 1138, Pope Innocent II had sent a letter addressed to all Latin Christians "faithful to God who are in the army of Constantinople or live in his land," which would have arrived in the east about this time.[685] In this letter Innocent describes John as a schismatic and advises all Latins that they will share in his damnation if they aid him in attacking Antioch or other places that faithful Christians may possess.[686] There were two major causes for the pope turning on John: one was likely his replacement of Latin bishops in Cilicia, combined with a threat to replace the Latin patriarch of Antioch too if Ibn al-Qalanisi is to be believed. Such policies had no doubt earned him the label of schismatic in the pope's eyes, but more decisive still was the changed diplomatic situation in Italy.

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[684] Ibid. p. 99.
[685] "universis dei fidelibus Latinis, qui sunt in exercitu Regis Constantinopolitani vel in terra sua habitant", G. Bresc-Bautier, *Le Cartulaire du Chapitre de Saint-Sepulcre de Jerusalem* (Paris, 1984), No. 10, pp. 51-2. The date of this letter has been debated, but with the context of external events Lilie's dating to 1138 appears to be correct: Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, pp. 130-3.
[686] "rex Constantinopolitanus, qui se ab unitate ecclesie dividit" and "Antiocham vel alia loca que fidelis Christiani possident", ibid. p. 52.

The death of Lothar in 1137 had led to a slow slackening of the war against Roger, as each of the maritime republics made peace, recognising that they needed the goodwill of whoever ruled southern Italy to maintain their trading dominance, as the Norman kingdom threatened all of their shipping in the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian seas while at the same time actively wanting peace with the republics.[687] When in the late 1130s it seemed likely that the alliance of Lothar, Innocent and John would prevail, the Italian city states sided with them, but with Lothar dead, his heir Conrad involved in a civil war, and John in the east, Pisa, Venice and Genoa settled their differences with Roger.[688]

This in turn left the papacy with no allies against Roger, but with the death of Anti-Pope Anaclectus in 1138, Roger was keen to be recognised by Innocent and then all would be resolved. [689] This reconciliation was only to occur with the enforced treaty of Mignano in 1139, but in the meantime Innocent and indeed the whole Italian peninsula was aligning itself with Roger, and thus turning from allies to being neutral or hostile towards John.[690]

Such a realignment not only contributed to Latins in the east turning against the Emperor, but his western provinces were now no longer secure from a Norman kingdom freed from fighting on its home turf. Together with this potential threat, reports would have begun filtering in that not only was Mohammed Danishmend threatening Cilicia, but Mas'ud of Ikonion was threatening his Anatolian territories

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[687] G. Gallasso, "Social and Political Developments in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries", *The Normans in Sicily and Southern Italy Lincei Lectures 1974* (Oxford, 1977), p. 61; D. Abulafia, *The Two Italies Economic Relations between the Norman Kingdom of Sicily and the Northern Communes* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 55.
[688] Ibid. p. 76.
[689] Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, pp. 130-1.
[690] Ibid; D. Matthew, *The Norman Kingdom of Sicily* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 52.

along the Sangarios River.[691] Overall: John had lingered too long in the east and the rest of the empire was beginning to suffer from his absence.

The imperial camp outside Antioch would have had many voices clamouring for a return, and so when a delegation arrived from Antioch assuring the emperor of their loyalty, it allowed John to leave Syria with his dignity intact.[692] William tells us that John was in such a rage that he was once more considering taking Antioch by force, and that these envoys were sent to assuage his anger. Whether such was the case or not, the embassy, followed by one further audience of the emperor with Raymond, Joscelin and other nobles, reconciled John with his Latin clients enough for honour to be satisfied.

Without the emperor camped outside the walls, Antioch and Edessa's allegiance as imperial clients was now in name only. John's seemingly reasonable demand for security for his treasure and a base for his siege engines had threatened the Latins' identity as the successors to the crusaders who had bought Antioch with the blood of heroes, and it lost him control of the city at exactly the moment external pressures from Anatolia and Italy recalled him from the east. It was not any 'defeat' at Shayzar that halted John's conquest of Aleppo, but his ill-judged demands and events in the wider world.

Though John left Syria without Antioch and Edessa as loyal clients, and so could not include their soldiers in his armies to bring overwhelming forces to bear against the Turks of Anatolia, Kinnamos was not wrong when he summed up John's expedition as one where much had been achieved in a short time. Compared to the

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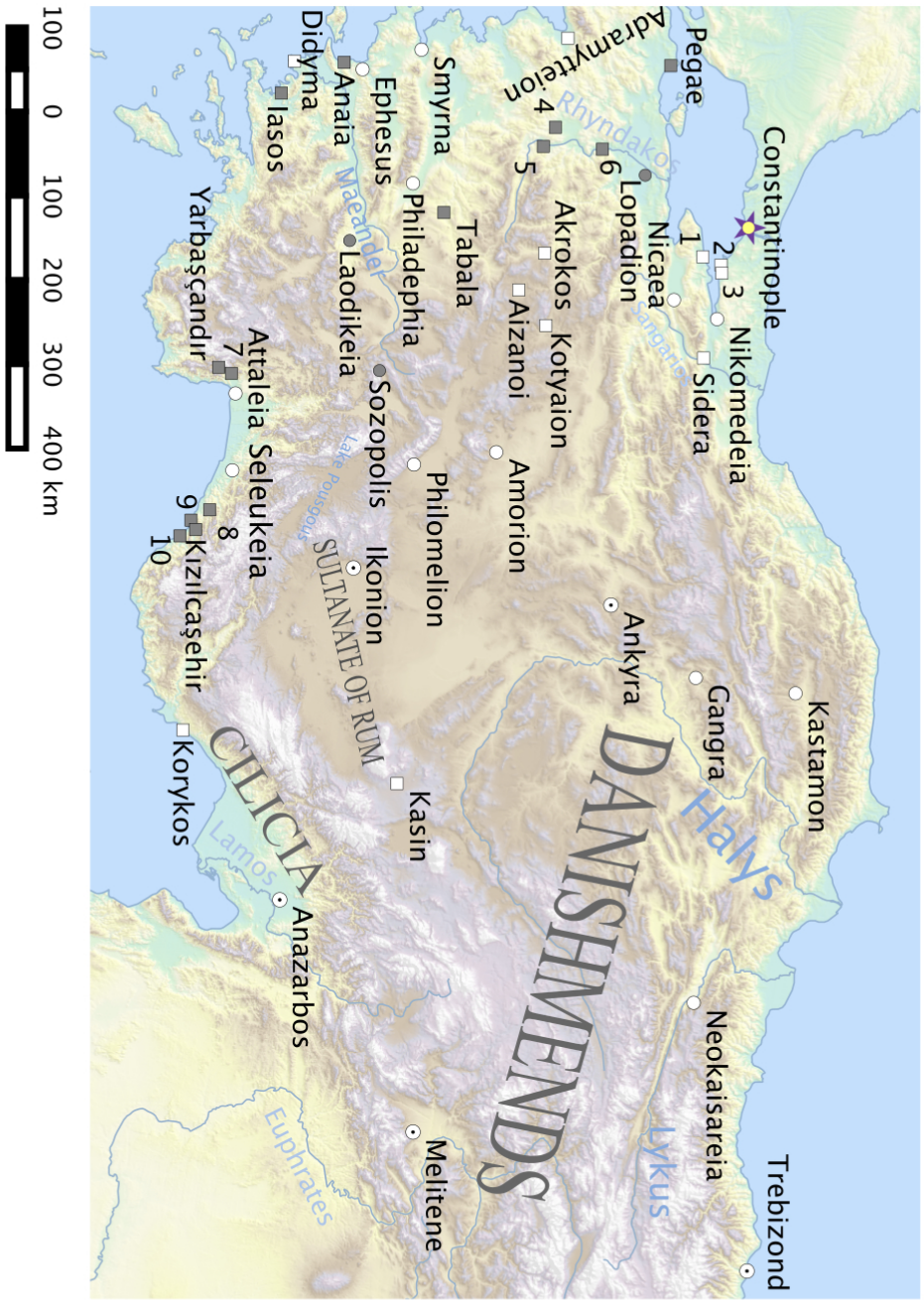
[691] Choniates only mentions that Ikonion had had taken advantage of John's absence to attack, but he mentions the Turks attacking along the Sangarios in early 1139 so the implication is there. By contrast, Italikos directly mentions how barbarian neighbours on the Tigris and Euphrates and those on the Sangarios are related, and that the people of Ishmael had broken treaties and attacked Bithynia: *NC*, p. 31; *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς," p. 267.
[692] William of Tyre, 15.5, pp. 680-1.

slow conquests of the tenth century John's annexations were truly exceptional, particularly as they were in fact fairly secure, with even the eastern Latins lined up to be brought into the fold upon the emperor's return.[693] Cilicia had been conquered and the Rupenid family was under house arrest in Constantinople. Antioch and Edessa had acknowledged John's overlordship by treaty, such that he had more than Devol binding them to him legally. Both crusader states had been strengthened, with the fight taken to the Muslims in Syria rather than the Christians being on the defensive. John's achievements in the east were not as great as they would have been had May of 1138 gone differently, but they were still considerable, and could be built upon with a further expedition. That expedition would be a few years away, however, as John first had to restore order and stability to the rest of his empire.

[693] *JK*, p. 21.



Map Six: John's Anatolian Fortress Network

Chapter Eight

Security in Anatolia and the Return East

The imperial retreat from Syria was by no means passive. John re-entered an arena that had become increasingly unstable in his absence. Ikonion was once more raiding Roman territory, such that John sent a division of his army north against them.[694] Choniates relates that this took the form of a counter raid, despoiling the land, "taking captive both men and animals of all kind, draft animals as well as those suited for riding," which demonstrates that the empire could use the Turks' own tactics against them, with this note by Choniates echoing Michael the Syrian's description of Turkish raids that had occurred while John was away.[695] Though John did return briefly to the capital, our sources reveal that he barely tarried there, despite his three-year absence and poor personal health, for Anatolian stability was not to be achieved with only one successful raid against Ikonion.[696]

Though Mohammed had retreated from John near Edessa, his defeat of his brothers meant that the Danishmendids were once more united, such that Mohammed could launch attacks against Bithynia and Cilicia simultaneously, as stated plainly by Italikos as a key reason for John's return.[697] A two-pronged assault indeed appears to have been the Danishmendid strategy, as the Turks both attacked northern Cilicia and crossed the Sangarios into Bithynia in early 1139. The ailing John's mere presence in Bithynia apparently averted the Danishmendid's raiding in the region, perhaps indicating that this was a Danishmendid feint, and Cilicia was

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[694] *NC*, p. 31; *Michael*, 16.9, p. 622, p. 248.
[695] Ibid.
[696] Both Choniates and Prodromos note how John set out on another expedition despite his illness, indeed Prodromos praises him all the more for it: *NC*, p. 33; *Prodromos*, XVI, lines 49-56.
[697] *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς," p. 267.

the intended thrust. Michael the Syrian tells us that the fortresses of Vakha and Kapniskerti, fruits of John's autumn Cilician campaign, were taken by Mohammed.[698]

The Danishmendids were, therefore, once more John's most dangerous foe in Anatolia, and dealing with them became his priority for the year ahead. Doing so was primarily to secure his current territories, but conquest of new territory would also demonstate renewed imperial strength to both current and prospective client rulers such as Ikonion, and so was an important strategic goal in and of itself. Historians who advocate John's major strategic priority being Antioch over Anatolia or other frontiers have been focusing on the wrong issue.[699] Whether John brought the crusaders into the imperial fold to take on the Turks together with his other clients, or conquered the Turks and subsequently the crusaders, the goal of imperial restoration was the same, as the political rhetoric makes clear.[700] Security in one would lead to security in the other, and with the Danishmendids on the offensive under Mohammed, Anatolia became the primary theatre of war once more, and had to be tackled before John could return to Syria.

As for Ikonion, no further offensives are mentioned by any source at this time, aside from an intriguing note by Choniates that John took advantage of a "cessation of hostilities" to build a fortress at Anchyrous on the Makestos in Phrygia.[701] It is unclear whether this was a formal truce between John and Mas'ud, or whether Mas'ud simply pulled back now that John and the imperial army had returned. Either way, there was no peace with Mohammed Danishmend, so John's

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[698] Vagha and Gaban in the original, *Michael*, 16.9, p. 622, p. 248.
[699] Birkenmeier, *Development of the Komnenian Army*, p. 47; Parnell, "John II Comnenus and Crusader Antioch," p. 150; Lilie is more equivocal on the subject, making no judgement as to whether John's strategic priority lay in Antioch or elsewhere.
[700] See Chapter Nine.
[701] *NC*, p. 33, p. 19.

building of Anchyrous was to secure his Phrygian territories in order that he could focus on Mohammed and the still rebellious Trebizond. The building of Anchyrous was, however, the culmination of a fortress building strategy John had adopted throughout his reign: one that has received little previous attention from academics.

Security in Anatolia through a Fortification Network

This lack of scholarship is in no small part due to yet another hole in the sources, as aside from Anchyrous and Lopadion, none of John's great building works are mentioned by the narrative histories, though on closer inspection there are some hints as to a building policy. Lopadion and Anchyrous alone have been interpreted as reflecting the military character of John's reign, their function merely that of *aplekta* [supply forts mentioned in tenth century military manuals], as a logistical back up to the emperor's offensive campaigns.[702] This interpretation however limits the role these fortresses played in cementing the Komnenian reconquest of western Anatolia, such that the thirteenth-century 'Empire of Nicaea' was a viable successor state based in these lands fifty years after the whole region had been overrun by the Turks.[703] Indeed, Choniates describes Manuel's fortification of threatened Anatolian cities as the act "most beneficial to common welfare" of anything Manuel ever performed, and from the number of fortifications John built, we can appreciate the benefits they brought to security in Anatolia, and what form John's defensive strategy took.[704]

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[702] "Anonymous Byzantine Treatise on Strategy", in *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, tr. G. T. Dennis (Washington D.C., 1985), in particular Ch. 9; J. Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565-1204* (London, 1999), p. 151; Birkenmeier, *Development of the Komnenian Army*, p. 150; Papageorgiou, *John II Komnenos*, pp. 4-5.
[703] Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 124.
[704] *NC*, p. 150; c.f. N. Matheou, "Khoniates' Asia Minor: Earthly and Ultimate Causes of Decline," in *Landscapes of Power Selected Papers from the XV Oxford University Byzantine Society*

The centre of this strategy was Lopadion, a place where John spent more time than at any other location save Constantinople itself. Though not a newly constructed settlement as the contemporary sources imply, the long walls and towers put around the more than ten hectare site demonstrate how this was the jewel in the crown of John's Anatolian building projects: a small city large enough to support the court away from Constantinople, while its location on the Rhyndakos and the east-west road put it in constant contact with the rest of the Anatolian frontier and the remainder of the empire.[705]

Fig. 29: Aerial view of Lopadion above, showing the bridge across the Rhyndakos at the top right and the towers of the south wall. The towers are shown more clearly in the photo below. The bridge foundations today on land show clearly how the river used to be much wider as well. Source: Google Maps.

International Graduate Conference, ed. M. Lau, C. Franchi, and M. Di Rodi (Oxford, 2014), pp. 222-3.

[705] M. Lau, "*Ioannoupolis*: Lopadion as 'City' and Military Headquarters under Emperor Ioannes II Komnenos," *The City and the Cities – Selected Papers from the XVI Oxford University Byzantine Society International Graduate Conference*, ed. N. Matheou, L. Bondioli and T. Kampanaki (Leiden, 2016) [Forthcoming].

Fig. 30: South-east corner Tower of Lopadion, showing the Komnenian brick cloisonné masonry.

Fig. 31: Bridge over the Rhyndakos, showing a rebuilding that may have occurred following an earthquake, located next to the ruins of a 19th-century bridge and with the modern road bridge marginally further downriver, demonstrating the enduring importance of this location as a crossing point (despite the contraction of the town due to the silting up of the river shown clearly in the first photo), and how, with a wider river, this bridge would have been essential.

Though Choniates and Kinnamos mention only Lopadion and Anchyrous as being built by John, Foss and Winfield have identified others by their stylistic and material construction, along with strategic location, as also being from his reign.[706] Further sites have also been identified by Deluigi on the same grounds using more recent archaeological studies, raising the possibility that with further work even more fortresses will come to light as being from the reign of John.[707]

To begin with the sites Foss and Winfield identified: less than 100km north and downriver from Anchyrous is the modern village of Sultançayır, site of a large Constantinian Bridge over the Makestos, which at the time of Foss's study had some remnants of a Byzantine fortification with the same decorative zig-zag cloisonné masonry as Anchyrous.[708] Where Sultançayır is on the same river as Anchyrous, the ruins of Pegadia are on the same road, only 30 kilometres to the west and at a site that Anna Komnene mentions was threatened in her father's day by the Turks as they sought to break back through to the coast. Thus, this would be an obvious site for John to establish control, so that he could expand west from there by further fort building.[709] Anchyrous itself was built near the banks of the Makestos (modern Susurluk), to the south of the modern town of Balıkesir. As well as guarding the river, it is on the main Roman road between the Mysian plain and

[706] Foss and Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications*, pp. 146-7.
[707] Deluigi, *Winter in the Land of Rûm*
[708] Foss and Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications*, pp. 191-192; see fig. 34 for the site as Foss saw it. Unfortunately during my fieldwork in 2013 the site seems to have disappeared, while the Makestos bridge is also in an increasingly dilapidated state compared to its appearance in 1902: T. Wiegand: "Reisen in Mysien," *MDAI, AA* 29 (1904), pp. 300-301.
[709] C. Foss, "The Defences Of Asia Minor against the Turks" *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 27 (1982), pp. 189-191; *AK*, 14.3, pp. 434-5. Recent mining operations have caused huge damage to the Sultançayır site as viewed in 2013, but as can be seen from Foss' images, the zig-zag pattern was in evidence as a determiner of stylistic dating. This was in addition to the *terminus post quem* of Alexios' reign established by the *Alexiad*, and the unlikelihood that Manuel would build a fortress so far behind his borders (and that it would not be noted in the better sources of his reign if he had). As for Pegadia, there was very little remaining even when the site was first surveyed in the 1830s, but the remains of nine towers can be seen according to Z. Mercangöz, "Bizans Çağında Balıkesir," *Bitek Kent: Balıkesir*, ed. F. Özdem (Istanbul, 2003), p. 39; Deluigi, *Winter in the Land of Rûm*, pp. 70-2.

the by then restored provinces of Lydia and Ionia, making its location central to the major arteries of transport and communication across this region of Anatolia.[710] The largest towers are also the ones that face the road, which, coupled with the highly decorative nature of the fortress, demonstrates the importance of the visual statement it made about the restoration of imperial power in the region, as indeed it has more in common with contemporary church buildings than other fortresses.[711]

This could imply that John may also have been building churches and other structures in the region using the same masons, or he merely wished his new fortress at the crossroads to be particularly magnificent, perhaps serving as an "imperial monument" to stability in the region.[712] Either way, the decoration of such a fortification is an expression of the wealth and power of John's imperial government. The amount of patronage and resources lavished upon a region with at least three fortresses built in close proximity by the same emperor is equally striking, and this is in addition to the role of fortified cities such as Laodikeia and Sozopolis, recaptured in John's first Anatolian campaigns.[713] The two larger towers

[710] Foss, "Defences of Asia Minor against the Turks," p. 162.
[711] Two Churches in Kastoria, Greece, exhibit the same form of cloisonné masonry, with that of *Hagioi Anargyroi* dated to the reign of John by Ćurčić. Epstein disagrees with this dating, arguing for a tenth-century date for the church; however, she dates another Kastoria church, *H. Nikolaos tou Kasnitze*, to the twelfth century on the basis of its paintings, and it too has similar decorative cloisonné masonry, therefore whether *Hagioi Anargyroi* is twelfth-century or not, the cloisonné style is: A. W. Epstein, "Middle Byzantine Churches of Kastoria: Dates and Implications", *The Art Bulletin* 62 (1980), pp. 198-9; S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans from Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent* (London, 2010), p. 381; see figs. 35-6.
[712] Foss, "Defences of Asia Minor against the Turks," p. 162.
[713] Ibid. 153-7; Deluigi agrees with Foss that the walls of Sozopolis were constructed by Romanos, but also posits that John made serious repairs to the site, with rows of flat stones used in a cloisonné technique similar to that usually used with brick in repaired parts of the site that use much smaller stones overall: Deluigi, *Winter in the Land of Rûm*, pp. 66-7. The site history of Laodikeia is more complex, in particular because the exact location of the city is uncertain after the city moved after an earthquake in late antiquity. The historiographical problem is not helped by seemingly contradictory or incomplete evidence, whereby Choniates tells us that John built a wall around Laodikeia, but then during the reign of Manuel the city is unwalled, while Odo of Deuil remarks the site was evacuated due to the advancing crusaders in 1148, presumedly because of a lack of walls: *NC*, 12, 124; Odo of Deuil, pp. 113-4. What is lacking in this analysis is that John could easily have built a fortress on a hill outside Laodikeia (suggested by Kinnamos with his remark that John left behind a garrison and

of Anchyrous may also reveal that this fortress was built quickly and economically, as, indeed, Choniates' account implies: the original five towers may have dominated the hilltop, and the main gate is protected by the right angle of the wall while the east is protected by the drop down to the river, showing its design was well thought through, but this was not an invasion-stopping grand fortification such as contemporary crusader castles with curtain walls and earthworks.[714] Nor, however, was it meant to be, as it was not a single fortress but part of a network of fortifications along the roads, rivers and coasts of Anatolia, that itself improved upon the network built by Alexios I.

Fig. 32: Aerial view of Anchyrous, demonstrating how its location has changed since Foss' study by the construction of the İkizcetepeler Dam in 1980. Source: Google Maps

plenty of supplies, *JK*, pp. 5-6), though Deluigi's general analysis about what that meant for John's strategic plan will be discussed below: Deluigi, *Winter in the Land of Rûm*, pp. 63-6.

[714] On contemporary crusader castles that were likely influenced by Byzantine fortifications originally, see H. Kennedy, *Crusader Castles* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 112-3; also for both the visual and practical value of Byzantine fortifications, see N. Bakirtzis, "The Practice, Perception and Experience of Byzantine fortification" in *The Byzantine World*, ed. P. Stephenson (London, 2010), p. 356.

Fig. 33: Anchyrous from across the dam, showing the two monumental, decorative towers and its position in the landscape.

Fig. 34: Anchyrous as Foss saw it from the old road: Foss, "Defences of Asia Minor against the Turks," p. 162.

Fig. 35: Church of SS Cosmas and Damian in Kastoria: Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, p. 381.

Fig. 36: Church of *Hagios Nikolaos tou Kasnitze*, Kastoria, showing cloisonné, in Epstein, "Middle Byzantine Churches in Kastoria," p. 196.

Fig. 37: Sultançayır Makestos Constantinian bridge in 2014, demonstrating how the site has degraded since both Foss' fieldwork and particularly since Wiegand's fieldwork in the early 20th century.

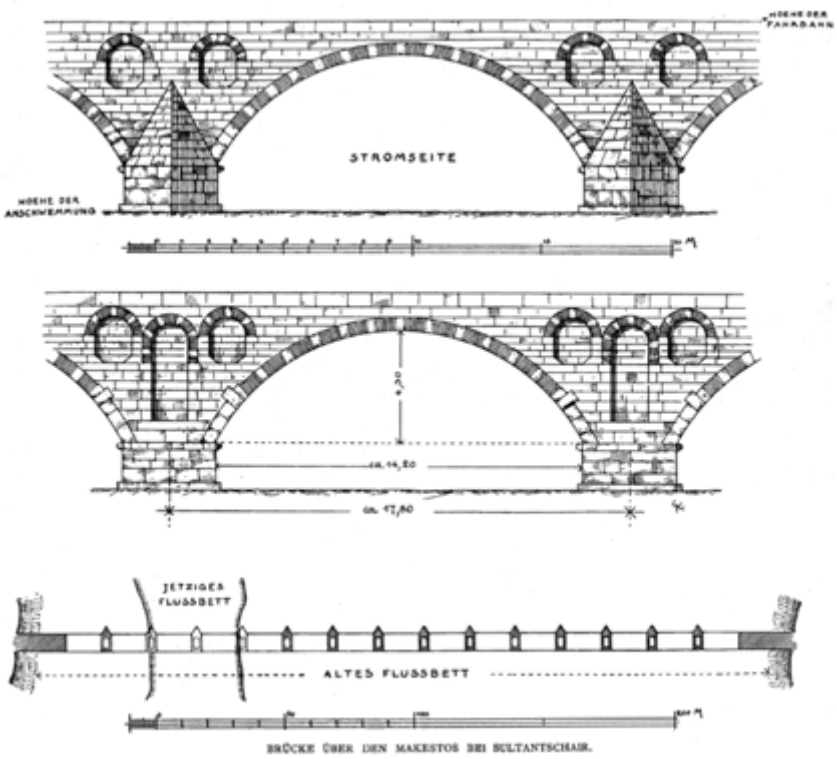

Fig. 38: Plan of the Makestos bridge, Wiegand, "Reisen in Mysien," p. 301.

Fig. 39: Surviving Sultançayır Tower as Foss saw it, with similar cloisonné to Anchyrous: Foss, "Defences of Asia Minor against the Turks," p. 162.

Fig. 40: Pegadia Tower cloisonné, from Mercangöz, "Bizans Çağında Balıkesir," p. 37.

Building on the work of Foss, Deluigi's study uses archeological surveys to identify further fortresses using the same criteria of matching cloisonné masonry with sites with connections to John and other Komnenoi. These include the walls of Trebenna and Yarbaşçandır Kalesi near Attaleia, likely built in 1141-2 as John is described as spending time there to "bring order to the surrounding provinces."[715] So too the fortress of Tabala, which guards the eastern approach to Philadelphia whilst being equidistant between the southern fortifications at Sozopolis and Laodikeia, and the northern ones at Anchyrous and Pegadia, and at the same time being on the banks of the river Hermos.[716] Equally four fortresses on the southern Anatolian coast, to the east of Seleukeia, contain Komnenian chapels in four cases (Antiocheia-ad-Cragum, Kalanoros and those at the citadel of Syedra and the port of Iotape) and one the walls of which use the same masonry as the chapel (Kızılcaşehir).[717] They were almost certainly constructed (or at least garrisoned and their chapels built) after John's Cilician campaign, to guard the coastal road, facilitate naval operations by defending harbours and, indeed, for the symbolic value of demonstrating renewed imperial control over the region.

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[715] See below; *JK*, 22; *NC*, 37; Deluigi, *Winter in the Land of Rûm*, pp. 72-4, based on the archaeological surveys of E. Akyürek, "The Bey Dağları in the Byzantine Period: Trebenna, Neapolis and their Territories," *The IIIrd Symposium on Lycia 07-10 November 2005, Antalya Symposium Proceedings*, ed. K. Dörtlük, B. Varkıvanç, T. Kahya, J. Des Courtils, M. Doğan Alparslan, and R. Boyraz (Antalya, 2006), pp. 6-7 for Yarbaşçandır Kalesi; *idem*, "On İkinci Yüzyılda Batı Pamphylia'da Bizans Varlığıμ Arkeolojik Buluntular IBığında bir Değerlendirme," *1. Uluslararası Sevgi Gönül Bizans Araştırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiriler*, A. Ödekan, E. Akyürek, and N. Necipoğlu (Istanbul, 2010), p. 234 for Trebenna.

[716] Foss assigns the site as a Laskarid foundation, while Deluigi sees the northern wall as Komnenian: C. Foss, "Late Byzantine Fortifications in Lydia," *JÖB* 28 (1979), p. 319; Deluigi, *Winter in the Land of Rûm*, p. 125.

[717] Antiocheia-ad-Cragum: G. Huber, *A Survey of Coastal Cities in Western Cilicia*, (Ankara, 1967), p. 21; Deluigi, *Winter in the Land of Rûm*, p. 123; Kalanoros: S. Redford, *Landscape and the State in Medieval Anatolia: Seljuk Gardens and Pavilions of Alanya, Turkey* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 14-5; N. Krabbenhöft, Krabbenhöft, N, *A Veneer of Power: Thirteenth-Century Seljuk Frescoes on the Walls of Alanya and Some Recommendations for their Preservation*, (Unpublished Masters Thesis, Koç University, Istanbul) (2011), pp. 51-2; Deluigi, *Winter in the Land of Rûm*, pp. 74-5; Syedra and Iotape: Huber, *Coastal Cities*, p. 38; Redford, *Medieval Anatolia*, p. 19; Deluigi, *Winter in the Land of Rûm*, p. 123; Kızılcaşehir: Redford, *Medieval Anatolia*, pp. 16-8; S. Doğan "Byzantine Surveys in and around Alanya in 2005," *AnMed: Anadolu Akdenizi Arkeoloji Haberleri* 4, (2006), p. 65; Deluigi, *Winter in the Land of Rûm*, pp. 75-6.

Building upon Deluigi's study, the same small fortress network dynamic is also to be seen on the western coast of Anatolia, together with one further major site in the sea of Marmora that is included in the latter study. These sites once again indicate much about the realities of John's control over these regions, and the Komnenian ability to project military power through the navy.

The smaller pair of fortresses both overlook the Aegean coast: Anaea, near Ephesos, and Iasos further south in the gulf of Karia, and both are in better condition than Sultançayır and Pegadia.[718] Anaea sits on a hill overlooking the coast protecting the plain and the Aegean Sea lanes.[719] It too has double or triple courses of brick between stone masonry and an irregular vertical cloisonné present in its sixteen towers (fig. 44), enclosing an area of 130m across. There is a larger tower on the corner facing the plain (the most vulnerable part of the fortress, and a good lookout point for any enemy) and three around the small gateway less than 15m away, which, in a similar manner to Anchyrous would provide effective use of enfilading fire with arrows, which is evidenced by numerous slits.[720] Iasos was a classical city that was still inhabited with a reduced population in this period, with the fortress being the fortified acropolis of the old city. It similarly overlooks the sea in the Karian Gulf as well as the main coastal road, and though there is much greater use of spolia in the construction of the fortress, the distinctive Komnenian brick cloisonné is still very much in evidence, and these walls are in addition to a tower built to defend the approach to the western port in the late eleventh century.[721]

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[718] Anaea: W. Müller-Wiener, "Mittelalterliche Befestigungen im südlichen Ionien", *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 11 (1961), p. 70; Foss and Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications*, p. 146; Iasos: "Fortificazioni Urbane di Frontiera in Asia Minore: Le Difese di Iasos di Caria in Età Bizantina," *La Transgiordania nei secoli XII-XIII e le 'frontiere' del Mediterraneo medievale*, ed. G. Vannini and M. Nucciotti (Oxford, 2012), pp. 449-457.
[719] Foss, and Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications*, p. 146; figs. 44-5
[720] Foss, "Defences of Asia Minor against the Turks," pp. 184-5.
[721] Cornieti, "Le Difese di Iasos di Caria," pp. 451-5; See fig. 46.

These two forts are, therefore, both sited at strategic positions along the coastal road, built to be competently defensive but on a small scale. As with those fortresses further inland, their presence would deter and defend against raiders, and being on transport routes could support the defence of the entire local region, increasing the speed of any imperial response as well as reassuring and settling the local population.

Fig. 41: Walls of Trebenna, Akyürek, "The Bey Dağları in the Byzantine Period," p. 16.

Fig. 42: Yarbaşçandır Tower, Akyürek, "The Bey Dağları in the Byzantine Period", p. 16.

Fig. 43: Aerial view of Kızılcaşehir, from Google Maps 2015.

Fig. 44: Anaea near Ephesos, displaying all but identical cloisonné masonry to Anchyrous.

Fig. 45: View from Anaea down to the sea.

Fig. 46: Iasos, demonstrating greater use of spolia mixed with brick cloisonné, unsurprising for the number of antique ruins in the area.

More significant is, however, the construction of both walls and cisterns at Pegae on the Anatolian coast of the sea of Marmora. Pegae was built on the site of the classical city of Priapos before being added to by the Laskarids in the thirteenth century, giving the site a convoluted archaeological history that has previously hidden John's influence. The walls have less cloisonné than is used in his other

fortresses, suggesting a later date due to their similarity with the Laskarid fortifications, but the towers use prodigious cloisonné of the same style. Müller-Wiener broadly dated the fortress to between the late Komnenian and early Laskarid periods, and then goes on to mention why John, Manuel and the Laskarids would all have been interested in the site.[722] Foss cross-references it historically and suggests Alexios may have first used it in his reconquest of the west Anatolian coast, but in his book with Winfield he focuses entirely upon the Laskarid aspects of the fortress, causing him to date it firmly to the thirteenth century.[723] Aylward's more recent study has, however, determined that they have assigned too late a date to it, and I concur with his findings, and indeed the events of John's reign give them further support.[724]

The fortress itself and the city walls of Pegae are constructed of mortared rubble, faced with a mixture of ashlar masonry and brick, brick and mortar, and fieldstones laid horizontally with some courses of brick. The fortress seems similar in many ways to Anchyrous, including use of decorative 'herringbone' cloisonné (fig. 48). As shown in fig. 47, the fortifications consist of a fortress on the north side and then a wall running across the peninsula with multiple towers. Most of these seem to consist of an outer, pentagonal shaped tower with signs of rounded masonry within them (fig. 50).

[722] Müller-Wiener, "Ionien," p. 73.
[723] Foss, *Defences of Asia Minor against the Turks*, p. 185; Foss and Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications*, pp. 154-5.
[724] W. Aylward "The Byzantine fortifications at Pegae (Priapus) on the Sea of Marmara", *Studia Troica* 16 (2006), pp. 179-203; Foss and Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications*, pp. 154-5; also used by Deluigi, *Winter in the Land of Rûm*, pp. 76-7, who agrees with Aylward's conclusions.

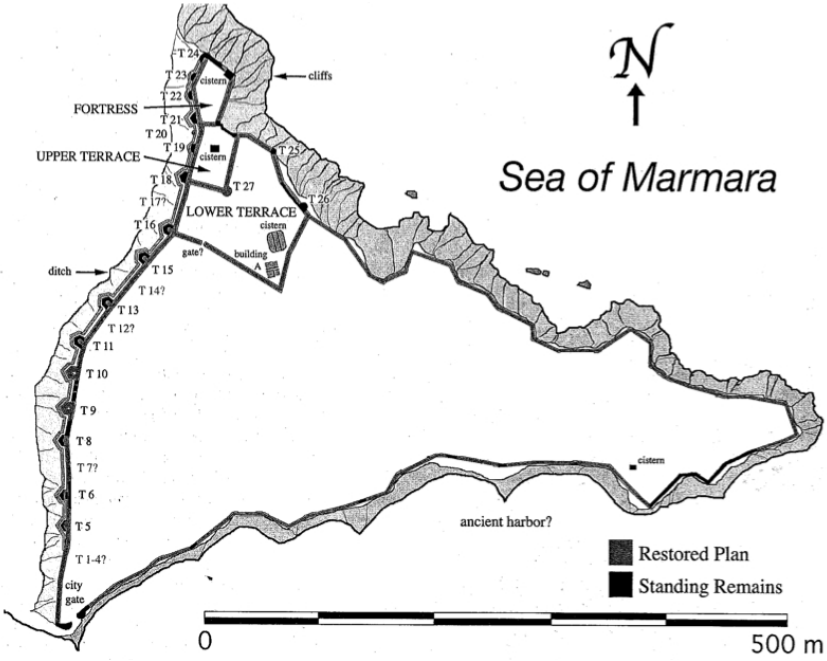

Fig. 47: Pegae plan, from Aylward, "Pegae," p. 180.

Fig. 48: Decorative 'Herringbone' cloisonné, Pegae, from Aylward, "Pegae," p. 187.

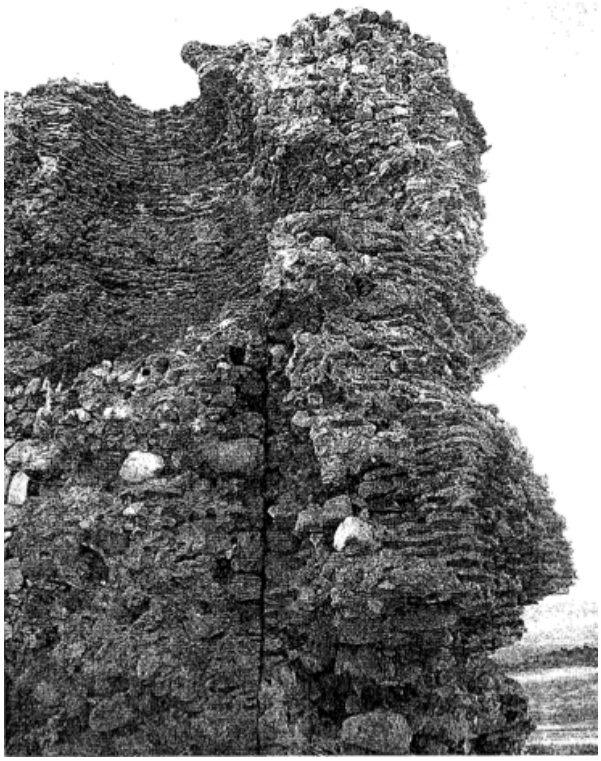

Fig. 49: Pegae Tower 16 (Aylward's numbering), showing the rounded tower on the left with alternating courses of fieldstone and brick, with a brick addition on the right that formed a pentagonal tower: Aylward, "Pegae," p. 191.

Fig. 50: Komnenian masonry below Laskarid at Pegae: Deluigi, *Winter in the Land of Rûm*, p. 146.

Fig. 51: Pegae towers and the Sea of Marmora, Deluigi, *Winter in the Land of Rûm*, p. 146.

Fig. 52: Pegae fortress cistern, showing mortared rubble and ceramic shards in plaster: Aylward, "Pegae," p. 195.

The crux of the dating of this fortress is the analysis of the towers. Foss and Winfield suggest that there were two phases of construction: the first closely followed by the second. The first was after 1204 when the Latin empire held Pegae, and the second was in 1224 when it was reconquered by Vatatzes and became one of the most important bases in the Nicaean empire.[725] Laskarid fortifications are

[725] Foss and Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications*, pp. 154-5.

characterised by pentagonal towers, along with *proteichisma* (an outer wall to prevent undermining and provide additional defence for defenders, as in the walls of Constantinople or Nicaea). The issue with a thirteenth-century dating is the change in materials between the towers, which is difficult to explain if they were built chronologically so close together, and indeed it is unlikely pentagonal towers would replace round towers in good repair within thirty years rather than just being restored. Also the idea that Pegae was not fortified before the thirteenth century does not accord with the textual sources. *The Historia de Expeditione Friderici Imperatoris* described it as a city (and, therefore, large and walled) where the crusaders rested because they "needed a market", also demonstrating Pegae's importance to trade, and ability to supply an army.[726] Additionally, in 1190 it is described as being "inhabited by Latins."[727] If true, then this lends weight to Pegae as an important centre of trade and logistical supply in this region, demonstrating that Latin traders and settlers within the Empire, who increased significantly in the last decades of the twelfth century, chose this site to take over and run.[728] Foss reinforces this with his analysis that the Latin Empire of Constantinople attempted to use Pegae as a staging post for conquest in Anatolia, and that after its capture by Vatatzes it became one of the most important ports and military bases in the successor state.[729] In addition to the similarity of decorative cloisonné to Anchyrous, and the similar construction with rubble cores, fieldstone and brick courses used there and all the other forts described, a date to John or Manuel's reign for the earlier towers is all but certain, with John's reign being more likely due to

[726] "The History of the Expedition of the Emperor Frederick," *The Crusade of Frederick Barbarossa*, tr. G. Loud (Farnham, 2010), p. 96.
[727] Ibid.
[728] Vasiliev, A.A, *History of the Byzantine Empire Volume* II (Madison, 1952), pp. 486-7.
[729] Foss and Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications*, p. 154.

the region being much more settled by Manuel's reign, while it was still in the balance during John's.

If this were so, a crucial part of John's construction work at this fortress was the building of four cisterns spread across the peninsula. They show different methods of construction, and make greater use of *spolia* than any of the fortresses so far covered aside from Iasos. This does, however, stand to reason as a large, mostly deserted ancient city on both the Pegae peninsula and at Iasos would have been the obvious places from which to take building materials, though clues to the date of construction must be found elsewhere. One clue is to be located in the fortress cistern, which must have been built at the same time as the fortress as it's eaves are designed to channel water into the cistern.[730] The evidence for contemporaneous dating is reinforced by it's masonry, which, despite using different materials, is still characterised by rubble stones covered in mortar and by Komnenid courses of brick. Though a crucial aspect of the defence of the fortress, the presence of a further three cisterns imply there was more at issue here than simply storing enough water for a siege. The other three cisterns are composed of a mix of mortared rubble, spolia, brick and fieldstones used with a cloisonné in their construction, and in addition they use the same method of waterproofing (two coats of ceramic chips in plaster) as that used in the fortress cistern (fig. 52).[731] With construction methods and materials so similar, the building of the fortress provides a *terminus post quem* for when all four cisterns would have been in use.

Pegae was, therefore, storing a lot more water than would be required by a garrison and a small harbour settlement, as there is no evidence of the whole classical city being inhabited, particularly as other cisterns are also larger than the

[730] Ibid. p. 195.
[731] Ibid. p. 198.

fortress one, the largest to the southeast being 18.5m x 15.3m, divided into three aisles and likely once as much as three meters high. Such a huge quantity of water being stored must mean it was for supplying the imperial army and navy. John's use of the navy for logistical support in the Balkans and in Cilicia and Syria made such bases a necessity, and his campaigns in his early reign from Anatolia to the Balkans and back again twice between 1120 and 1125 would have required a logistical support base where the ability to transport large quantities of drinking water would be essential. Sources make especial note of the few occasions when the armies were not properly supplied, therefore there must have been a huge volume of food, water and other necessities being sent out to supply the frontier fortresses, armies and navies constantly, and this harbour seems to have been part of that supply system.[732] From Pegae, down to Anaea, Iasos, and the other Aegean fortresses of Alexios, then east to the southern coastal fortresses built west of Seleukeia, then Korykos and Tarsos in Cilicia, and then to the rebuilt harbour of Alexandretta at Antioch, all these sites were part of the same network.[733] John's fortresses further inland would have provided this same support had they been simply *aplekta* as they have traditionally been seen, but when viewed as part of the whole network they become part of a strategy for both holding territory and facilitating further expansion.

[732] Most especially the Neocaesareia campaign as discussed below.
[733] Foss, "Defences of Asia Minor against the Turks," pp. 157-9; the fortress at Seleukeia also dominates the crossing of the river Kalykadnos, maintaining another facet of the Komnenian defensive strategy, ibidem p. 59.

Map Six: John's Anatolian Fortress Network. Not shown are the unknown sites of Alamos, Alazos and Balza near Kastamon, which would add a similar protective zone of fortresses to the north, and the many Cilician castles shown in the map of John's Eastern Campaign. On the map are however multiple fortresses built under Alexios, of which the most recent survey is in Deluigi (2015), pp. 52-61. There have been few major surveys of the north east of Turkey, and so presumedly a similar pattern would be found around Trebizond as well were such to be undertaken. This demonstrates that under the Komnenoi, Anatolia as well as the Balkans became much more fully castellated.

This network of fortifications, controlling the lines of communication and logistics, lies at the heart of a successful policy of restoration of imperial authorirty – and indeed has similarities to Byzantine strategy in the Balkans, where the fords over the Danube and the roads and river valleys across modern Serbia and Kosovo were also the focus of an imperial network of fortifications. Though Deluigi interprets John's fortresses as being used simply to guard the roads to important cities, thus achieving little permanent protection for the people in the region, assessing John's strategy on the fortresses alone underlines the protection that they could and did give.[734] For both of these regions, the empire managed to turn the tables on their enemies by reversing the role of the actor pursuing the best 'active defence,' by using these fortifications as bases for counter raids. Whittow likens the

[734] Deluigi, *Winter in the Land of Rûm*, pp. 39 and 66 in particular.

Turks to the Spanish and the Byzantines to the Moors in the Iberian peninsula during the eleventh century; he notes that:

> The Turks were not invincible; their herds were as vulnerable as Byzantine villages; but their defeat or containment required an effective system of local defence based on a network of castles whose garrisons were prepared to launch counter-strikes in response to Turkish raids.[735]

This is exactly what John sets up in the twelfth century in western Anatolia to secure his conquests, as the local nobility did not do so on their own unlike the nobility of Spain who acted without crown control neccesary. As we have seen already, and as I shall argue in the rest of this chapter, it was John's army that threw back invasions while the fortresses held and facilitated the projection of that force. Indeed, Basilakes' imperial rhetoric stated that Rome's true walls were not made of stone, but of "weapons and missiles and horses."[736]

Birkenmeier theorises that John's strategy rested on capturing strongpoints that would then hold out against the Turks, and this surely was part of the plan: John's focus on capturing Laodikiea, Sozopolis, Kastamon and Gangra make that plain.[737] However, equally important was the capturing of the smaller fortresses of Alamos, Alazos and Balza in Paphlagonia, thus creating a network in order that there would be fortresses across all of populated western Asia Minor. This was a well-nuanced and planned network of fortifications operating on a very specific operational code: comparisons with Bakirtzis' "protective ring" of fortresses around fourteenth-century Thessaloniki, and Haldon's tenth-century east Anatolian frontier

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[735] M. Whittow, "How the East Was Lost: The Background to the Komnenian Reconquista,' in *Alexios I Komnenos-Papers*, ed. M. Mullett and Dion Smythe (Belfast, 1996), p. 66; *ibidem*, "Rural Fortifications in Western Europe and Byzantium, 10th-12th century," *Bosphorus - Court, City and Country in Byzantium* , ed. S. Eftymiades, C. Rapp, D. Tsougarakis (Amsterdam, 1995), pp. 56-74

[736] Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, pp. 70-1.

[737] Birkenmeier's thesis is that "it was his [John's] deliberate strategy to obtain fortified points that would enable him [in the east] to threaten his most important foes, the Danishmendids": Birkenmeier *Development of the Komnenian Army*, p. 98. Though these sites are unidentified, a number of fortified hilltops from the era have been identified in Glatz and Matthews, *Project Paphlagonia*, pp. 195-197.

based around defence in depth, do not accurately portray what was occurring.[738] John's network embraced the whole region, rather than specifically protecting population centres, and rather than establishing a frontier zone of control or 'march', these fortresses were carrying out active defence of these areas by controlling lines of communication and logistics.

The Quiet Fall of Gabras of Trebizond

With Anatolian frontier security boosted by the building of Anchyrous, and Ikonion quiet, John lost no time in launching an expedition north. Choniates tells us for the first time that there was some resistance to John's incessant campaigning from the troops themselves, and not merely from poets bereft of imperial patronage. Apparently John's "imperial decrees" that the army be kept together even after such a long expedition to the east and the immediate counter-Ikonion campaign made the Emperor appear "unremitting and imperious" for the first time, as he prevented anyone from going home through use of "those who kept diligent watch over the roads and points of embarkation," something easily done through his network of fortifications.[739] Choniates here notes that John allowed his detractors to air their grievances, not pretending he did not know or did not care about their complaints, but giving them some outlet for their ire in order to keep them with him to fulfil his goals, demonstrating his devotion to his objectives and his realisation that success in Anatolia relied upon retaining the initiative against his foes. Choniates outlines these foes, and thus the goals of John's next campaign, as threefold: to expel "the barbarians who had intruded upon the *Armeniakon* theme", to seize Constantine Gabras who had been ruling as a tyrant in Trebizond for some time, and finally to

[738] Bakirtzis, "Byzantine Fortification," pp. 364-347; Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*, p. 65.
[739] *NC*, p. 33, pp. 19-20.

march against Neokaisareia and the Danishmendids, whom Choniates here mentions were "the strongest and most ruthless of those who had subdued the cities of the Romans," highlighting their renewed status as the major threat to Roman ambitions.[740]

Though John had not allowed his army to return home, they had spent most of the year recovering from their last engagements when he set out from Lopadion in late spring 1139. Choniates gives no details on the summer and autumn campaign, and nor is there any other mention of John's deeds until he took up winter quarters on the winter solstice (21st December) in the Pontic city of Kinte.[741] This location is unknown, but no one has put forward a better option than Chalandon, who suggested it be identified with Kundu in the Lykos River valley in Cappadocia, to the east of Neokaesareia and the site of a Roman bridge across the Lykos.[742] Such identification is strengthened by Prodromos' poem on the campaign of 1140, which opens with a successful engagement against Mohammed in February on the Lykos; John reaching Neokaisareia so soon in 1140 would therefore necessitate local winter quarters.[743]

If such were the case, between late spring and the 21st December the imperial army would have campaigned across the northern coast of Anatolia in order to reach the Lykos valley. Of John's three aims for this campaign outlined by Choniates, two must, therefore, have been accomplished: the Armeniakon theme, consisting of the central Pontic region between Paphlagonia and Chaldia must have been secured from Danishmendid assault, and the Trebizond rebellion finally

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[740] Ibid. p. 34; Ibid. p. 20.
[741] Ibid.
[742] Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, p. 177; Based on a travel account from the 19th century, D. G. Hogarth and J.A.R. Munro, *Modern and Ancient Roads in Eastern Asia Minor* (London, 1893), p. 730.
[743] *Prodromos*, XIX, lines 11-30.

extinguished. Though the former may be assumed to be fairly uninteresting as far as dramatic engagements went for histories and court rhetoric, the lack of focus put on the end of an almost ten-year resistance to imperial rule is a striking omission. The reason for this is likely to be that whatever prestige the emperor may have gained by restoring Trebizond under his aegis, it was as nothing to what he had lost by letting such resistance go on for so long – indeed Gabras had even minted his own coins – and so the less focus on it by both contemporaries and indeed Choniates' eulogising history, the better.[744] Still, the reintegration was successful, and was likely to have involved the replacement of locals with Constantinopolitans as we can glean from one of Prodromos' letters. He writes to his former master, colleague and friend Stephanos Skylitzes during John's second eastern expedition in 1142/3 that if his penury did not improve he would join Stephanos there, as the latter had become metropolitan of the city shortly after its restoration to the empire.[745] That Prodromos would leave the capital for Trebizond implies its security in the empire only a few years later, and the fact that Trebizond stayed loyal until the fall of Constantinople in 1204, and then became the centre of the successor empire of Trebizond, demonstrates the success of John's reconquest. Of Gabras' own fate we are unsure, but of his sons one became a councillor of Manuel I, another ended up at the court of Turkish Ikonion, and another went to the Crimea so it is assumed they were barred from any further office in Chaldia.[746] As the spring of 1140 began, John had secured the Pontic coast and quietly ended Trebizond's rebellion in a campaign that would keep the coast Roman until 1204, and thus was set to press his advantage

[744] P. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins* (London, 1982), pp. 228-9.
[745] Theodore Prodromos, "Τῷ μητροπολίτῃ Τραπεζοῦντος," Letter 5, tr. M. Op de Coul, *Théodore Prodrome Lettres et Discours Édition, Traduction, Commentaire* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Paris IV, 2007), pp. 94-100; commentary: pp. 302-7.
[746] A. Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades, c. 979 – c. 1653", *University of Birmingham Historical Journal* 12 (1970), p. 171; *NC*, p. 121.

against Mohammed Danishmend with the conquest of Neokaisareia and the old province of Cappadocia.

A Campaign Too Far: Logistics, Treachery and Failure at Neokaisareia

The possible capture of Cappadocia would be a tantalising prize that could lead to the conquest of all Anatolia if it succeeded. Not only would it deprive Mohammed of the heartland of his Danishmendid sultanate, likely causing his followers to desert him, but geographically it would open the land route across the peninsula to Cilicia, putting the eastern passes back under Roman authority, surrounding the remaining territories of both the Danishmendids and Mas'ud in Ikonion. The young Alexios' capture of Kasin in 1137 had begun the process, and so this campaign would seek to connect imperial lands across Anatolia once more.[747] With the eastern borders guarded by both Edessa and Georgia, then under the capable Demetrios I who in 1139 was raiding the Turks in Ganja, modern Azerbaijan, and with Roman superiority demonstrated once again, John could reabsorb central Anatolia at leisure.

John's eyes on such a prize may have caused his reach to exceed his grasp, as unlike many of his other campaigns where he stacked the odds in his favour with preparation before setting out, John began this one with a number of disadvantages. His army had been on campaign all but continuously since 1137 with only a small number of short rests, and had overwintered in the small city of Kinte in the newly retaken frontier regions of Chaldia and Cappadocia. The winter had been unusually harsh, with the cold leading to "diverse evils" as John began his campaign in the

[747] See Maps Five and Seven.

still bleak February.[748] Supplies were depleted, pack animals and warhorses died, and the Turks took full advantage, launching frequent surprise raids and attacks, and even engaging in open battle on the Lykos river, either on the route to Neakaisareia or while John was already laying siege depending on whether Choniates' or Kinnamos' accounts are to be believed. Though Prodromos' poem paints the engagement as a great victory against the Turks, Choniates' account is more nuanced.[749] The Danishmendid hit and run attacks had caused John to constitute an elite squad of cavalry composed of the most skilled lancers among the Romans and Latins, he had given them the best horses and had them charge down the Turks while at the same time raising up infantry standards to give the appearance of more cavalry units, putting the Turks to flight.[750]

Though victorious, John's army was not in the best condition when it began the siege of Neokaisareia, relying on the trickery of assumed cavalry superiority when in fact John did not have the troops, and it was still suffering from the cold winter away from his supply lines and in a barren land. Prodromos goes to great lengths describing the steep hills and narrow passes overgrown with thorn bushes while the sun blazed down and there was no water to drink; at night the army was cold and exposed, all the while wearing armour in constant fear of attack.[751] Choniates, Kinnamos and Prodromos note one such attack when John's youngest son Manuel showed particular heroism: charging in personally to relieve a Roman division that was losing to a superior Turkish force, and though John publicly

[748] *NC*, 34, 20; *JK*, p. 21; Kinnamos contends that John began the siege of Neokaisareia in winter, which is a possibility, though it does not change the narrative a great deal either way.
[749] *Prodromos*, XIX, lines 21-40.
[750] *NC*, p. 35*;* Birkenmeier gives a thorough analysis of this engagement, highlighting that John's army was composed of mainly infantry for the purposes of siege operations at the end of the campaign, and marks the difference between cavalry suitable for charging enemy units, and those unsuitable for such purposes: Birkenmeier, *Development of the Komnenian Army*, p. 94.
[751] *Prodromos*, XIX, lines 92-111.

praised the young prince, he was furious and privately beat him according to Kinnamos for almost getting himself killed.[752] As well as providing simple data about this incident, these accounts tell us once again that the conduct of John's sieges was not merely the act of assaulting the walls of a city, but a thorough process of engaging with enemy forces in the whole territory, requiring many skirmishes as well as the dramatic city-taking to conquer a province. That this is the one occasion when we hear of a Byzantine division being hard pressed again hints at the difficulties encountered during this winter campaign, far from home territory. It is at this point that Kinnamos tells us John gave up, rescuing Christian prisoners and seizing as much plunder as possible before abandoning the siege and the campaign as a step too far. Kinnamos also notes how few of the Romans returned from this campaign on horseback.[753] Prodromos' poem focuses on the heroic endurance of the emperor, the courage of his sons and his men as they return, still bringing tribute despite their failure to take the city, while Choniates provides us with an incident that could explain John's retreat.[754]

Choniates tells us that the emperor's nephew John, son of his newly reconciled brother Isaac, had inherited his father's penchant for treachery at the worst possible moment for the emperor's plans. Where Choniates only tells us that Isaac betrayed John for being "vexed at some trifle", this time he relates to us an equally trifling thing for which his son betrayed his lord, family and religion.[755] The emperor saw a distinguished knight from Italy without a horse (likely one of his previously mentioned handpicked squad of lancers that had seen off the Turks), and

[752] *NC*, p. 35; *JK*, pp. 25-6; *Prodromos*, XIX, line 78; Prodromos merely mentions Manuel's heroism, Choniates mentions the beating while Kinnamos mentions how the emperor was angry but also filled with admiration, following his usual pattern of glorifying Manuel compared to his father, while Choniates marks the emperor as a harsh but fair disciplinarian.
[753] *JK*, p. 21.
[754] *Prodromos*, XIX, lines 92-201.
[755] *NC*, pp. 35-6.

asked the young John to dismount his Arabian stallion, knowing that he had no lack of horses. The haughty young aristocrat rejected the emperor's demand, going so far as to challenge the knight to a duel to determine who was the better warrior so that the greater man could remain mounted, but at the emperor's anger (for they were in the middle of a skirmish) he had to acquiesce. Upon mounting another horse, he rode straight towards the Turkish ranks, but put up his lance and defected to them. He must have recalled how he had spent his youth with his father in Turkish company, and with an attitude familiar to any who have seen a modern caricature of teenage indignation, decided to change sides to one where he believed he would be treated better. Fortunately for him the young John was indeed welcomed by the Turks and would soon convert to Islam and marry a daughter of Mas'ud – but before that his very act of defection was to scupper single-handedly the Cappadocian campaign. The emperor – likely quite rightly – feared that the young John would reveal to the Turks "the Roman army's predicament…/the lack of horses and supplies and every other plight in the camp", and so was forced to withdraw, enduring attacks all the way back to the coast.[756]

Far from being a second great eastern campaign, John had instead only achieved modest goals in the northeast. Armeniakon was secure, Gabras' rebellion finally ended and Chaldia restored to his authority. These were not mean achievements, but compared to the successes of previous years they seemed paltry. Had John prepared better, and had a bit more luck with his nephew, his campaign may have produced the rewards he wished, but in retrospect it was a step too far for his exhausted army. Even so he is likely to have spent some time securing his new

[756] Ibid. p. 36, p. 21.

frontiers, as he did not return to Constantinople until the Ides of January 1141. [757] The following year was one of consolidation and rebuilding, as though John did leave for Lopadion to carry out some operations on his eastern frontier, there were no great campaigns, and he returned to the capital before the winter began.[758] There would presumedly have been much court business to catch up on from his years away, not least the developing situation in Italy.

Italian Diplomacy

Since his return from Syria, John had attempted to restore the anti-Norman coalition that had existed in 1137, with the maritime republics, the Papacy and the German Empire aligned with him against Roger's new Norman Kingdom. Such a coalition was imperative not just to secure his western borders, as had been shown by the pope's letter labelling him a schismatic, but to his eastern ambitions, and to any possibility of southern Italy's return to Byzantine suzerainty.

One of John's first acts when he had returned, briefly, to the capital in 1139 was to send a letter to the pope expressing his belief in the unity of the church, as a clear riposte to the papal letter that had contributed to the unravelling of his Syrian campaign.[759] Aside from skilfully navigating issues such as papal supremacy by addressing Innocent as "παπαν," and despite the letterhead being composed of five

[757] *NC*, p. 37.
[758] Ibid.
[759] "Unam enim esse ecclesiam, *quam Salvator sanguine proprio redemit, nulli eorum qui divinam scripturam docti sunt omnino ignotum est", Monumenta spectantia ad unionem Ecclesiarum Graecae et Romanae*, ed. A. Theiner, F. Miklosich (vol. I, Vienna, 1872), p. 20; Rowe believes that the olive branch was in fact Innocent's initiative, attempting to keep both John and Roger on his side. Though possible, Lilie's more standard interpretation of the letter as John's initiative to mend fences is more likely, though Rowe's contribution that the papacy also had much to gain from imperial friendship is worth mentioning: Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 135; Rowe, "The Papacy and the Greeks," p. 121.

crosses in reference to the pentarchy, there is little of substance in this letter, whilst John's follow up letter in 1141 is more specific.[760]

This second letter refers to the "two swords" that defend the church, an idea formulated by pope Gelasius in the fifth century that posited a union of Christian society under the twin governance of the secular emperor and the church, and indeed the letterhead is changed to three crosses, implying a more unified church of east and west.[761]

Fig. 53: The letterheads of John's two letters to the papacy of 1139 and 41, showing the five and three cross designs, respectively. The letters themselves are written on purple dyed parchment and use chrysography as well as their ornate lettering to convey their value and importance. They are written in Greek first and Latin second. Images from: *Archivum Secretum Apostolicum Vaticanum*.

The 'two swords' is a loaded phrase, and one that has often been analysed by historians as lending itself to two extreme interpretations of John's policy: on the one hand, Ostrogorsky has seen this phrase as John's intention to ally with the pope "and together they would restore the unity of the Christian Church and establish the world supremacy of the one Roman Empire," deriving an ambition for world conquest from this small phrase.[762] At the other extreme are Chalandon and Rowe, who see John as merely rhetorically stating the benefits of an alliance, being

[760] *Monumenta spectantia*, p. 17.
[761] Based upon Luke 22:38; Pope Gelasius, "Duo Sunt", *Readings in European History*, tr. J. H. Robinson (Boston, 1905), pp. 72-73; "duobus gladiis", *Monumenta spectantia* vol. II, p. 20.
[762] Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, p. 385.

"friendly but inconclusive" so as to retain his freedom of action in the Levant and not be tied down by any papal restrictions.[763] Rowe additionally believes John may here be sounding the pope out regarding his own recognition as emperor of the west, something Magdalino argues was one of Manuel's key foreign policy goals so there would be no conflict of interest for any Latin subjects of the empire, and indeed should some of Italy be restored to Byzantium, its rule could be delegated to the pope.[764]

These grand claims read much into small phrases, yet at their core they are not beyond the realm of possibility, with John's major flaw being occasional overambition. Analysing the language of both the original letters, the pope names John specifically as "rex Constinopolitanus" and a schismatic, attacking the basis of his rule over Latin subjects, at exactly the time when John hoped to enforce his dominance over both Crusaders and, eventually, Italians and expand beyond his current maritime republican clients.[765] With these two letters, John reaffirms his devotion to a single church and requests recognition of his title as Roman Emperor, thus his full set of titles in Latin names him as "Ioannes in Christo deo fidelis rex, porfyrogenitus, sublimis, celsus, fortis, augustus et imperator Romanorum."[766] Such a claim is not, however, to be interpreted as inimical to the German empire, with whom John had exchanged ambassadors in 1140, 1141 and 1142.[767] Conrad III was occupied with a German civil war and the Normans were hardly his top priority, so

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[763] "…généralités sur les bienfaits de la reunion", Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, p. 163; Rowe, "The Papacy and the Greeks," p. 122.
[764] Ibid; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 89.
[765] Bresc-Bautier, *Cartulaire du Chapitre de Saint-Sepulcre*, no. 10, pp. 51-2.
[766] *Monumenta spectantia,* vol. I, pp. 18-20.
[767] F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565-1453, Regesten von 1025-1204* (Munich, 1976), nos. 1320-1322; W. Ohnsorge, *Das Zweikaiserproblem im früheren Mittelalter; der Bedeutung des byzantinischen Reiches für die Entwicklung der Staatsidee in Europa* (Hildesheim, 1947), pp. 374, 379, n. 50, 384, 387; Lilie, *Handel und Politik*, pp. 387, 395; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 134.

John proposed a marriage alliance with his youngest son Manuel to sweeten the deal, for which we have a poem of Prodromos remarking on the Princess Bertha's arrival at court, and the alliance between the "king of old Rome" and John that would lead to Conrad "joining in the victories of the Despotes."[768] The marriage did not, however, take place until after John's death, with the sticking point in negotiations said to be the rights of Conrad and John over the soon to be conquered southern Italy, but even so the two great powers had renewed their alliance. Indeed, they appear to have done so with the support of both Venice and Pisa as a Pisan ambassador was present in Constantinople during the German negotiations, which involved Doge Pietro Polani of Venice as mediator, and so the support of these two maritime republics was as strong as it had been in 1137 despite their peace treaties with Roger.[769]

It must also be repeated that John chose to remain aligned against Roger in order to pave the way for a reconquest. Roger in fact proposed a marriage of his son to an imperial princess in an attempt at an olive branch according to Kinnamos[770] and supposedly John did not refuse, but kept the negotiations going long enough that he died before anything had been decided. At the same time, however, a fragmentary encomium to Axouch refers to the building of new ships for the

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[768] Ὦ μέγα ῥὴξ τῆς παλαιᾶς καὶ πρεσβυτέρας Ῥώμης,
βαθύτατε τὴν φρόνησιν, δεινὲ τὴν στρατηγίαν,
τὸ γένος εὐγενέστατε, περίδοξε Κονράδε,
καὶ κηδεστὰ λαμπρότατε τῶν δορυφορουμένων,
νῦν ὑπερῆρας τῇ τιμῇ, νῦν ηὐγενίσθης πλέον,
ὅτι καὶ τῷ Κομνηνικῷ συνεκεντρίσθης γένει
καὶ καθωράθης ἀγχιστεὺς τοσούτου βασιλέως·
ὅθεν καὶ χαῖρε μεθ᾽ ἡμῶν καὶ σύναδε τῇ κόρῃ
νῦν μὲν παιᾶνας μουσικοὺς τοὺς ἐπιβατηρίους,
μετ᾽οὐ πολὺ δὲ σὺν θεῷ τοὺς ἐπιθαλαμίους
ἐπαναζεύξαντος ἡμῖν σὺν νίκαις τοῦ δεσπότου." *Prodromos*, XX, lines 37-47.

[769] *Documenti sulle relazione delle città toscane coll'Oriente Cristiano e coi Turchi fino all'anno MDXXXI,* ed. G. Müller (Florence, 1879), no. 2, 4; Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden*, no. 1322; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 135.

[770] *JK*, p. 91.

express purpose of standing against the "disreputable intents and attacks" of the prince of Sicily, while equally mentioning how "the bold German…attempts to learn from the great victory of our manly and most noble Autokrator."[771] It seems likely that John's preferred policy was an anti-Norman alliance with the Germans, the maritime republics and the Papacy, but if he could not have such an alliance then he would secure peace in the west. The drawing out of negotiations with both Germans and Normans demonstrates that John was serious about his rights in southern Italy, as his end goal was the restoration of the empire as it had been in the previous century. Such negotiations in 1141 do not necessarily imply that John was immediately planning an Italian invasion, or a return to the east to make his authority over the crusaders fact as well as rhetoric, but they do demonstrate that such plans would be put in train when the situation allowed. December and the new spring would, however, see another major change in the Anatolian situation requiring imperial action: the death of Mohammed Danishmend, and an attack on Sozopolis.

Renewed Turkish Civil Wars and the Lake Pousegouse Campaign in 1142

As with the death of Ghazi in the previous decade, chaos followed Mohammed's death on the 6th December, chaos such that Michael the Syrian is unclear on the details, with only the fourteenth-century chronicle of Abu'l-Fida giving a coherent narrative.[772] He tells us that Mohammed's death led his three

[771] "Τί φὴς ὁ τῶν Σικελῶν ἀρχηγέτης , ὁ διαπλοϊζόμενος κιβδήλοις βουλαῖς
καὶ ἀδοκίμοις ἐννοίαις ἐπινηχόμενος; ὁρᾷς τὸ του βασιλέως προβούλιον,
τὴν ἑτοιμασίαν τὰς τριήρεις τοὺς στρατιώτας" and "ὁ θρασὺς Ἀλαμανὸς ὁ τὴν ὀφρῦν ὑπὲρ τὸν
κρόταφον αἴρων καὶ ὀνειροπολῶν τὰ κενώτατα καὶ ἐπὶ κενοῖς ἐρειδόμενος καὶ ἀνεμώλιά
τινα διανοούμενος σκέμματα, πείρᾳ μαθών σου τὴν μεγαλονίκου ἡμῶν αὐτοκράτορος εὐανδρίαν καὶ
γενναιότητα," Basilakes, "λογος εἰς τὸν σεβαστὸν καὶ μέγαν Δομέστικον" *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 118.

[772] Abul-Feda, "Chronique", *RHC Historiens orientaux* (vol. 1., Paris, 1872), pp. 1-165; *Michael*, 16.10, p. 625, p. 253.

sons, his son-in-law Mas'ud (a seemingly eternal opportunist), and Mohammed's three brothers and their three sons to fight once more over Asia Minor.[773] Such a multi-party civil war was understandably complex even for contemporaries, but over the course of a few months the camps consolidated into three: one led my Mas'ud who allied with Ibrahim, Mohammed's eldest son who did not succeed him as malik [sultan or king] but did inherit Melitene. Another was based at Neokaisareia; this was ruled by Mohammed's brother Yaghi allied with his brother Ayn al-Dawla, who had ruled Melitene previously, along with their sons Taghi and Dhu'l Qarnayn. Both of these camps opposed the succession of Mohammed's second son, Dhu'l Nun based in Ankyra, as the new Malik.[774] It is unclear exactly when this civil war broke out, and the timeline of events are uncorroborated, but eventually Dhu'l Nun would defeat his uncle's Neokaisareia alliance, but then would in turn be defeated by Mas'ud and his heir, Kilij-Arslan II by 1164.[775] Nevertheless, who exactly attacked Sozopolis in 1142 is unknown, with the attackers only identified as "Turks" by Kinnamos, but it is likely to have been the new Malik Dhu'l Nun seeking to prove himself worthy of his position.[776] Such an identification is lent credence by a letter from Manuel to Mas'ud in 1145 where he mentions that he and Taghi Arslan are allied; though this could have been very quick diplomacy on Manuel's part, it is likely John may have laid the foundations by despairing of Mas'ud ever coming into the fold, and so aligned himself with the Neokaisareia camp in classic 'enemy of my enemy is my friend' diplomacy.[777] Despite the Turks attacking Sozopolis "in full strength," John appears to have had

[773] Abul-Feda, "Chronique", pp. 26-42; *Michael*, 16.10, p. 625.
[774] Ibid. Corroboration for this can be found in "Extrait de la Chronique intitulée Ibn-Alatyr," *Kamel-Altevarykh*, *RHC Historiens orientaux* (vol 1., Paris, 1872), p. 544.
[775] Ibid.
[776] *JK*, p. 22.
[777] Ibid. p. 39.

no trouble relieving the city, such that he then went off to Attaleia, where "he intended to remain for some time so as to establish greater order in the surrounding provinces."[778]

Such restoration of order seems to have involved the conquest of Lake Pousegouse, classical Karalis and modern Beyşehir, which shows how for Choniates, conquest meant security for existing provinces, and demonstrating how the two policies were linked.[779] This campaign is illuminating as to the nature of the inhabitants of Anatolia in this period, as the people of the lake were Christians (indeed Kinnamos calls them Romans) who due to close proximity, commercial ties and long custom, were allied with the Turks, treated the emperor as an enemy, and resisted the restoration of imperial authority. Such a restoration was of huge strategic importance to John, as the people of the lake could travel to Ikonion and back in a day, and so possession of it would be a dagger aimed at Mas'ud's throat. This was particularly the case due to the fortification of the islands in the lake, as each one was walled by an old fort, and with the size of the body of water creating a huge moat for each fortress, it made these islands well able to resist any invader.

Fig. 54: Danishmendid Civil War, 1142.

[778] *JK*, p. 22; *NC*, p. 37.
[779] Ibid.

John first asked them to surrender, or indeed to yield the islands and go over to the Turks if they preferred, an intriguing offer that demonstrates how important conquest of the lake was, and indeed John's penchant for devious negotiation (as with the nomads before), as such an offer would surely have divided the population of the islands. However, they refused him, but John devised an ingenious solution to the island fortifications. The emperor ordered that a quantity of boats should be bound together and planks tied atop them, such that he could mount his war machines on floating platforms and thus use his siege engines against the lake castles. Both Kinnamos and Choniates record that strong winds occasionally formed across the lake, capsizing these rafts and leading to great loss of life, but despite the winds the islands were taken.[780]

Whether John intended to follow the capture of the lake with a siege of Ikonion is unknown, as his eldest son and co-emperor the young Alexios was struck down by a fever that killed him quickly. John and the army then returned to Attaleia to send Alexios' body home by sea, accompanied by his brothers Andronikos and Isaac.[781] On the voyage home, Andronikos also joined Alexios in death, proving a double blow to the now aging emperor, with Kinnamos, Choniates, Italikos' *monody* and letter to Meles, and the *Kleinchroniken* all remarking on how the emperor grieved for his sons, and began to see his best laid plans falling apart.[782] Indeed the *Kleinchroniken* optimistically relate that John planned to send his eldest son Alexios to Rome to be crowned, and Andronikos to Jerusalem while Isaac and Manuel would have other parts of the world; we have no means of assessing as to

[780] Ibid.
[781] *JK*, p. 24; *NC*, p. 38; *Italikos*, "Μονῳδία εἰς τὸν σεβαστοκράτορα κῦρ Ἀνδρύνικον, τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ βασιλέως κυροῦ Ἰωαννου τοῦ πορφυρογεννήτου θανόντα, ὅτε ἐκόμιζεν ἐξ Ἀτταλίας νεκρὸν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ βασιλέα Ἀλέξιον τὸν πορφυρογέννητον," and "Πρὸς τὸν βασιλικὸν γραμματικόν" pp. 130-1, 181-3; William of Tyre, 15.19, p. 700.
[782] Ibid; *KC*, Chronik 6.2, pp. 57-8.

whether John actually believed he could carry out such a plan, but the loss would not only have affected him personally, but also the army as a whole for both Italikos and Choniates make clear, it was not a good omen for the march ahead.

John's next move was to restore imperial authority in Cilicia, and indeed further east, though whether he had always intended to do this after the Lake campaign, or whether he changed his mind after the death of Alexios is unclear, with Choniates presenting Alexios' death as a turning point and Kinnamos implying it was always his plan. [783] John's intention to conquer Ikonion soon is, however, clear from the Lake campaign, and in Manuel's early reign he too attempted to carry John's intentions through, perhaps demonstrating the continuing presence of Axouch as *megas domestikos*, and that John's plans were so near to being fulfilled after the capture of Lake Pousegouse.[784]

However, the death of his sons and the date already being 2nd August made John reconsider an Ikonion campaign that year. With the Turkish civil wars raging, imperial frontiers would be safe from any major incursion, and being already in his eastern territories the temptation to impose a final settlement on the Levant, as he had in the Balkans, would have been significant. With such a settlement he could add the eastern Latins to his army, and so be even more effective in Anatolia – and the time was certainly ripe, as Prince Raymond himself had recently been calling for imperial aid.[785] Such a strategy would mean that only Anatolia and perhaps southern Italy would remain for John to focus on as a frontier in his final years, and so it was in this context that the Emperor brought the army east in 1142.

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[783] *JK*, pp. 22-4; *NC*, p. 38-9.
[784] *NC*, 52-3; *JK*, 38-63.
[785] William of Tyre, 15.20, pp. 701-2.

The Return East

Choniates tells us that in 1142 John's overt purpose was to travel to Cilicia to integrate it further into the empire, but that he also travelled east to once more push his claim to Antioch.[786] Kinnamos relates that John planned to grant Manuel his own territory, comprising Attaleia, Cilicia, Antioch and Cyprus, because Raymond, prince of Antioch had rebelled.[787] Though the *Kleinchroniken* entry for the death of the young Alexios also implies that John intended setting up his sons with different parts of the empire to rule directly in his old age, such a division of territory between sons would still be exceptionally innovative.[788] Equally the reason given by Kinnamos that Raymond was in rebellion is noteworthy, suggesting that either John now held him to account for the failures of 1138 despite forgiving him, or that Raymond had been called to attend on the emperor with troops but had not come. In fact, William of Tyre relates that Raymond had been requesting the emperor to return for some time to save the crusaders from Zengi.[789] Thus, there are a number of issues with John's 1142 expedition to the east that are contentious: his exact goals and the reasons he decided to return are both unclear in the sources, but his actions do illuminate aspects of them. Equally the circumstances surrounding his death may not give us enough information to determine whether the emperor was murdered, but they do tell us who benefitted from his early death.

To address Kinnamos' alleged plan to give Manuel his own portion of territory: it would be much more useful if we knew whether this plan predated the death of young Alexios, and if it was a practical plan. What we do know is that Cilicia and Antioch had been used to local rule for the last half-century, and so

[786] *NC*, p. 39.
[787] *JK*, pp. 22-23.
[788] *KC*, Chronik 6.2, pp. 57-8.
[789] William of Tyre, 15.19, p. 700.

putting a young imperial prince in charge of the region, particularly one with a reputation as a latinophile, would be sympathetic to local elites, and also provide benefits to defence and expansion as a local ruler who could be proactive on the territory's behalf.[790] Such a ruler uniting this region would both be able to offer protection against Zengi and, indeed, promote the Christian cause against Ikonion, the Danishmendids and the Muslims of Syria, while at the same time the emperor and/or his brother Isaac could be carrying out other operations on behalf of the empire.[791] John's age was another factor, as he was now fifty-six years old while Isaac was 30 and Manuel 25, so 1142-3 would be an obvious time for the emperor to start transitioning to a more sedate lifestyle in the capital while his sons continued to fight on the frontiers. This being so, some form of plan to empower his sons was likely being considered, though with the death of Alexios and Andronikos, the exact form of that plan was almost certainly under review. Isaac had probably been ordered back to Constantinople to reassure the court that all was well despite the deaths, while John considered a new succession plan. Though old, he would not have considered that his death could be imminent and so it is likely he travelled east considering his options, rather than having already made up his mind, as his heirs would be in a stronger position were John to crown them as co-emperors back in Constantinople.

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[790] Manuel's early reputation as a latinophile may derive from being the youngest child of his Latin mother, but the only supporting evidence William of Tyre's assertion that the Latin soldiers in the army welcomed his ascension to the throne, and an encomium by Italikos states that the Latin contingents were indeed under Manuel's command. During his later reign there are, however, many more examples of his favouring Latins and Latin practices: for example, Conrad of Montferrat and holding a joust: William of Tyre, 15.13, pp. 705-6; *Italikos*, "Encomium on Manuel I Komnenos," p. 286; *NC*, p. 382; L. Jones and H. Maguire, "A description of the jousts of Manuel I Komnenos," *BMGS* 26 (2002), pp. 104-48.

[791] Lilie agrees that some form of Kinnamos' plan was likely for the same reasons, while Harris throws it out as unlikely due to the "indivisibility of imperial power," citing a fourteenth-century condemnation as evidence. In fact, the enduring use of co-emperorship by John as a co-emperor with his father and son make such a settlement possible at least, in particular as Kinnamos' plan does not say independence, merely that Manuel would administer this as a separate territory, presumedly under his father: Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, pp. 138-141; Harris, *Byzantium and the Crusaders*, p. 85, n. 37.

What is certain is that John aimed to bring Edessa and Antioch into the imperial fold through surprise and overwhelming force if necessary, as though Alexios had only died on the 2nd August, the emperor had gone through Edessa and was camped at Gastin, captured during the late Alexios' last campaign, by September 25th.[792] William now relates that the emperor and his "incomparable host" arrived at Turbessel, [Tell Bāshir], described as a very rich fortress just over twenty miles from the Euphrates.

Fig. 55: Turbessel and its hinterland today, demonstrating it to be more fertile than many of the lands surrounding it, and how the hill dominates the landscape. Source: Forteresses d'Orient.

Fig. 56: Eastern gate of Turbussel. Source: Forteresses d'Orient.

[792] *NC*, pp. 38-9; William of Tyre, 15.19, p. 701.

Stunning Joscelin with both his sudden arrival and the size of his army, an obvious warning that the emperor could do the same at any time, he demanded hostages from the count, leading Joscelin to hand over his daughter Isabella.[793] William relates that the emperor's demand was just, taking into consideration Joscelin's previous reluctance to carry out his orders in 1138: either way, John was taking no chances on Edessa becoming an imperial client this time. Having secured Joscelin's loyalty, he sent messages to Prince Raymond that he should hand over Antioch according to their previous agreements, in order that war could be waged effectively against their mutual enemies in Muslim Syria.[794]

The Demand for Antioch

John was thus picking up exactly where he had left off in 1138, and though Harris again advocates that John was more interested in recognition than physical domination of Antioch, Choniates' language is unequivocal that John had a "burning desire to unite Antioch to Constantinople," and if this involved Raymond staying on as a client prince then so be it.[795] Lilie sees John's demand here as violating the treaty of 1137, but Parnell makes the point that using Antioch as a base to conquer Raymond's new territory did not constitute annexing the territory, and indeed William once again exonerates John of any possibility of treaty breaking.[796] Either way, John had resolved that Antioch's citadel and fortifications must pass to him, and then he would pursue conquest in Syria with Antioch as a base to hold his

[793] William of Tyre, 15.19, p. 701.
[794] *Ibid*; *NC*, p. 39.
[795] *NC*, p. 39; Harris, *Byzantium and the Crusaders*, p. 85.
[796] Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 136; Parnell, "John II Comnenus and Crusader Antioch," pp. 155-7.

war chest and build siege weapons, as he had intended before he had been recalled to Anatolia.

Raymond was then put in a difficult position: as politically the protection of the emperor as a distant sovereign, or even Manuel as a local suzerain, would bolster his position against Zengi. William of Tyre relates that Raymond had been sending messages calling for the emperor to return for the last few years, and now the emperor was there he could hardly reject him.[797] On the other hand, many nobles of his principality were deeply hostile to the idea of any return to imperial suzerainty, with the patriarch and "Ἰταλοὺς," that is Normans from southern Italy, highlighted by William and Choniates respectively as being part of an anti-Roman camp.[798] As before, they brought up the fact that the "indolence of the Greeks" had lost the city more than once before, and that they could not hand it over to them in the best interest of the land. The reference to the Patriarch and St Peter by William may also suggest that the church in particular was hostile to the Romans due to fear of being replaced by Greek clergy, whilst the Norman hostility to the Romans was now long standing, and a state of cold war still existed between Roger and John despite ongoing marriage negotiations. Nevertheless, they would all wish to avoid open war with the Emperor, and they could rely on the fact that John would not wish to take Antioch by storm, ruining his reputation in the west and with all Latins, if he could avoid it. This being so they refused on the basis of feudal law, claiming that Raymond only held the territory due to his marriage to Constance, and neither Raymond nor Constance could transfer sovereignty without the consent of their subjects or they would be driven out.[799] Passing the buck in this way at the very

[797] William of Tyre, 15.20, pp. 701-2.
[798] Ibid. 126; *NC*, p. 39.
[799] William of Tyre, 15.20, p. 702.

least played for time. Choniates relates how the emperor pondered how it would take days in order to just enter the city considering how divided it was, and then he would have to leave without "altering anything in its established customs," and that it would be unwise to force entry.[800] It was already too late in the year to carry out a campaign against the Muslims, and the sea coast would be better than the plain when winter came; thus John resolved to go to winter quarters in Cilicia with a view to drawing Raymond out with a campaign the following year. Even so, he did not leave without a show of force, as he allowed his troops to pillage the suburbs and even strip the fruit trees for both fruit and wood for the fires as he pulled back, though he forbade any waging of war against Christians.[801] Though undoubtedly frustrated to be refused yet again, John could go to Cilicia with the thought that the New Year could easily see all of his goals fulfilled in Syria, as William conveys.[802] His likelihood of success can also be seen by the presence of a Genoese embassy at John's camp at Antioch negotiating for trade privileges; with the maritime republics backing him, the board was set for an imperial annexation of Antioch in the new year.[803] Meanwhile, he could rest his forces that had once more had a long year-and-a-half on campaign, and bolster his position in Cilicia.

Winter in Cilicia and the Jerusalem Proposal

John spent the winter near Tarsus, but not before sending an "embassy of the highest nobility" to King Fulk of Jerusalem, explaining that he wished to visit the kingdom for the purpose of prayer and devotion, and to lend aid against the enemy

[800] *NC*, p. 39.
[801] Ibid. pp. 39-40.
[802] William of Tyre, 15.21, p. 702.
[803] *Annali genovesi di Caffaro e de' suoi continuatori, dal MXCIX al MCCXCII*, *FSI,* ed. L. Belgrano and C. I di Sant' Angelo (vol I, Rome, 1890), p. 31; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 138.

in those parts.[804] Such a desire is also expressed by John in the speech Choniates relates at his death, by Kinnamos where he describes a planned visit to Palestine and how John gave a lampstand made of twenty talents of gold to the Holy Sepulchre, and by a poem of Prodromos where this same donation is recorded.[805] At this goal, even William is sceptical, relating that this plan was to "dissimulabat mentis conceptum"[to disguise his real purpose].[806] That purpose is assumed by Lilie to be the recognition of his imperial status by Fulk, who up until now had been able to avoid meeting John and so yielding anything of his own status to the emperor.[807] Harris puts this in the tradition of the emperor being protector of the holy places, while there may also have been church matters to negotiate regarding provision for Orthodox Christians in the kingdom.[808] Hamilton has noted that Constantinople had maintained titular patriarchs of Jerusalem in Constantinople since 1117, with the current one being a patriarch Nicholas (c1122 to c1156), though this was likely more for giving weight to Synodal decisions in the capital rather than undermining the authority of the Latin patriarchs.[809] As well as these matters, Fulk could possibly be convinced to support John's claims to Antioch and Edessa, whilst entering into a treaty similar to the Venetians as an imperial ally, all on top of the prestige John would attain by being the first Roman emperor since late Antiquity to visit Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Finally, of course, all indicators point to the fact that John was indeed a pious ruler and so such a pilgrimage would be in keeping with his personality, particularly as he entered his old age and had the difficult matter of

[804] William of Tyre, 15.21, p. 702; Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 138.
[805] *NC*, p. 42; *JK*, p. 25; *Prodromos*, XXII, lines 1-16.
[806] William of Tyre, 15.21, p. 702.
[807] Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, p. 137
[808] Harris, *Byzantium and the Crusaders*, p. 86.
[809] V. Grumel, *La Chronologie* (Paris, 1958), p. 448; *ibidem*, *Les Regestes des actes du Patriarchat de Constantinople: Vol. 1, Les Actes des patriarches* (Paris, 1972), no. 1038; Hamilton (1980), pp. 180-1.

a new succession to work out, and the souls of his two dead sons to pray for. His donation to the Holy Sepulchre also suggests that he was attempting a soft power policy with Jerusalem at the same time as one of coercion against Antioch. Though it is usually Manuel that is acclaimed as the great patron of the Holy Land while his father presided over an era Lilie called "the height of conflict," such a donation suggests that John was already contemplating a policy of more benign influence in the Holy Land itself.[810] Therefore 1143 was intended to be the year a settlement of the Levant by agreement and warfare was arranged, much as John had done in the Balkans in 1129, such that imperial power in the region would not only restored be to mid-eleventh-century levels, but indeed bolstered by the Crusader states as better imperial clients than the Arab states of the eleventh century and earlier. Such a settlement would allow John and his heirs to focus on Anatolia and Southern Italy from that point forward, as his Ikonion campaign and Italian negotiations outline.

Unfortunately for John, Fulk returned with an embassy of his own, containing some of the most highly ranked figures of the realm to convince the emperor of his sincerity. Anselm, Bishop of Bethlehem, Rohard, Castellan of Jerusalem, and Geoffrey, Abbot of the Temple of the Lord (who was well versed in Greek), conveyed to John that Fulk would be happy to welcome him to his kingdom, but that its small size meant that he would not be able to support such a large army. Could he, therefore, only bring ten thousand men with him as escort?[811] John appears to have abandoned his intentions at this point, in William's words because only ten thousand men was not in keeping with his imperial dignity. Whether Lilie and Papageorgiou are correct and he could not hope to carry out his objective of dominion over Jerusalem without a large army, or whether he merely

[810] Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusades*, pp. 138-41 c.f. pp. 220-1.
[811] William of Tyre, 15.21, p. 703.

shelved his plans for another occasion (as with naval support, he would be more than able to supply the army himself) is unknown, but either way the emperor contented himself with waiting out the winter.[812]

He did not spend this time unprofitably, however, as in early spring, shortly before the season "kings ordinarily lead forth their armies to war" in the words of William, our sources find him hunting near Anazarbus.[813] Such a trip was likely not merely for hunting, but a social event to bring local elites further into the imperial fold, with Anazarbus being Prince Leon's old seat, and thus probably the centre of any anti-Roman party of local nobles. The empire's newly integrated province would surely have benefited from such imperial visits as they fell into old patterns, but unfortunately for John, the process of integration, and his plans for a Levantine settlement, were cut short.

The Death of John

Since at least the ruminations of Browning in 1961 the question of whether John was murdered has been debated.[814] There is no suspicion in any of the narrative histories, or indeed those court sources Browning believes may imply foul play, as those sources are almost certainly referring to fate knocking down the empire before time rather than there being any conspiracy or assassination.[815] The details of how John received the wound on his palm vary, but the crucial details are that John was afoot hunting a boar with a spear when he was thrown back and the

[812] Papageorgiou, *John II Komnenos*, p. 24.
[813] William of Tyre, 15.22, p. 704 – 15.23, p. 706; *NC*, p. 40; *JK*, p. 24; *Gregory the Priest*, p. 242.
[814] R. Browning, "The Death of John II Comnenus," *Byzantion 31* (1961), pp. 229-35; c.f. M. Lau, *The Suspicious Case of the Death of Emperor John II Komnenos – Cui Bono?* Delivered at Leeds International Medieval Congress 2012: https://www.academia.edu/8542942/The_Suspicious_Case_of_the_Death_of_Emperor_John_II_Komnenos_-_Cui_Bono.
[815] These include an anonymous panegyric to Patriarch Michael II Oxeites and a lament for John usually identified as being by John Tzetzes, both published within Browning's article.

arrows in his quiver cut his palm.[816] Whether through poison or merely infection, the wound became inflamed and despite the doctors lancing the swelling, the pain only grew worse, with the emperor refusing to allow them to amputate, supposedly with the line that it would be unbecoming for the Roman empire to be ruled by one hand.[817] Such pride in refusing the doctors' advice concerning the bandage is related especially by Kinnamos, in such a way that the implication is that had the emperor not been so stubborn he might have lived, and from the testimony of William and Kinnamos at least, it would seem that John's stubborn nature did indeed allow the wound to kill him.[818] Choniates meanwhile fills his account with portents: the valley where John was resting was filled with heavy rains, such that the imperial couch had to be moved, and John echoed the rain by quoting a prophecy of Leo the Wise that he would fall in watery places, and another from the same emperor that he would become food for crows, referring to both the sizzling irons that cauterised his wound and his location in the mountains at a place called the crows' nest.[819] In any case, on 4th April, Easter Sunday, John took communion and then allowed any to petition him, doing so again on the 5th at the suggestion of Axouch.[820] In William's account, this was where John specifically consulted with his commanders as to the succession, that his imminent death had made a pressing issue.[821]

It is in this matter, the most important of John's last acts, which Browning's article contributes to the debate. For though Choniates, Kinnamos and William all have John decide that Manuel must succeed in order to safeguard the army, and

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[816] William of Tyre, 15.22, p. 704; *NC*, p. 40; *JK*, p. 24.
[817] William of Tyre, 15.22, pp. 704-5; the possibility that it may have been an infection rather than poison is advocated by J. Lascaratus and D. Voros, "The fatal wounding of Emperor John II Comnenus," *Journal of Wound Care* 7 (1998), pp. 195-6.
[818] *Ibid*; *JK*, pp. 24-5.
[819] *NC*, pp. 40-1, ns. 94-5; Leo the Wise, *Leonis, romanorum imperatoris Augusti, Patrologia cursus completes 107*, ed. J-P Migne (Paris, 1863), 1132B.2 and 1129B.4 respectively.
[820] *NC*, p. 41.
[821] William of Tyre, 15.23, p. 705.

indeed that his qualities may have been superior to Isaac's, the anonymous panegyric in fact portrays the army as acclaiming Manuel as emperor, and then John merely "nodding assent" to its will.[822] It is notable that both the panegyric and Choniates use the phrase "ἐπιψηφίζεται ταῖς ψήφοις," [counting the pebbles/votes], referring to the antique system of voting for office, though Choniates mentions merely that Manuel was acclaimed as emperor as if he had been elected.[823] The panegyric specifically refers to the Varangian Guard, the elders and those closest in blood to the emperor as giving the salute to Manuel before John nodded assent; this is by no means conclusive, but it does suggest that Manuel connived at his own succession by getting the army on his side, and forcing his father to name him sole emperor, rather than Isaac, or both sons as co-emperors.

As to the murder itself, Browning himself admits that he does not have enough evidence, but merely questions the nature of John's death. [824] Taking away his rhetorical suggestions, we are left with assessing whether any party benefitted who had opportunity. Manuel benefitted, but he may well have accomplished his goal through a year's campaigning alone with his father, and it is difficult to believe that he or his party would actively hurt imperial interests in the Levant when they were so close to fulfilment. Cilician nobles would have no guarantee that prince Leon and his sons would ever escape from Constantinople, and so killing John would hardly have secured their objectives. Latin and Turkish enemies of John are unlikely to have had sufficient opportunity to tamper with John's arrows or his treatment so as to be able to assassinate him. What is more, though John's death did hamper imperial designs in the region, with Manuel and Isaac alive and having

[822] For Oxeites Panegyric, see Browning, "The Death of John II," p. 233.
[823] *NC*, p. 46.
[824] Browning, "The Death of John II," p. 235.

campaigned with John for so many years, there would be no reason to suggest that his sons would improve the situation for any of the empire's enemies, as indeed would eventually prove the case when Manuel had Prince Raymond supplicate himself at John's tomb, finally realising John's goal of Antioch as an imperial client.[825]

John died four days later on the 8th April, his body was conveyed to Mopsuestia and thence by ship to Constantinople to be buried at the imperial monastery of Christ Pantokrator, where his son Isaac had been imprisoned by Axouch to facilitate Manuel's accession.[826]

The emperor's last years had almost seen the fulfillment of a life spent attempting the restoration of Roman power; one more summer could well have seen the Latins of the Levant settled as varying ranks of imperial clients as the Serbians, Pechenegs and Italian maritime republics had before, and a status quo reached with Zengi as had been arranged with the Hungarians. With such a settlement accomplished, Ikonion would have been ripe for conquest after the Lake campaign, and with the Danishmendids occupied in civil war there had never been a better time for Anatolian conquests. Diplomatic initiatives with the Papacy, the Germans and the Italian cities had secured the coalition against Roger once more, such that southern Italy was also open to imperial expansion. Though the death of Alexios and Andronikos had been a serious blow, it was not a mortal one to imperial power with Isaac and Manuel still alive and able to work with their father in his old age on behalf of the empire.

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[825] *JK*, p. 35.
[826] Ibid. p. 29; *NC*, pp. 48-50: *KC*, Chronik 6.3, p. 58; Chronik 14.79, p. 145.

John's last expeditions demonstrate once more that he appears to have operated a policy whereby whenever the Turks fought each other, he would campaign in other arenas, but when they were united he gave them his full attention. These campaigns in Anatolia and his last journey east do, however, also demonstrate better than any other feature of his reign how the deeds of individual actors could dramatically change the shape of a political field. The treachery of his nephew John resulted in failure in Cappodocia; the death of Mohammed in renewed Turkish civil war, and the facilitation of John's final eastern campaign; and the death of Alexios in the retreat from Ikonion. The death of John himself, and the frustration of his ambitions were unfortunately at such a point that the world had moved on once again by the time Manuel could address his father's unfinished plans. Though the building of fortresses and diplomacy with the Latin east and west demonstrates that John could make longer-term plans, the fact that the decisions and deaths of prominent figures could change the board at short notice, necessitating a reordering of plans, demonstrates the volatility of the era. John may have had the restoration of the height of the eleventh-century empire as an end goal, but the means of achieving that goal were never straight forward, with every change of circumstance there was an opportunity for advantage or defeat, as Manuel would find in turn. John's legacy, both at the time and that which comes down to us today, was however secured by projection of imperial power in the capital, which was in many ways far more important, though connected to, anything that occurred on the frontiers. This was John's positive legacy, which was ably manufactured by his control of the major political stage of the era, that of the Queen of Cities itself.

Chapter Nine

The Political Theatre of Constantinople

John secured a wholly positive legacy amongst contemporaries, such that it even convinced Gibbon over five hundred years later of John's worthiness. He accomplished this feat in no small part by balancing the two essential roles the twelfth-century emperor had to play in order to be a success. On the one hand, the post-eleventh-century crisis emperor had to be an itinerant monarch, as only the emperor could accomplish the military and diplomatic resolutions necessary to secure and extend the empire's frontiers. This, John accomplished in the west, managing his subject nomadic and Serbian clients, maintaining less dominant client relationships with the Italian maritime cities, and then peace and even alliance with the powers of Hungary, the Papacy and the German Empire in alignment against the Normans. He came very close to a similar settlement in the Levant, with Edessa and Antioch as subject clients, Jerusalem as a satellite and a possible working peace with Zengi on the table, as shown by their exchange of gifts and unwillingness to face each other in the field. Anatolia too came close, with Mas'ud of Ikonion in a similar client relationship between his restoration and betrayal, and otherwise successive military campaigns extended the empire's territory throughout the reign. In addition to military might, John accomplished the latter through always returning to Anatolia whenever there was a dominant Turkish threat, and then during Turkish internal conflicts turning to other regions to impose settlements on them so he could return to focus more successfully upon military options in Anatolia on each occasion, as his military was cumulatively reinforced by troops from his clients.

At the same time as this itinerant monarchy however, the Roman Empire had a fixed capital at Constantinople, and it was imperative that John maintained power and support in that capital, in particular if he were going to be absent for such long periods. Indeed, such absences go a long way to explaining Isaac's challenge against his brother. John attempted to offset some of this problem by bringing many of the great and good of the nobility with him on campaign, while Constantinople hosted the administrative machinery to govern the empire, the tax raising apparatus to pay for military and diplomatic endeavours, the Church and the cultural elite whose support Constantinople relied upon. Throughout John's reign, he pursued numerous methods to secure his support in the capital, with the most high profile of these being the construction of the imperial monastery of Christ Pantokrator. John's reign cannot be understood and tracked merely through exploration and analysis of his campaigns, but must include the other side of the narrative which is expressed through the stages of the building of the Pantokrator, and the rhetoric and rituals of Constantinople. Thus John and his regime emphasised three major messages: legitimacy, piety, and above all John's role as the restorer of the Roman Empire. The reign seen in this light divides into two phases: the early period when Constantinople was governed by his brother the *sebastokrator* Isaac, and the later period after his betrayal.

The Early Years: Support through Isaac and the Army

At Alexios' death, if not during his illness a few years before, the factions John would have to keep on his side in order to control the capital can be seen in stark relief. John's accession came perilously close to blood on the streets of

Constantinople, and yet such a dynastic conflict was avoided by John's skilful management of events that aligned most factions of the capital behind him. We understand these events through the lenses of Choniates and Zonaras, who each put emphasis on different stages of John's acquisition of total power during those turbulent days.

Despite the potential conflict, Choniates presents John's assumption of control as almost a model imperial succession in comparison with later emperors, with emphasis on the wishes of the father, the divine plan, and John's personal characteristics that made his rise seem both inevitable and desirable.[827] This he does, as with much of the reign, by presenting the decline of the rightful *taxis* of the world from John onwards; as a side effect, such a presentation has done much to create the historical memory of John as the rightful emperor for Choniates' contemporaries which has lasted all the way through to Gibbon and to us today.[828] By contrast, Zonaras' account places much more emphasis on John's acclamation in Hagia Sophia by the clergy, and indeed the Georgian ambassadors, demonstrating how it was through John's piety and the will of God's Church on earth that John came to be acclaimed as ecumenical emperor.[829] This of course must be in no small part due to Zonaras being a monk at his time of writing, and indeed in comparison to Alexios' bloody accession John's act of seeking the blessing of the Church before taking control of the Great Palace can be seen as a worthy accession to the throne. Whether one of these factors was more important in practice, or indeed whether it was John's occupation of the Great Palace, the role of the Varangian Guard, the support of his brother Isaac, the aristocracy or the Constantinopolitan mob that was

[827] *NC*, pp. 6-8.
[828] Beihammer, "Comnenian Imperial Succession," pp. 165-9.
[829] Ibid. 168-9.

in fact the deciding factor, John's management of all of these factions secured him the emperorship in 1118.

Returning to the fallout from Anna's Philopation conspiracy in 1119, John dealt with this challenge primarily through skilful management of his family and the aristocracy. This method was supported by use of the power of court ceremony and rhetoric, and this combination would set the tone for the next ten years of support that John enjoyed in the capital. Choniates specifically identified Nikephoros and Anna's learning and education as the primary reason for such a faction gathering behind them, and so it can be assumed that there was an 'intellectual faction' at court who saw much to gain by replacing John, possibly begun by the members of the *theatron* of empress Mother Eirene Doukaina and Anna Komnene.[830] With the plot discovered, John kept this faction on his side primarily through magnanimity, for despite their intentions he had no one "maimed or flagellated," he merely confiscated their possessions, and then (presumedly on proof of their renewed loyalty) actually restored most of these possessions to them, and indeed everything to his sister Anna.[831] Apparently Nikephoros, and definitely his mother, stayed loyal throughout, and John managed to rally his family behind him in 1119. Such a cohesive family was epitomised by his brother Isaac, equal to John's sons with the rank of *sebastokrator*, and brought on by John as an "equal partner of his throne and table." [832] The imperial court was as much of a social and cultural hub as it was a political, bureaucratic, and indeed religious institution, and the true, legitimate Roman emperor had a role he must play within that court. [833] John delegated his role

[830] *NC*, p. 10; Tornikes*, Lettres*, p. 267; *Italikos*, pp. 146-51; Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 194.
[831] Ibid., p. 11.
[832] *NC*, p. 8, p. 7.
[833] H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829-1204* (Washington D.C, 1997), particularly: A. Kazhdan and M. McCormick, "The Social World of the Byzantine Court", pp. 167-97. For further studies on the Byzantine court and court ceremony, an almost exhaustive and stellar bibliography can

in Constantinople to Isaac from 1119 until Isaac's betrayal in the 1130s, and this was the primary means by which John's regime secured support in Constantinople.

From what we know of Isaac's activities in this period, he was the perfect candidate to rally any intellectual faction at court behind the regime. From the three poems by Prodromos on Isaac's return to court in 1139, we know the *sebastokrator* was considered an able man of letters, a poet in his own right and possibly even a painter.[834] He patronised art as can be verified by an octateuch preserved in the seraglio in Istanbul, and the Church by rebuilding the Chora church of his grandmother Maria Doukaina, in which his portrait survives and where he originally intended to be buried.[835]

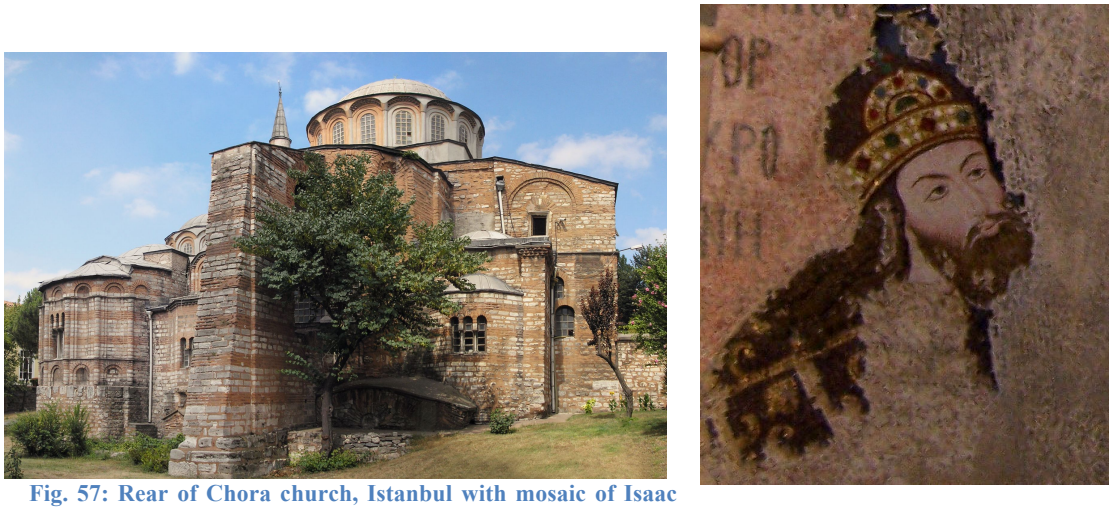

Fig. 57: Rear of Chora church, Istanbul with mosaic of Isaac Komnenos.

Such activities were everything an intellectual faction could expect from an emperor in Constantinople, highlighting the piety and support for learning that a legitimate emperor should pursue, but they were reinforced by both court ceremony and rhetoric in praise of John, in addition to the apportioning of offices in his government and use of an itinerant court.

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be found in M. Mullett, "Tented Ceremony: Ephemeral Performances under the Komnenoi," *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean Comparative Perspectives*, ed. A. Beihammer, S. Constantnou, M. Parani (Leiden, 2013), p. 497-8, ns. 39-57.

[834] *Prodromos*, XXXX, XXXXI, XXXXII. 41 discusses a portrait Isaac painted of his brother John, but the poem also implies he may have merely had it commissioned.

[835] T. Uspensky, "Konstantinopolskii seralskii kodeks vosmikhnizhiya," *IRAIK* 12 (1907), pp. 18–32; "Kosmosoteira: Typikon" (2001), p. 782, 838.

Though John's own accession may have been fraught with overtones of force and the possibility for blood in the streets, his son Alexios' coronation as emperor in 1119 coupled with his other three sons' ascension to the rank of *sebastokrator* carried with them all the power of imperial and religious ritual. Neither Choniates nor Kinnamos focuses on the occasion as neither of their narrative goals are aided by recalling the legitimacy of Alexios as John's rightful and God-favoured heir, but from Prodromos' poem we can imagine the regime making a very public and visual statement of legitimacy, which included singing and dancing for what was likely the equivalent of a palace ball.[836] Indeed, Prodromos' emphasis on the music sweeping up not only the army and countless people, but also elders and senators and priests implies strongly that the occasion appealed to a wider audience than John's usual power base.[837] Equally, the commissioning of Prodromos' poem demonstrates how the poet had moved on from working only in the *theatra* of the empress mother and Nikephoros Bryennios. His early work is characterised by his commentaries on Aristotle, his romance of *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, and two commissions concerning the wedding of Nikephoros' two sons and the death of his daughter-in-law Theodora.[838] Such work, in addition to the fact that his teacher Italikos is known to have worked in the *theatron*, firmly places Prodromos as part of such an intellectual faction at court,

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[836] *Prodromos*, I, lines 79-84.
[837] Ibid. lines 18-23.
[838] Tornikes' funeral oration to Anna emphasises how she and Nikephoros made their house "a home of the Muses," thus a natural patron for authors of romances, see: Nikephoros Bryennios, *Nicéphore Bryennios Histoire*, tr. P. Gautier (Brussels. 1975), pp. 340-55; *Prodromos*, LIX; J. Cramer, "Xenedemus," *Anecdota graeca e codd. manuscriptis bibliothecarum Oxoniensum* (vol. 3, Oxford, 1836), pp. 204-15; P. Tannery, "Théodore Prodrome sur le grand et le petit", *Annuaire des Études Grecques* 21 (1887), pp. 104–19. For *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* see: E. Jeffreys, "Theodore Prodromos, "*Rhodanthe and Dosikles*", *Four Byzantine Novels* (Liverpool, 2012), pp. 3-156; E. Jeffreys, "A Date for Rhodanthe and Dosikles?" in *Der Roman in Byzanz der Komnenenzeit Referate des Internationalen Symposiums an der Freien Universität Berlin, 3. bis 6. April 1998* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), p. 136; George Tornikes, *Georges et Dèmetrios Tornikès, Lettres et Discours*, ed. J. Darrouzès (Paris, 1970), p. 267, pp. 283-93, Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, pp. 5-7.

even though he would only have been a mouthpiece rather than a power player.[839] The fact that he now wrote a poem for the emperor was therefore an achievement in itself, and alongside the commisioning of the *Muses* this should be interpreted as a sign that John had put some effort into wooing the court intellectuals and the Church in 1119 with ceremony and court rhetoric, even if he left such wooing in the capital to his brother for the rest of the decade.

It should not be forgotten, however, that many of the grandees of the court accompanied John on campaign, and the ceremony of the court that was such an essential part of being the Roman emperor would have continued in the field, regardless of what form of ceremonial was taking place in Constantinople. The tenth-century military manuals contain a large list comprising many of the most important government officials as well as household staff and army officers who always travel with the emperor, and from scattered references in our sources the same practices appear to have continued into the twelfth century.[840] John's itinerant court not only developed an *esprit de corps* amongst much of the aristocracy, uniting them behind John as brothers-in-arms, but was also equipped to allow the emperor to perform his role on imperial ceremonial occasions. Mullett's study on *Tented Ceremony* recalls that John was betrothed to Piroska on campaign with his father in a tent, and throughout the rest of his life other occasions occurred that reflect Mullett's thesis that the tent and the camp were very much the Byzantine court on the move.[841] Petitions from Meles, Axouch and Adrian Komnenos to the emperor on behalf of others make clear that the normal business of the court continued, alongside diplomatic meetings such as for the peace treaty with Stephen

[839] Italikos, pp. 146-51.
[840] *"Anonymous Military Treatise*"; Mullett, "Tented Ceremony", pp. 498-9, n. 58; see Chapter Two, *The 'new' Government and Marriage Policies.*
[841] Sathas Anonymous, pp. 181-2; Mullett, "Tented Ceremony", pp. 510 and 513.

of Hungary or the Genoese negotiations outside Antioch in 1142. Of prime importance were the ritual submissions of figures such as Raymond of Antioch, both actual and planned in the case of the first and second expeditions to Syria respectively. These would have occurred in the imperial camp, and similar rituals of submission are likely to have taken place with nomad and Turkish chiefs and Serb princes, as they did in the case of Uroš II and Manuel. Such submissions would have proven John's legitimacy as the rightful, God-favoured Roman emperor far more effectively than any performance of court rhetoric short of a Triumph in Constantinople. This goes some way to explaining why alongside the collective identity forged through combat as brothers-in-arms, the itinerant imperial court on the move was so firmly supportive of John throughout his life, as from childhood he had forged relationships with these men.

The one exception to this collective identity is the one that proves the rule in the case of John's nephew, Isaac's son John Komnenos. On his and his father's reconciliation with the emperor in 1138, he would have entered the world of the itinerant court with the reputation as the traitor's son. Where his contemporaries in age, such as his cousins the imperial princes, had campaigned with the emperor for at least the last ten years, he had been in exile. His likely emotions on being made to feel like an outsider can well be understood and came to a head in Cappadocia in 1140 when he was disrespected in favour of a Latin knight; by comparison, he had spent the last ten years among the Turks, and so it is no wonder he felt more kinship with them and so decided to change sides. By 1140, the institutional identity of the imperial aristocracy had coalesced enough that a traitor's son who had missed the last ten years would have found it well nigh impossible to break in; with the

exception of this imperial nephew, however, such a strong corporate identity was a strength to the regime.

Nevertheless, the difficulty lay in translating these rituals of legitimacy and power back to the capital, and in the 1120s it seems that John completely relied on his brother Isaac and the rest of his government to support him when he was on campaign. In some ways this conclusion is derived from evidence bias, as we have no sources for John doing anything in Constantinople in this period after 1119 aside from negotiations with the Venetians in 1126, and yet the lack of information combined with his freedom of action on the frontiers implies that all was well. Considering, however, that Prodromos was active from at least 1119, it is likely that John intervened far less in the capital in this period: but this was all to change with the treachery of Isaac.

After Isaac: Support through Rhetoric

Isaac's treachery in 1130 was a watershed from which John adopted a new strategy to secure support in Constantinople. This he succeeded in doing through better conveying his accomplishments back in the capital through ceremony when present and by way of the court rhetors when on campaign, and then most prominently with the construction of the monastery of Christ Pantokrator. Indeed, the longer the emperor was away, the more he built, and the grander the ceremonies and court rhetoric that resulted.

It is noteworthy that from John's first major victory after his brother's betrayal, the capture of Kastamon, we have four major rhetorical works surviving from Prodromos alone, after what appears to be a dearth of such works describing

earlier victories.[842] Messages sent from the emperor on campaign to Constantinople would have kept the government of the empire informed as to his deeds, but with the Byzantine court and wider citizenry being as much a social and cultural organisation as a political and bureaucratic one, the information sent home was then converted into the form of poems to be digested by the court and people, with specific forms of poetry directed towards different audiences. [843] Specifically: the high style of hexameter for the elites, and the *dekastich* to be sung by the deme choirs to a wider audience. Additionally, *Prodromos* poems V and VI are of the same metre, implying either multiple poems for the same event, or indeed that there were multiple events to celebrate John's victory, which would provide yet more opportunities to convey John's power to those who did not hear the demes or understand the poetry at the triumph.

Unfortunately no battlefield communiqué survives, but we have the process of propagating imperial success described in a letter by Italikos to the *Logothetes ton Dromos*, Stephen Meles, and then referred to in a subsequent oration. Italikos mentions how he heard a letter from the emperor and knew the words were by Meles, such was their eloquence describing the battles and deeds of the Cilician campaign.[844] Also of note is the fact that officially these letters were from the emperor, even if actually penned by a ghostwriter. Italikos then mentions how he went to the "platform of the *didaskaloi*" to pass on such deeds himself.[845] We are fortunate to have this very oration also preserved, during which he mentions that giving orations such as this was his public service (δημοσιεύων) – that is reporting

[842] *Prodromos*, III, IV, V, VI.
[843] As Introduction, n. 16, Chapter Five, and Lau, "Power of Poetry", pp. 195-214
[844] "Τούτων εἰς κοινὴν ἀκοὴν ἀναγινωσκομένων, ἐβόων αὐτός" "Μέλητος γνώσκω τὴν γλῶσσαν λαλοῦσαν." Italikos, "Τῷ λογοθέτῃ τοῦ δρόμου τῷ Μέλητι", p. 232.
[845] "Ἐναύλους τοίνυν ἔχων τὰς τοιαύτας ἐγὼ φωνὰς καὶ προσιζήσασαν τὴν ὅλην ἁρμονίαν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, ἀνῆλθον ὡς εἶχον εὐθὺς ἐπὶ τοὺς τῆς διδασκαλίας ὀκρίβαντας καὶ ὧν ἐνεφορήθην λόγων πρὸς ἄλλους ἐπλήρουν καὶ μετωχέτευον τὰ σὰ ῥεύματα ἐπὶ τὸν λαόν."

the news of the emperor's struggles to fire up the people in support of the regime.[846] Further details as to the practice of using these poems comes first from Prodromos, who boasts in Poem XIX that though many were working on poems for the emperor, only he had finished, suggesting that speed of propagation was important to John.[847] Basilakios takes the other tack, explaining in his oration that by celebrating John's deeds in a grander style he will make those achievements even greater.[848] This point is also made by Italikos, who notes that Meles: "surrounds greatness with greatness…/through your golden tongue the deeds of the Emperor are related;" Italikos also mentions that he and his associates debated which was the more wondrous: John's deeds or the quality of the words describing them, proving how the latter was just as important as the former to the intelligentsia of Constantinople.[849] It is equally noteworthy that three long orations by three different rhetors all survive for John's first eastern expedition, demonstrating how John used these poets to maintain connections and support in the capital despite being away for so long.

The messages these rhetors conveyed are remarkably consistent throughout the reign, and indeed between the authors. Though much of their style could be dismissed as standard imperial rhetorical tropes, it is noteworthy which tropes of the 1000-year repertoire of imperial panegyric these poets chose. They tell us a great

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[846] 'Πᾶσα μὲν γλῶσσα καὶ στόμα πᾶν ἐπὶ σοὶ κεκίνηται, βασιλεῦ, ἀλλ᾽ ἐγὼ τῶν ἄλλων θερμότερος. Καὶ σὺ μὲν κατέσυρας τὰς πόλεις Συρίας. ἐγὼ δὲ τὰς ἀκοὰς τῶν ἀκροατῶν ὑπὲρ τῶν εἰς ταύτας ἀγώνων καὶ ὥσπερ αὐτοὺς δημοσιεύων εἰς τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἀνῆγον ὀκρίβαντας καὶ τοῦ ῥεύματος τὸ σφοδρὸν ἐκεῖθεν αἰσθάνομαι ἢ ἐκ Μινουκιανοῦ τε καὶ Νικαγόρου". Italikos, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," p. 257.

[847] *Prodromos*, XIX, lines 1-10.

[848] "Ἀλλά μοι δός, ὦ ἄριστε αὐτοκράτορ, ἃ σὺ τότε τοῖς ἔργοις ἐφιλοσόφησας,
ταῦτα νῦν ἐπεισκυκλῆσαι τῷ λόγῳ φιλοτιμότερον, ἵν᾽ ᾖ μοι καὶ
ὑψηλότερον τοῦ τε λόγου τὸ ἐπεισόδιον καὶ τῶν σῶν μεγαλουργημάτων τὸ πρόᾳσμα". Basilakes, *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 54, lines 19-22.

[849] "μεγάλοις μέγεθος περιτέθεικας.../ τῇ χρυσῇ σου γλώττῃ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος ἀφηγούμενος;" "Οὐκ εἴχομεν ὅ τι θαυμάσομεν πότερον τῶν ἔργων τὸ μέγεθος ἢ τῶν λόγων τὴν εὐμουσίαν, τὸν αὐτουργὸν τῶν κατορθωμάτων βασιλέα ἢ τὸν συγγραφέα τῶν ἔργων, τὸν ἀθλητὴν ἢ τὸν κήρυκα." Italikos, "Τῷ λογοθέτῃ τοῦ δρόμου τῷ Μέλητι," p. 232.

deal about which messages John's court most approved of, and indeed how they wished the actions of the emperor and the world around to be perceived. Though a full exegesis of the court texts must form part of a broader study on John's reign, what is striking about the rhetoric of his time is how life imitates art, as John appears to have pursued policies that would make good rhetoric in the capital.[850]

The most straightforward of messages is of course John's legitimacy – across all court sources from the *Muses* to his epitaphs, John's descent from the Komnenoi and the Doukai, the great emperors of the past and the legitimacy of his children as equally noble and worthy heirs also born in the purple, is endemic. The more important task of the rhetor was to justify John's absence from the capital for much of his reign. He must explain what the emperor was doing. The inklings of criticism in both these court sources are confined to the fact that John spends so much time away, though it must be acknowledged that this criticism had a personal dimension in order that the rhetors would have more commissions and access to promotion if the emperor stayed in the capital, directly referenced in a few poems and letters.[851] In addition to these John is begged to remain in Constantinople because already: "the nations of dawn and dusk are your slaves" and Prodromos begs him on behalf of Christ, his fellow emperor Alexios, and all the *sebastokratores* and *porphyrogennetoi* not to be an emperor "of ancient days" [πολυχρόνιος].[852] His meaning is not apparent in this Christmas hymn aside from the implication that 'modern' emperors did not leave Constantinople as often as

[850] Specific discussion is found in Papageorgiou, *John II Komnenos*, Lau, "Power of Poetry", and Lau, "Ioannoupolis".
[851] Summary of Prodromos' life to be found in Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels*, p. 6; c.f. the letters of Italikos to secure promotion in the emperor's absence being contemporaneous with Prodromos' begging poem to Anna Komnene and his consideration of joining his teacher Skylitzes in Trebizond: Prodromos, "Τῷ μητροπολίτῃ Τραπεζοῦντος", Letter 5, tr. Op de Coul (2007), pp. 94-100; *Prodromos*, LIX, for the poem to Anna, and also references in poems to John such as XI, lines 211-220.
[852] *Prodromos*, IX, lines β15 -24.

John did. Prodromos goes on that it is God that will judge his reign, and that therefore he must favour God rather than more campaigns.[853] Subtler is a hymn written by Prodromos for the feast of the Baptism of Christ, where in addition to drawing a parallel with Christ in praise of the emperor through a voice from heaven saying: "this is my Emperor, with whom I am well pleased. Be obedient to him," he calls upon the emperor to purify the Queen of Cities as only with John and his "twin sun" Alexios in the capital will Constantinople shine as it should. By contrast to this sacred duty: "horse riding is unimportant, rest your horses, unharness your bridle and give to your city." [854] These words appear to be the only surviving contemporary criticism from John's reign, and indeed they too are passed on by both Choniates and then Gibbon, implying that John's only true fault was that he was over fond of glory, which may be further indication that Choniates used some of these court texts as his sources.[855] These few words of criticism do however evaporate after Prodromos' poems concerning both his visit to Lopadion and John's Cappadocian campaign, where the rhetor may have realised what the situation was on the imperial frontiers, and so he even appears to express guilt at being safe in Constantinople while the emperor suffered for him – a remarkable change in tone.[856] Indeed the latter poem is a *dekastisch* and so would likely have been sung out by deme choirs to the people, making the following lines a direct address to the people as to the nature of the emperor's suffering for his people:

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[853] Ibid. γ1-24.
[854] "Οὗτος ὁ βασιλεύς μου, οὗτος εἰς ὃν εὐδόκησα, τούτῳ καὶ πειθαρχεῖτε" and "ἀλλ᾽ἄφες, ἄναξ ἥλιε, μικρὸν τὴν ἱππασίαν, ἀνάπαυσον τοὺς ἵππους σου, λύσον τοὺς χαλινούς σου καὶ δὸς τῇ πόλει σουτῶν σῶν ἀκτίνων κορεσθῆναι"*Ibid*, Poem X, α14-5 γ16-19 respectively.
[855] *NC*, p. 46; c.f. the similarity in the descriptions of the triumph, is his rhetorical turns of phrases for incidents in the first eastern expedition, which is perhaps uncoincidentally the best covered by Choniates, Kinnamos and the court sources. The same holds true for Manuel's reign: Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 20.
[856] Prodromos, XVIII and XIX specifically lines 73-108 of the former and lines 182-91 of the latter

the Emperor starved - I was fed,
the Emperor froze - I was warm,
the Emperor was exposed - I was covered.
The mighty Komnenos endured such great misery,
while the unfortunate and lowly Prodromos lived luxuriously.[857]

This is developed further in many poems, both with the emperor being compared to Christ and as a labourer on behalf of his people. Prodromos praises the emperor for his golden sweat during the Kastamon oration – a sudatory image not entirely to modern taste, but his meaning is clarified in the exhortation to: "receive the Emperor and wipe off the golden sweat from his golden brow as it has redeemed you," paralleling the emperor's sweat in particular with the redeeming power of the blood of Christ. [858] In the Gangra oration, John's triumphal liturgy in the Cathedral is equated to a husbandman who has worked long in the fields, caring for the land, until winter comes and his wife thanks him by giving him fine food and unmixed wine to foster the strength in his heart.[859] This image additionally ascribes the Church the role of John's partner in his works. Across multiple poems, this image of 'John the worker' is consistent: he overcomes hostile lands, full of chasms, narrow passes and overgrown thorns, and builds roads and *stele* across them, turning the land into a garden and ending war.[860] Indeed, the empire itself is described as a living thing, where the emperor stretches out "the vines of new Rome, with its branches growing across the seas and its offshoots up the furthest

[857] "ἐπείνησεν ὁ βασιλεύς, ἐγὼ δ᾽ἐχορταζόμην,
ἐρίγωσεν ὁ βασιλεύς, ἐγὼ δ᾽ἐθερμαινόμην,
αἴθριος ἦν ὁ βασιλεύς, ἐγὼ δ᾽ἐστεγαζόμην.
ὁ Κομνηνὸς ὁ κραταιὸς ὁ τόσος ἐτλεπάθει,
ὁ δυστυχὴς δὲ Πρόδρομος καὶ ταπεινὸς ἐτρύφα." Ibid. XIX, lines 186-90.
[858] "δέξαι τὸν βασιλέα καὶ τοὺς ἱδρῶτας τοῦς χρυσούς, οἷς ἐξηγόρασέ σε, ἀπόμορξον, ἀπόμαξον ἐκ τοῦ χρυσοῦ μετώπου·," *Prodromos*, IV, lines 63-4. On lines 68 and 70 the Eucharist is indeed referenced as the "answering grace" [ἀντίχαρις] to the emperor's works [πόνοι].
[859] *Prodromos*, VIII, lines 264-73.
[860] *Ibid*, XIX, lines 151-60; "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα", pp. 70-1; Lau, "Power of Poetry", pp. 2010-11.

rivers."[861] Indeed, the word "κλῆμα" used for vine branch is the same word used for a Roman centurion's punishment switch adding a chastising dimension to John's expansion into new lands. The land itself is described as a "wanton and unfaithful" woman at the same time as being a daughter of new Rome who was betrothed to slaves and brutes who ravished her, but is now re-betrothed to the emperor so that "the servant is again the servant" of her legitimate master.[862] Mixed metaphor this may be, but John's role as the one who sets everything right is consistent.

At the same time as a farmer, builder and disciplinarian he is also described as the "Arch-Surveyor" who sets out to use his sword to complete the circle of the imperial geometry by mastering Asia.[863] Though parallels with classical heroes, and most particularly Alexander, are regularly found in these poems and to be expected from imperial rhetoric, an added dimension is an end to the "days of Kronos," the disorders of the past, and the start of "the days of vengeance…/the days of repayment."[864] Choniates' agenda to portray John as the ordered past that steadily declined may well have derived from these texts where John's court rhetors portrayed John as the restorer of the Roman Empire after its time of troubles.[865] The specific similes used emphasise how John is correcting the fate of the empire to reclaim the victories of the great emperors of the past. Thus he is Emperor Leo for his Cilician campaign and Alexander the Great for Anatolia in addition to realising the dreams of Heraklios and Constantine, and the rhetors and chroniclers remark on how John is performing deeds that have not been done by emperors in many

[861] "ἐξέτεινας τὴν ἄμπελον τῆς νεωτέρας Ῥώμης, τὸ κλῆμα ἐχρι θαλασσῶν καὶ τὰς παραφυάδας, μεγίστων ἄχρι ποταμῶν,"Ibid. IV, line 77-9.
[862] "῾Υβρίστρια καὶ μοιχαλίς", "ἡ δούλη πάλιν δούλη", Ibid. IV, lines 131, 140.
[863] Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 54.
[864] "αἱ ἡμέραι τῆς ἐκδικήσεως…/αἱ ἡμέραι τῆς ἀνταποδόσεως" Ibid. p. 69; *Prodromos*, XV, line 54.
[865] For John as Restorer see: Basilakes, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα," and "Λογος εἰς τὸν σεβαστὸν καὶ μέγαν Δομέστικον," *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 58 and 87-8 respectively; Italikos, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," p. 266; *Prodromos*, IV, XV, XVII and XVIII, line 118, line 41, line 189 and line 108 respectively.

years.[866] Rhetoric would of course only go so far, and thus John made an especial effort whenever he was in the capital and the provincial cities to demonstrate in person that through his actions the Roman Empire was being restored. For this he used all the grandeur of imperial and church ceremonial, which indeed was the most vibrant physical manifestation of Roman identity.

Rituals of Roman Rulership and Imperial Piety

To both contemporaries and scholars, the Roman Triumph appears as the most stunning example of the power and majesty of imperial dominion. Scholars are limited in their analysis of these events by the fact that we can only experience them through accounts that are often as rhetorical as the event itself, though the *dekastichs* that would likely have been sung during these events convey to us one facet of the experience without an interlocutor. Closer to us are perhaps the religious processions introduced and amended during John's reign, but all these ceremonies, including John's triumphal entries to Constantinople, Antioch and Gangra (that we know of), conveyed the messages of legitimacy, piety and imperial restoration more dynamically and to wider audiences than the rhetors could. Thus it is no surprise their grandeur is preserved and commented on in the surviving texts, as they were perhaps the most effective means by which John's regime could convey these three messages. Aside from the coronation of Alexios in 1119 we have no examples of such ceremonies before the treachery of Isaac, and though these may be merely missing from our sources, the third stanza in Prodromos' 5th poem implies that John

[866] Leo and Alexander: Italikos, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην," p. 247 and Prodromos, VIII, line 291 respectively; Heraklios: *JK*, p. 14 (also mentions Justinian); *Prodromos*, XIX, line 125 and Basilakes, "λογος εἰς τὸν σεβαστὸν καὶ μέγαν Δομέστικον", *Orationes et Epistolae*, p. 90; Constantine: Italikos *Ibidem*, p. 265, and *Ibidem*, p. 68; *Prodromos*, XI, line 55; Lines for the latter point include: "who from this age has heard of Balzon under the Romans": *Prodromos*, IV, line 211.

had not celebrated any triumphs before, and that 1130 must therefore again be seen as a watershed when John's regime took more care to project imperial power in the capital through these ceremonies.[867]

The most fully described triumph is that of 1133 after the capture of Kastamon, when Choniates, Kinnamos, and Prodromos' poems all contain the same descriptors, though Prodromos' sixth poem provides the most detail.[868] John was met by the people at the colonnades of the Propontis ferry, while all ranks of society stopped work and decorated the streets and houses with gold and purple cloth.[869] Red cloths were placed above the processional route, doves were released during the procession, and platforms and scaffolding were set up either side for people to watch; this was supposedly for the whole city from the eastern gates to the Great Palace according to Choniates, implying that the processional route came from both the eastern gate and the ferry and then came together.[870] The common people were supposedly dressed in white, red, blue or green: if not a rhetorical trope, then this is a reference to the common people's allegiance to circus factions, and thus a reflection (in rhetoric or fact) of every person's ordered place in the world that John had restored.[871] There was music and dancing and rhetors sang along the route, with Prodromos' two *dekastisch* compositions almost certainly being two examples of the poems used.[872] The silver chariot, covered in precious stones and griffon decorations (a reference to Alexander) receives attention in all sources, and most particularly the fact that riding in it was not John, who walked humbly in front

[867] The stanza tells us that John had earned five chariots already by conquering Laodikeia, Sozopolis, the Skythians (nomads), the Dalmatians (Serbs?) and the Dacians (Hungarians) and yet leaving these behind, he would not accept a chariot for Kastamon, such was his humility as discussed below: *Prodromos*, V, lines 21-30.
[868] *Prodromos,* III, V and VI; *JK*, pp. 13-14; *NC*, p. 18-9.
[869] *Ibid*, particularly Poems IV and VI, lines 240-49 and lines 25 and 38 respectively.
[870] Ibid. VI, line 96, *NC*, p. 19.
[871] Ibid. line 151.
[872] Ibid. IV and VI, lines 19-20, 250-9, 277-8 and lines 70-71.

carrying a cross rather than his weapons, but an icon of the *Theotokos*.[873] The emperor's humility is indeed referenced in all the *dekastischs*, so onlookers would have no doubts as to the symbolism of the gesture, as the emperor's "unconquered fellow-general" was honoured, and John's piety emphasised to the extreme.[874] The chariot was driven by John's chief ministers either side of the icon, while John and the young Alexios were dressed in gold and his three brothers the *sebastokratores* in white and pearls (matching the horses) attending upon the icon as they would to the emperor, in a tableau reminiscent of an icon with the imperial family as angels.[875] Trophies, prisoners and the army in dress uniform followed the imperial chariot, with Turkish soldiers in matching mail shirts mentioned specifically.[876] The procession went through the Acropolis, with the great doors of copper and gold opening before him, and culminated in Hagia Sophia, where John gave thanks to God for his victories "before all the people," placed the treasure around the altar and went to the sanctuary alone with the Patriarch bearing a candle, and only then returned to the Palace.[877]

From the similarity in descriptions it seems likely that the chroniclers used Prodromos' poems as their sources for this event, such is their rhetorical style. Equally, however, Choniates' description in particular carries a textual link to Plutarch's *Camillus*, a classical Roman general who received four triumphs in Plutach's text, but these descriptions contain deliberate alterations to the classical

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[873] Kinnamos alone says gold rather than silver, his description is also the most grudging in its praise, using phrases such as John walking "perhaps to avoid arrogance": *JK*, p. 13, p. 20; *Prodromos*, V and VI, specifically VI lines 59-82, 163-5, and a description of the icon in lines 199-210. The lack of weapons "which lords constantly bear" coupled with the white clothes imply that God and the Theotokos was the only weapon that John needed to conquer.
[874] *NC*, p. 19, p. 12.
[875] Ibid; *Prodromos*, VI, lines 83-87, 152, 178-81.
[876] Prisoners are listed in the 23rd stanza of the Poem IV, lines 230-39; soldiers are mentioned in Poem VI, lines 116-40, with the matching mail shirts mentioned on line 121.
[877] *NC*, p. 19, p. 12; *Prodromos*, VI, lines 211-20.

model that convey John's messages even more prominently during both the ceremony, and in our texts.[878] The visual spectacle of the triumph physically placed the emperor next to prisoners, treasures, the army and the icon of the *Theotokos*, his "spectacularly ostentatious display of humility" alongside his sons pushed forward his messages of legitimacy, piety and imperial restoration as no other event could.[879] It was no doubt hugely expensive to perform such a choreographed and lavish occasion, but in the wake of his brother's treachery, and indeed with the plunder brought in through John's conquests, it was a price the emperor would have been happy to pay to secure the support of the capital.

Similar elements are to be found during John's *adventus* to Gangra and Antioch: for the former, the supplication of the Lady of Gangra was followed by a procession of the army through the city and then a service in the cathedral to give thanks, while on both occasons that the emperor entered Antioch the whole populace came out to greet him, the second time after the campaign against the Muslims of Syria the streets were decorated and the people held up sacred images. While Prodromos' *dekastisch* on the campaign suggests if not a triumph then definitely some form of ceremony involving deme choirs being performed back in Constantinople, while Basilakios' and Italikos' orations were undoubtedly read at either a major court event, or multiple events, such is their length.[880] Indeed, Kastamon and Antioch aside, Prodromos has three more Turkish campaign poems

[878] The textual link has been demonstrated in A. Kaldellis, "The original source for Tzimiskes' Balkan campaign (971AD) and the emperor's classicizing propaganda," *BMGS* Vol. 37 No. 1 (2013), p. 37.
[879] M. McCormick, *Eternal victory Triumphal rulership in late antiquity, Byzantium and the early medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 173-4.
[880] Gangra: *Prodromos*, VIII, lines 249-63; Antioch: *NC*, pp. 27 and 31; *Prodromos*, Poem XI, "Λόγος εἰς τὸν ἀοίδιμον βασιλέα"; *Italikos*, "Λόγος βασιλικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰωάννην,"

addressed "τοῖς δήμοις," in addition to further poems such as that on the Cappadocian campaign intended for a court setting.[881]

These less splendid ceremonies may have taken place in the Hippodrome or another public space. Indeed there is one poem addressed to the people in the wake of his Syrian campaign concerning John presiding over the public races, which tells us he hosted races in celebration of his conquests in the east.[882] This short poem conveys once more John's descent from the Komnenoi and Doukai, his hard won victories and divine favour from the Pantokrator, and all using similes and metaphors concerning light in a poem that again evokes the later ceremony of *Prokypsis*.[883] This combination of a new wave of ceremonial rhetoric incorporated as part of the very traditional practice of chariot racing marks the ceremonial of John's reign as a bridge between old and new, and one where his regime used every weapon in its arsenal to convey messages to the people of Constantinople. The court was given extra ceremonial c.1140 as well, with two paeans by Prodromos for separate imperial weddings, and another for the presentation of Manuel's future wife, Bertha-Eirene.[884] Where in the fallout from Isaac's treachery and the capture of Kastamon John had used one huge event to convey his messages in the capital, after his eastern expedition he used multiple smaller events. In both cases, the messages given by this imperial ceremonial were consistent.

Complementary to these Roman rituals of triumphs, court orations and chariot racing were Christian rituals that above all emphasised John's piety, but added to it the familiar dimensions of legitimacy and imperial restoration. John's personal piety is well attested by Choniates in particular, who relates in full the

[881] *Prodromos*, XV, XVI, XVII and XIX respectively.
[882] Ibid. XII.
[883] Ibid.
[884] Ibid. XIII, XIV and XX.

incident where John called upon the icon of the Mother of God during the battle of Berrhoia, crying out and gesturing pitifully for intervention, before leading the Varangian Guard against the nomadic wagons to win the day.[885] In the wake of this victory, John made a number of changes to the Marian processions in Constantinople. This is of particular note as they occurred whether the emperor was present or not, and thus were expressions of imperial piety and authority transcending specific events and actual imperial presence as they were part of the liturgical calendar.

The *Theometor* had become more closely associated with the imperial family since Alexios had moved the residence of the Komnenoi to Blachernai Palace, which was the site of a Marian shrine, founded in the fifth century by Emperor Leo and his Empress Verina, and expanded by Justin and Justinian in the sixth.[886] This shrine had held a weekly procession of the icon to the Chalkoprateia monastery on a Friday to petition the Mother of God for intercession, and across the ages various miracles attested to this practice. [887] At the same time, the other major Marian procession was that of the icon of the *Hodogetria*, 'She who shows the Way,' from the eponymous church of the *Hodegon* to a different church in the city every Tuesday, and the icon was also known to have been taken into battle as John did at Berrhoia.[888] John not only instituted a new procession for an icon of the Virgin *Eleousa*, 'Tenderness' or 'showing mercy,' from his monastery of the Pantokrator, but also had that procession meet with the Friday procession of the Blachernai and finish at the Pantokrator, changing the traditional route that finished

[885] *NC*, p. 15.
[886] C.f. B. V Pentcheva, *Icons and Power* (Pennsylvania, 2006), p. 12.
[887] Ibid. p. 145.
[888] Ibid. p. 110.

at the Chalkoprateia.[889] The *Carmen* of Piroska-Eirene written for the feast day of the Pantokrator describes the imperial couple leading this procession from the Blachernai shrine, singing hymns and praying for intercession for their people. Thus John was directly involved in these initiatives when present in the capital.[890] Furthermore, he instituted an annual ceremony whereby the icon of the *Hodogetria* would come to the Pantokrator; it was to be set by John's tomb for the monks to keep a vigil while praying for his soul, and in the morning all those present would receive a share of fifty *hyperpyra nomismata*.[891] With these changes, John appropriated what were previously expressions of public intercession for imperial use – he associated these processions with his regime, and thus harnessed their political and spiritual benefit for himself as well as the people as a whole, or to put it another way he conflated the fortunes of both himself and the people together.[892]

Such appropriation was not limited to processions, but to feast days as well. Prodromos' hymns for Christmas and the Baptism of Christ may not have been innovative in adding an imperial dimension to the feast day, but they complemented John's own initiatives in instituting specific regulations for the feast days at his monastery of the Pantokrator.[893] It is in the Pantokrator that a synthesis of all of these themes is to be found, and the three messages of John's regime are most clearly conveyed to both his contemporaries and later generations in its *typikon*, in its ceremonial and rhetorical texts, and in the stones of the building itself.

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[889] Ibid. p. 165; *Pantokrator Typikon*, pp. 73-5.
[890] "τοὺς ἐκ Βλαχερνῶν τυπικῶς ἀφιγμένους ἰθυτενῶς ἄγουσαν ὑμνῳδοὺς ἔχειν πρὸς οὐρανίους τούσδε καὶ θείους δόμους." *Az Árpád-kori Magyar történet bizánci forrásai: Fontes Byzantini historiae Hungaricae aevo ducum et regum ex stirpe Árpád descendentium*. [Byzantine sources of the Hungarian Árpád dynasty] ed. G. Moravcsik (Budapest, 1988), pp. 121-122; Pentcheva (2006), p. 12; P. Magdalino, "The Foundation of the Pantokrator Monastery in Its Urban Setting," *The Pantokrator Monastery* ed. Kotzabassi (2013), p. 44. This provides the *terminus ante quem* for this change at least.
[891] *Pantokrator Typikon*, pp. 81-3; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, p. 165.
[892] Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, p. 184.
[893] *Prodromos*, IX and X.

The Imperial Monastery of Christ Pantokrator: a microcosm of John's Regime

The Pantokrator is one of the few imperial foundations where both the foundation document of the *typikon* and the buildings themselves survive, together with a host of *ekphrases* and other complementary texts.[894] This combination results in it being one of the few areas of study from the reign of John with a substantial background of research as scholars have attempted to answer the question of why such an immense foundation was made, including the minutiae of its operations. When analysed in context with John's other operations in Constantinople it is apparent that John's tripartite message of legitimacy, piety and imperial restoration sees its apogee in the Pantokrator, and indeed the evolution of the complex has much to do with John's evolving priorities in Constantinople.

The *typikon* represents the finished or almost finished vision of the Pantokrator, but from the building itself and some clues in other texts it can be seen that such was not always the plan. The central structure is made up of three separate churches with three separate dedications, and from restoration work overseen by Robert Ousterhout in the late 90's, and indeed from the floor plan itself, it is apparent that the final church is sandwiched awkwardly between the others, and so even if the second church was originally intended the third was not.[895]

[894] Magdalino, "The Pantokrator Monastery in its Urban Setting", p. 34.
[895] R. Ousterhout, "Architecture, Art and Komnenian Ideology at the Pantokrator Monastery", *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*, ed. N. Necipoglu (Leiden, 2001), p. 133. Indeed, once John joined his wife in the patronage of the Pantokrator, two churches side by side, one each for the imperial couple, may have been the intended design.

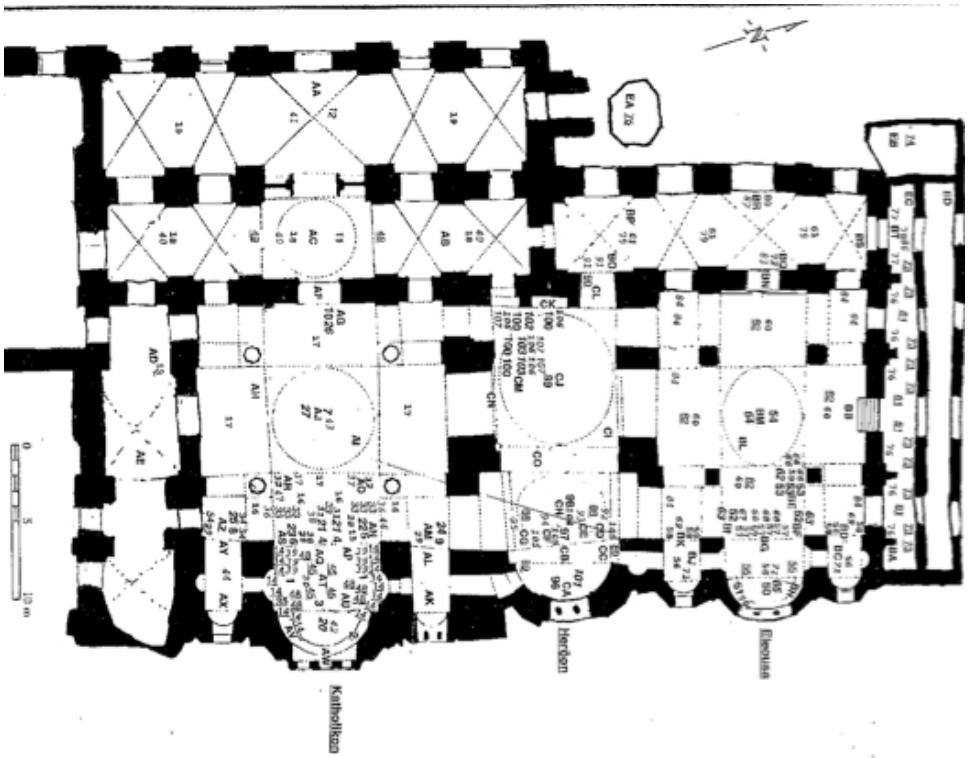

Fig. 58: Floor Plan of the three Pantokrator Churches.[896]

The *Synaxarion* presents a stylised tale of empress Eirene taking her husband by the hand into the Pantokrator church, only to fall to the floor and burst into tears of entreaty as she required "a greater helping hand" to make it the most magnificent of churches.[897] This implies there was an early period when the foundation was more under Eirene's patronage alone, and thus more humble, before John promised to endow it so that it would be the finest in the city.[898] We can see this evolution hinted at from the list of properties that supported the Pantokrator where there is a significant number from both John and Eirene's personal estates.[899] The *typikon* goes further to note that there will be properties excluded "in the present document" and that John may change some of his wishes for the structure in the future.[900] This

[896] E. Congdon, "Imperial Commemoration and Ritual in the *Typikon* of the Monastery of Christ Pantokrator", *REB* 54 (1996) p. 189.
[897] *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae. Propylaeunt ad Acta SS Novembris*, ed. H. Delehaye (Brussels, 1902), pp. 887-90; tr. P. Magdalino, "Appendix" (2013), p. 34.
[898] Ibid.
[899] *Pantokrator Typikon*, pp. 115-25.
[900] "ἐν τῇ παρούσῃ γραφῇ," Ibid.

suggests that the surviving *typikon* was merely the latest in a series of charters that had governed the foundation, and indeed that John would continue to use the structure for his purposes as required.

Though his wife's tearful begging may indeed have a basis in fact, the expansion of the Pantokrator complex from a simple foundation of an empress to *the* imperial monastery *par excellence* reflects the politics of John's reign, and is the culmination of the major processes and events of the period.

In the first instance, the monastery is in the tradition of other Komnenian refoundations: an expression of the piety and philanthropy of the founder. The chosen dedications of the monastic *katholicon*, that to Christ Pantokrator, and the second church dedicated to the *Theotokos Eleousa* appear as merely the latest in a series of dedications by the imperial family to both Christ and the *Theotokos,* by John's grandmother, parents and cousin.[901] The choice of dedications, Christ 'Ruler of All' and *Theotokos* 'Showing Mercy' does imply a slight sense of one-upmanship looking at past dedications in n. 899 below, and yet it is still in the tradition of these past personal foundations of empresses and emperors. The same is implied by the likelihood that the monastery was originally conceived as a refoundation of the *xenon* of Theophilos: with so many centuries-old foundations around Constantinople, refoundations served the useful purpose of updating these antique structures together with associating the new Komnenoi dynasty with their predecessors.[902] Though Theophilos had been an iconoclast Emperor, in the

[901] Christ: *Pantepoptes* 'The all-overseeing,' *Philanthropos* 'who loves mankind,' and *Evergetes* 'The benefactor'; Theotokos: *Kecharitomene* 'full of grace' and *Pammakaristos* 'all-blessed.' Summary of all of these monasteries in Magdalino, "The Pantokrator Monastery in its Urban Setting", p. 39.

[902] M. Mullett, "Refounding monasteries in Constantinople under the Komnenoi", *Founders and refounders of Byzantine monasteries*, ed. M. Mullett (Belfast, 2007), p. 374. Further discussion of the site as originally that of the *xenon* in Magdalino, "The Pantokrator Monastery in its Urban Setting", pp. 35-6.

contemporary literary satire the *Timarion* he was renowned for his "devotion to justice" and had been rehabilitated as a true Christian.[903] Indeed, in an anonymous letter addressed to John concerning the behaviour of an emperor, the writer tells John that just as the good tree is identified by its good fruits, similarly a good king is known by his philanthropies and his application of justice: thus the association of John with Theophilos was entirely suitable for his foundation in its emphasis upon John's qualities as an ideal emperor.[904] Though we cannot be sure what other philanthropic functions or church buildings the simpler foundation of Eirene's was originally intended to encompass, the catalyst for the complex entering a league of its own on the scale of philanthropy, piety and physical presence must be linked to both the crisis year of 1126, Isaac's treachery in 1130 and finally Eirene's death in 1134.

With a lack of contemporary brick stamps or dedicatory inscriptions, there is no way to date conclusively any part of the complex to a specific year of John's reign; the only near certainties are that it was rapidly constructed and completed over the course of a decade.[905] With the *typikon* dated to 1136 (mentioning all three churches and thus the likelihood that they were all constructed or nearing completion at the time of writing) this gives us a rough start date for the construction of the first church in 1126, with Isaac's treachery in 1130 and Eirene's

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[903] Within which he is labelled one of the "Galileans," and thus a true Christian in the underworld where he acts as a judge: *Timarion*, tr. B. Baldwin (Detroit, 1984), p. 32, 62 in particular.
[904] "ὡς γὰρ τὸ δένδρον ἐκ του καρπου, οὕτω βασιλεὺς ἐκ του εὐεργετειν καὶ μαλλον τὸ κοινόν, οὐκ ἐκ του ἀδικειν γνωρίζεται", G. Mercati, "Gli aneddoti d'un Codice Bolognese", *BZ* 6 (1897), p. 142.
[905] R. Ousterhout, M. Ahunbay, and Z. Ahunbey, "Study and Restoration of the Zeyrek Camii in Istanbul: First Report, 1997–98", *DOP* 54, p. 268; M. Ahunbay, Z. Ahunbey, "Restoration Work at the Zeyrek Camii, 1997-1998", *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*, ed. N, Necipoglu (Leiden, 2001), pp. 117-132. R. Ousterhout, "Contextualising the later churches of Constantinople: Suggested Methodologies and a Few Examples," *DOP* 54 (2000), pp. 247-8; Ousterhout, "Komnenian Ideology at the Pantokrator Monastery", pp. 133-50. Many of the materials used appear to be reused sixth-century bricks, including one brick stamp tentatively assigned to that period, supporting Magdalino's thesis that the site was originally the house of Hilara, daughter of the emperor Maurice: P. Magdalino, *Studies on the History and Topography of Byzantine Constantinople* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 68, 72-3.

death in 1134 constituting moments for expansion and accelerated construction that fit with the archaeological evidence and ideological messages too well for unintended coincidence.[906]

The empress' foundation may have begun as the type of philanthropic and pious work that empresses ought to do, and indeed Eirene's predecessors had done, but in 1126 as the international situation was at its most precarious and John was forced to come to terms with Venice, an expression of imperial power in the capital was well timed, particularly as John himself was not able to stay in the capital due to the ongoing Balkan conflicts. The site of the monastery on the fourth hill was ideal for such a project, commanding a panoramic view of the city now as it did then, such that the view was even referenced in the epigram for the monastery's dedication.[907] As such, it would have been visible to much of the city, and was conveniently located just off both the *Mese* and the main coastal processional route, as well as being proximate to the Church of the Holy Apostles and the Venetian quarter.[908] This area of the city was also likely to have contained a substantial number of the poor of Constantinople and so was in exactly the right place to

[906] "…παρὰ της βασιλείας μου κατὰ μηνα ὀκτοβριον, ἰνδικτιωνος πεντεκαιδεκάτης, ἔτους ἑξακισχιλιοστου ἑξακοσιοστου τεσσαρακοστου πέμπτου", *Pantokrator Typikon*, p. 131.
[907] Magdalino, "The Pantokrator Monastery in its Urban Setting," pp. 34, 49-52.
[908] The processional route is noted in the case of Theophilos' original foundation, where in the Logothete's chronicle it is attested that he "turned aside" from the usual Blachernai procession to view the construction, and almost the same word is used in the *Pantokrator typikon* for the new processional route ("ἐκνεύσας" and "παρεκνεύειν" respectively): *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon* ed. S. Wahlgren (vol. I, New York, 2006), pp. 230-1, cited by Magdalino (2013), p. 35, n. 13. The Venetian Quarter was fully established by a chrysobull of Alexios where he granted them wharfs, a Church, market, and houses close to Perama, a ferry embarkation point in the Pera district: *AK*, 6.5, pp. 177-9; P. Magdalino, "The Maritime Neighbourhoods of Constantinople: Commercial and Residential Functions, Sixth to Twelfth Centuries," *DOP* 54 (2000), p. 219.

demonstrate imperial philanthropy, in addition to being ripe for redevelopment and urban regeneration in a practical sense.[909]

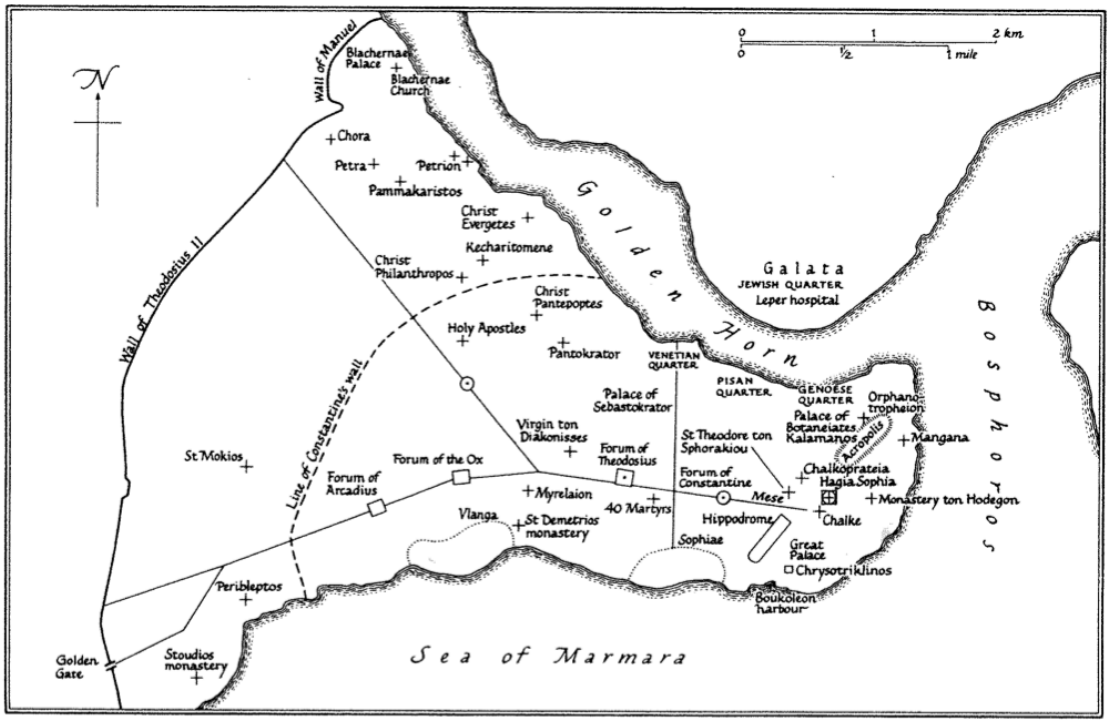

Fig. 59: Komnenian Constantinople, from Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 110.

Sited at such a confluence meant that the messages of the Pantokrator were even more apparent to specific audiences: how better to make up lost prestige in 1126 with the Venetians in Constantinople in the physical absence of the emperor, than with an imperial building project? And with the betrayal of Isaac in 1130, John's need to project such messages in the capital while away on campaign only grew – and as his need grew, so too did the Pantokrator.[910] Both the *typikon* and the epigram for the inauguration of the Pantokrator allude to the circumstances of its foundation: in the introduction of the *typikon* John gives thanks to God first for

[909] C. Mango, *Le Dévelopment urbain de Constantinople (IVe – VIIe siècles)* (Paris, 1985), p. 53; Magdalino (2000), pp, 211-9; P. Magdalino, "Aristocratic Oikoi in the tenth and eleventh regions of Constantinople", *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*, ed. N. Necipoglu (Leiden, 2001), pp. 53-69.

[910] Ousterhout agreed that from his work on the Pantokrator it is entirely likely that in 1130 the other two churches were added, whilst from c.1118-30 only the southern church was being constructed. This was during questions for his paper, "Piroska and the Pantokrator," presented at *Piroska and the Pantokrator: Dynastic Memory, Healing and Salvation in Komenian Constantinople* International Conference at the Central European University Budapest, 3rd June 2015, Proceedings forthcoming.

placing him as ruler of the Ausonians and for his past victories, then for rescuing him from ambushes from within and without, particularly mentioning: "those of my friends and relations who stood against me and wickedly distanced themselves from brotherly concord."[911] Following this he states that in return for these favours he submitted himself entirely to the will of God, which guided him to build the monastery with his "partner and helper in life"[912] with whom he shared its "planning, construction and completion,"[913] though not before she died and left John "torn in two;"[914] though he acknowledges that this occurred blamelessly by God's will.

Though "those distanced from brotherly concord" does include John's sister Anna, by 1136 the obvious person distanced, and so the focus of this phrase, would far more likely be John's brother Isaac.[915] The earlier preamble thanking God for raising John "above all treachery and plotting at the right time painlessly set(ting) me at the position of absolute power in the ancestral empire of the Ausones" doubtless refers to Anna specifically as John restates his own legitimacy, and so the second reference to those against him must be Isaac, as eighteen years later Anna's plot would be very old news. [916] In addition, the references to John's wife show how he had appropriated her project even when she still lived, and that with her death he endeavoured to pay tribute to her through the Pantokrator. The inauguration epigram adds to this picture by focusing in the first part on the fact that it was

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[911] "...τῶν φίλῶν καὶ τῶν πλησίον ἀπεναντίας μοι στάντας καὶ ἀπομακρυνθέντας κακως της ἀδελψικης ὁμονοίας καθελουσα καὶ συμποδίσασα.": *Pantokrator Typikon*, p. 28.
[912] "…του βιου κοινωνὸν καὶ συλλήπτορα,": ibid., p. 29.
[913] "...της προθέσεως καὶ της προσαγωγης καὶ της πράξεως": ibid.
[914] "…διχότομον ἀποδείξασα": Ibid.
[915] *Pantokrator Typikon*, p. 131, p. 774; Magdalino has noted that both siblings are the focus: Magdalino, "The Pantokrator Monastery in its Urban Setting", p. 45.
[916] "…καὶ πάσης ἐνέδρας καὶ μηχανης ὑπέρτερον ἀναδείξασα καὶ πρὸς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα ζωστηρα της πατρικης Αὐσόνων ἀρχης ἀνωδύνως κατὰ καιρὸν ἐμβιβάσασα", *Pantokrator Typikon*, p. 27, p. 737.

Eirene that raised the walls and buildings and gardens of the monastery, and it was she that was acclaimed founder as "Queen Xene."[917] However, the purpose of the ceremony and the poem is elucidated in the second half, where over many lines God is called upon to grant victory to the emperor against his ungodly enemies, specifically the "offspring of Hagar," lending him his right arm in battle to fulfil his wishes.[918] In the context of the mid-1130s, the vocal and visual reminders given by the ceremony, the poem and the church itself of what the emperor was doing for the people of Constantinople would be invaluable in projecting imperial power during imperial absence.

The foundation itself projected this power in three ways: through philanthropic works, the ceremonies that took place within the complex, and the architecture and decoration of the churches themselves, while all of these continue to carry the messages of legitimacy, piety and imperial renewal.

In Constantelos' landmark study on Byzantine philanthropy, he puts Eirene, John and Isaac next to each other, noting how equal they were in kindness and humanitarianism.[919] Though much of his study derives from the evidence in the *typikon* of Isaac's monastery of the *Theotokos Kosmoteira*, 'World Saviour,' such a similarity would no doubt have been exactly what John feared. It is noteworthy that on Isaac's return to Constantinople the poem of welcome by Prodromos (which is undated and so may in fact date from before his exile) stresses his education, warlike skills and philanthropy, even addressing him as *Basileus*, and though care is taken to note that he is in service to his brother, Isaac's appropriation of imperial

[917] Magdalino, "Appendix", pp. 49-52, lines 30, 41, 52, 60, 136.
[918] Ibid. lines 106-9, 126-35.
[919] D. Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New Jersey, 1968), p. 130.

virtues was something that John would have demonstrably to exceed.[920] It is thus no coincidence that this post-exile monastery was in Thrace and not in the capital, and it was the Pantokrator and its works that must take centre stage.[921] This may also have contributed to the diminished status and silence regarding Alexios I's great foundation of the Orphanotrophion, as, though Zonaras mentions that John expanded it, the imperial orphanage receives no mention in the histories or court sources as the focus is all on the Pantokrator.[922] Returning to the anonymous letter to John, the author writes: "that it matters not whether one directs one's prayers to the heavenly God or to the earthly god," and the emperor is extolled to distribute wealth to the needy, women young and old, imitating the rain that falls on both land and sea. [923] Such a letter describes the perfect emperor, and just as it has been suggested that *typika* are a form of utopian writing for the Byzantine community, setting out plans for an ideal society, it appears that through the Pantokrator John was attempting to live up to this vision.[924]

The scale of the Pantokrator's philanthropy was immense, larger than any other non-imperial foundation, with the *typikon* going into intricate details as to the workings of the hospital in particular. [925] At any one time there would be twenty-nine medical staff on duty, serving a maximum of sixty-one patients who required beds, and six doctors devoted to those that had minor ailments, giving it a patient-

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[920] *Prodromos*, XLII; comment by Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, p. 194.
[921] Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 193-4; Kosmosoteira: Typikon" (2001).
[922] *Zonaras*, 18.23, p. 744; R. Guilland, "Étude sur l'histoire administrative de l'empire byzantin. L'orphanotrophe," *REB* 23 (1965), p. 207.
[923] "…Ἄκουσον του λόγου μου βασιλευ – διὰ γὰρ τουτο σὺ βασιλεύς- ἵνα μὴ ἀδίκως ἀλλὰ δικίως προσαγορεύῃ καὶ βασιλεύς, ἴσον δὲ εἰπειν καὶ θεὸς ἐπίγειος καὶ οὐράνιος," Mercati, "Codice Bolognese", p. 140; cited by Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy*, p. 57.
[924] M. Angold, "Were Byzantine monastic Typika literature?" *The Making of Byzantine History. Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol on His 70th Birthday*, ed. R. Beaton and C. Roueché (Aldershot, 1993), p. 70.
[925] *Pantokrator Typikon,* pp. 85-107, 161; P. Charanis, "The Monk as an Element of Byzantine Society," *DOP* 25 (1971), pp. 61-84; Magdalino, "The Pantokrator Monastery in Its Urban Setting," p. 42.

to-doctor ratio enviable by modern hospitals. In addition to the effect of such philanthropy on those who benefitted from it in Constantinople, John publicised the project with what may be considered a commemorative coin: one that bears an icon of the Pantokrator on one side, and on the reverse: "he who gives to the poor lends to God."[926] Such a coin demonstrates that though this was indeed a pre-eminent humanitarian foundation, John was ensuring that as many people as possible knew he was such a humanitarian, and thus an emperor personifying an ideal.

More complex messages were, however, projected by the ceremonies that took place inside the Pantokrator, many of them described in minute detail in the *typikon*, together with the life of the monks themselves.[927] The *typikon* states that John's thank-offering to God will be a band of ascetics who will pray for his salvation, and it has been advocated that the primary purpose of the Pantokrator was for John and his wife's personal salvation.[928] This is not meant as a search for personal glorification but to portray him as a concerned seeker of salvation who wishes to ensure his place in heaven with the help of those praying in the Pantokrator. The rituals that John commanded to be performed in all three of the Pantokrator's churches, together with what lighting, icons and movements the clergy were to perform do indeed have such a concern at their heart. In the *Katholikon* the primary ritual of commemoration was to take place at night, emphasising the significance of moving between different sources of light in the church. There is a slow process of movement towards the very well-lit sanctuary – the church is censed by a priest while the monks gather in the narthex and chant "*trisagia*, psalms, *kyrie*, responses and prayers all on John's behalf," and a specific

[926] Proverbs 19:17; C. Diehl, *La Société byzantine à l'époque des Comnènes: conférences faites à Bucharest (avril 1929)* (Paris, 1929), p. 51.
[927] *Pantokrator Typikon,* pp. 47-67.
[928] "Ναζιραίων", *Pantokrator Typikon*, p. 29; Congdon, "Commemoration and Ritual", p. 161.

prayer is said in which the monks ask for their emperor and founder to be placed among the saints.[929] Thus he states explicitly the aim of the entire enterprise from the first. The priest then approaches and censes the *bema* with more prayers before going to the founder's tomb in the central church with a candle and preparing all the icons, calling a *Gloria* when it is complete so that the monks may enter after a final psalm and procession past all the icons with prayers, though they are barely lit, towards the many lights at the high altar.[930] The symbolism of this shows the emperor as one who is in darkness (his tomb in a separate church needing a candle to be brought to it) and who with the prayers of the monks will hopefully one day also enter into the light of heaven.

Such devotion is, of course, to be expected from a pious emperor, and particularly one so devoted to his departed empress Eirene and thus no doubt contained a fierce desire to guarantee he would see her again in heaven. However, the rituals do not merely specify that the monks should pray for John's soul once he passes on, but should also request intercession from the *Theotokos* in the present. These rituals are more focused upon the northern church of the *Theotokos Eleousa*, where in a weekly service the icon of the *Theotokos* was to be literally highlighted with candles, as the monks processed past John's future tomb and said prayers for her intercession.[931] Such intercession prayers were an integral part of John's adoption of the Marian processions in support of his regime, and so should be seen as part of a new focus on the *Theotokos* as imperial patron under John. Indeed, recent scholarship has also demonstrated how during John's reign the cult of the Three Holy Hierarchs was inaugurated at the Pantokrator, and so this monastery

[929] Congdon, "Commemoration and Ritual", p. 181, citing *Pantokrator Typikon*, pp. 31-5.
[930] Ibid. pp. 181-4, citing Ibid.
[931] Congdon, "Commemoration and Ritual", pp. 171-5; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, p. 175.

was at the forefront of the latest wave of Christian devotion, gaining John an unmatched reputation for piety.[932] The *typikon* notes that John made the Transfiguration the principal festival of the *Katholikon*, and in later periods it was customary for the emperor to attend this feast personally in the monastery rather than in Hagia Sophia as had previously been the custom; such a change may have originated with John, and certainly his successors used his methods to project power through association with these public ceremonies of worship, also granting them an imperial dimension even in the emperor's absence as exemplified by the Marian processions.[933]

Many of the philanthropic functions and the ceremonies at the Pantokrator were similar to those of past emperors and their foundations, with John seemingly just outdoing his predecessors and contemporary family members. Magdalino has taken care to point out that the role of the Pantokrator as a supreme dynastic monument to the Komnenoi should only be accepted with qualification: it was in the tradition of previous foundations, and from the *typikon* it is apparent that John conceived the structure as being for his nuclear family, even envisioning that his heir might wish for a separate place of burial, and that it was only with Manuel's continued patronage of the site that it became supreme.[934] Thus the structure and the *typikon* were very much centred on the present, and fulfilled functions that were primarily for John's contemporary benefit rather than for posterity or the eventual salvation of his soul. Gautier's work on those commemorated by the *typikon* sought to establish a "cursus honorum" of family and officials in John's government, but

[932] M. D'Ambrosi, "The Icon of the Three Holy Hierarchs at the Pantokrator and the Epigramms of Theodore Prodromos on Them," *The Pantokrator* (2013), pp. 143-51.
[933] S. Kotzabassi, "Feasts at the Monastery of the Pantokrator," *The Pantokrator Monastery*, ed. Kotzabassi (Berlin, 2013), pp. 154-5, ns. 11-2, citing the *De Ceremoniis* and Pseudo-Kodinos respectively.
[934] Magdalino, "The Pantokrator Monastery in its Urban Setting", pp. 45, 41 and 46 respectively.

almost more relevant is the fact that John is using commemorations in the Pantokrator as a method of binding these individuals to his regime.[935] The commemoration of not only his nephews by marriage the *sebastoi*, but also of officials such as his two *mystikoi*, John and Tzykanisteriotes, the *doctor* Niketas and the *vestiarites* Theodore Beroites, in addition to his closer family is similar to creating an *esprit de corps* on campaign, only here forging it amongst members of his regime.[936] More important even than this, however, was the ideology inherent in the central church of the Pantokrator, which clearly illustrates the monastry's role as a vehicle for promoting imperial restoration, legitimacy and piety: the church was dedicated to Archangel St Michael the incorporeal, but called the "*Heröon*" in the *typikon*, a classical term for the tomb of a hero.[937]

The dedication to St Michael was not only appropriate given his status as the patron saint of warriors, but as a member of the *Deesis* that usually appeared on iconostasis screens was in the highest celestial position under the *Theotokos*, and so is consistent with imperial patrons being the ones with the most powers of intercession with God.[938] Though the death of Eirene, and with it a reminder of John's own mortality and need for salvation, is an obvious source for the addition of this church after the start of construction of the other two churches, this *Heröon* represented more than merely a funerary chapel. Deciphering the meanings behind this church is aided by the survival of the original decorated floor opus sextile tiles of the *Katholikon* and some of those in the *Heröon* itself, preserved by the wooden

[935] *Pantokrator Typikon*, pp. 235-62, specifically p. 234.
[936] A. Gkoutzioukostas, "Byzantine Officials in the Typikon of the Monastery of Christ Pantokrator in Constantinople," *The Pantokrator Monastery*, ed. Kotzabassi (Berlin, 2013), pp. 71-81.
[937] Congdon, "Commemoration and Ritual", pp. 175-6.
[938] Ibid.

floor and carpets used in the modern mosque of the Zeyrek Camii.[939] They are one of the few specific decorations we can decisively date to John's reign, as Manuel made extensive modifications during his own reign, though it may be assumed that it was magnificently well adorned in accordance with John's promise in the *synaxarion*, and by the tone of these later descriptions.[940]

Where the most we can glean of the significance of the *Eleousa* church is the implied sponsorship of the Marian cult, linked through the processions, for the *Katholikon* and the *Heröon* the decoration constitutes intense visual examples of Komnenian imperial ideology. Ousterhout's diagram and four of the photos provide a good idea of the geometric floor plan, though they do not convey its artistic splendour or its detailed decoration due to the poor quality of the 1960's photos. Of particular note are the roundels filled with birds, ferocious beasts and mythological creatures, a wheel filled with zodiac symbols and personifications of the seasons, rectangular panels with scenes of farming and hunting, other panels with figural scenes such as the life of Samson, with outer bands of land and sea creatures as well as additional natural scenes, such as those showing hunting.[941] Though indubitably conveying to us a message of great lavishness and desire to create a floor that was deeply beautiful in and of itself, such decoration calls to mind comparisons with early Christian themes and through them indications of the Komnenian conceptions of imperial ideology.

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[939] They have only ever been photographed during restoration work in the 1960's, see A. H. S. Megaw, "Notes on Recent Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul" *DOP* 17 (1963), pp. 333-64.
[940] A. van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople Their History and Architecture* (London, 1974), p. 221. Eyewitnesses to the *Pantokrator* after Manuel's reign, whether western, Slavic or accounts from the Council of Florence that recall decorations in Venice's San Marco as being from the *Pantokrator* all suffer this problem – some decoration may be from the reign of John but we cannot know which. See E. Mineva, "References to the Monastery of Pantokrator in Old Slavic Literature (14th-15th c.)" and I. Taxidis, "The Monastery of Pantokrator in the Narratives of Western Travellers," *The Pantokrator Monastery*, ed. Kotzabassi (Berlin, 2013), pp. 83-108 and Sylvester Syropoulos, *Les Mémoires du grand ecclésiarque de l'Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le Concile de Florence (1438-1439)* (Rome, 1971), p. 222.
[941] Ousterhout, "Komnenian Ideology at the Pantokrator Monastery", pp. 134-5.

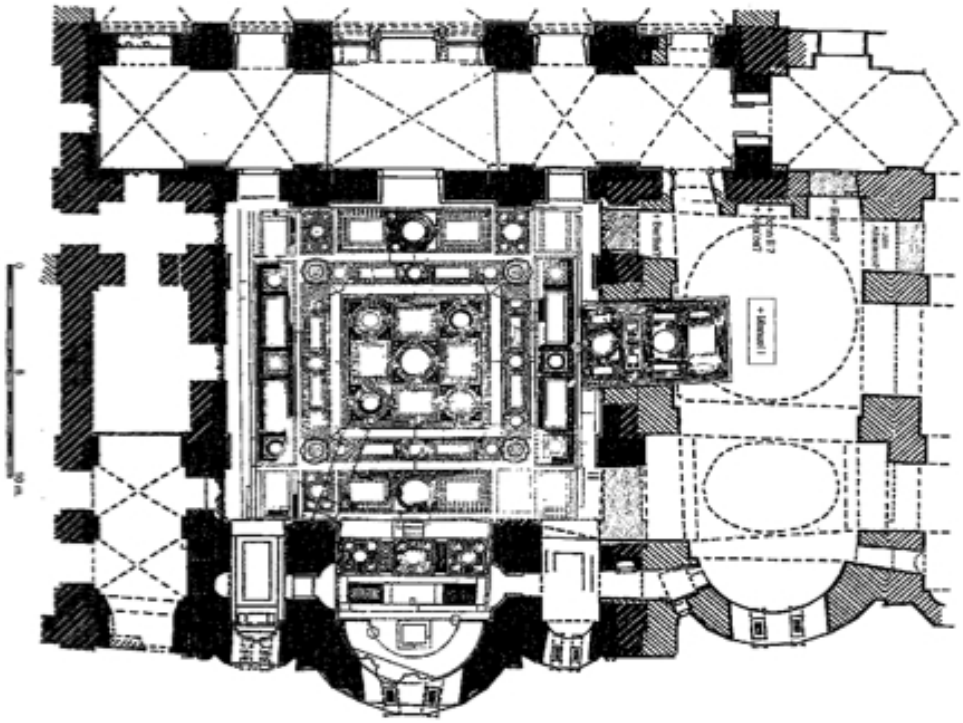

Fig. 60 – Plan of the *Heröon* and Pantokrator *Katholikon* with the *opus sextile* floor and the hypothetical positions of the imperial tombs, from Ousterhout, "Komnenian Ideology at the Pantokrator Monastery", p. 136.

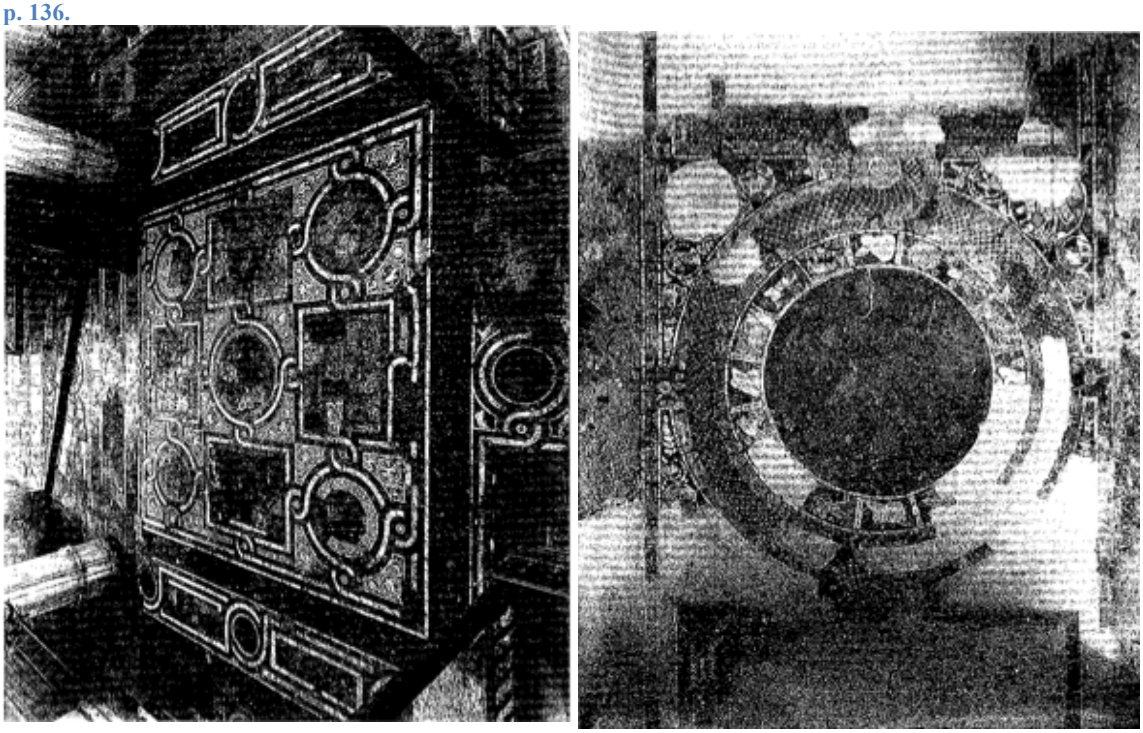

Fig. 61: Central and western floor of the Pantokrator *Katholikon*, with the latter showing the symbols of the zodiac, from Ousterhout, "Komnenian Ideology at the Pantokrator Monastery", p. 137, 139.

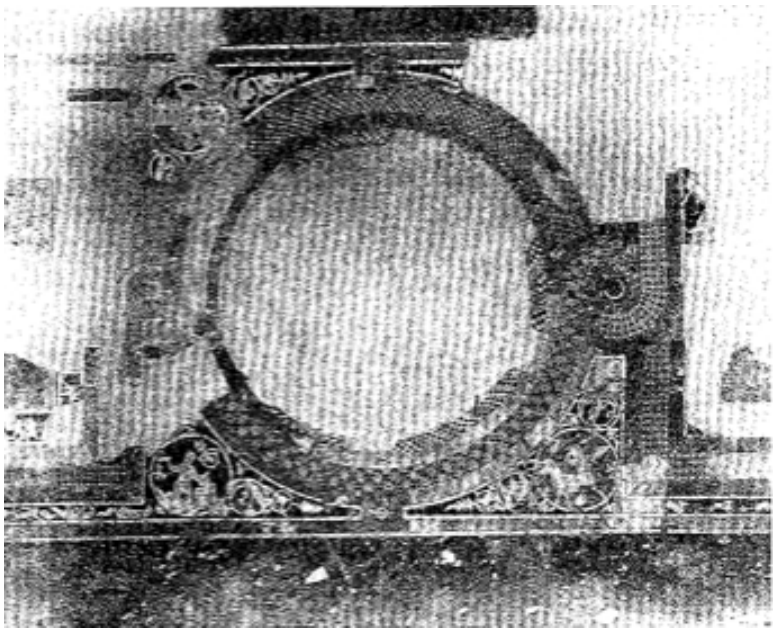

Fig. 62: Western floor of the Pantokrator *Katholikon*, showing scenes from the life of Samson, from Ousterhout, Robert, "Komnenian Ideology at the Pantokrator Monastery", p. 139.

The wildlife and hunting scenes are similar to those used in early Christian churches, linking the Pantokrator artistically to the early Constantinopolitan past, perhaps specifically the House of Hilara on which the monastery was built, but also the mosaic floors of the Great Palace and the nearby church of the Holy Apostles.[942] These all give the Pantokrator connotations of power and authority in general, and the imperial title in particular; this results in this being not just another Komnenian monastic foundation, but a foundation for a new imperial line that has succeeded the original line set up by Constantine, and indeed Justinian who also had his mausoleum at the Holy Apostles. Such a message is central to the court rhetoric, which called upon John's descent from the Komnenoi, the Doukai, and their ancient predecessors, and extols how he has produced new "purple branches" through his sons, once again emphasising legitimacy and imperial restoration. Equally such dynasty building finds a voice in the two visual depictions we have of John: the famous mosaic in Hagia Sophia and a contemporary gospel book (*Tetraevangelion*, Vat. Urb. gf. 2).

[942] Ibid. pp. 142-4.

Fig. 63: Dedication Image in an illuminated manuscript of the Four Gospels, showing John and his son Alexios crowned by Christ, who is flanked by personifications of the virtues of Mercy and Justice. The father and son have their full titles listed: Cormack, *Writing in Gold*, p. 196.

Fig. 64: Mosaic of Hagia Sophia, depicting the Virgin and Child flanked by John and Eirene, and then their son the co-Emperor Alexios to the right.

These depictions are notable in containing John and his son Alexios, emphasising both their collegial rule and the continuity represented from father to son in this new dynasty. Though the inclusion of Christ and the Virgin is an act of piety, it also emphasises the origin of imperial power, and the legitimacy given to John through their favour, literally in the case of the gospel book as Christ crowns John and Alexios, flanked by personifications of Mercy and Justice.[943] The

[943] M. Bonicatti, "Per l'origine del Salterio Barberiniano greco 372 e la cronologia del Tetraevangelo Urbinate greco 2" *Rivista di cultura classica e medioevale* 2 (1960), pp. 44-47, 51, 58-61; I.

presentation of money and the scroll by John and Eirene to the *Theotokos* may indeed symbolise the Pantokrator monastery itself, and even if not then certainly another donation to the church. Such images demonstrate the relationship between the emperor and the divine, and so evoke the ideological cult of the emperor that John's regime built in Constantinople. Such a vision was part of the rhetoric of imperial renewal that emperors used over the centuries, as just as Constantine set up an imperial mausoleum at the Holy Apostles and created his New Rome, so too did Alexios make a similar statement by moving to the Blachernai.[944] These images, together with the floor of the Pantokrator tell the viewer that just as Constantine began the empire anew with his conversion and the new foundations of a palace and mausoleum, so too do the Komnenoi begin the empire anew with their own new palace and mausoleum, and an entire dynasty chosen by God.

They do, however, add their own twist to such traditional artistic forms with the zodiac imagery. Manuel was a noted proponent of astrology, and was the author of a treatise in its defence promoting it as being completely compatible with Christian doctrine. Such decoration, therefore, implies that either John himself was sympathetic to such views, or at least that a body of elite Constantinopolitans who supervised the construction of the Pantokrator with the architect Nikephoros were advocates.[945] The incorporation of Samson into the floor design complemented the defence of astrology as Christian. Judges 14-16 relates that the birth and

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Spatharakis, *Studies in Byzantine Manuscript Illumination and Iconography* (London, 1996), pp. 44-48, 79-80.

[944] See P. Magdalino, ed, *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th centuries: papers from the twenty-sixth spring symposium of Byzantine studies* (Aldershot, 1994), esp. pp. 3-9

[945] Ibid. p. 145. Indeed, it was a monk of the Pantokrator who condemned all astrologers as heretics that caused Manuel to write such a defence, and so this very mosaic may have been that which caused the monk to complain. As such, it was very likely to have been specifically requested by the designers of the Pantokrator. Magdalino (2002), pp. 117, 377. As far as dating goes, Manuel extended this floor into the *Heröon*, though how far and with what additional decoration we do not know as only the small section shown by Ousterhout's diagram has survived.

achievements of the hero are preordained, but being part of a divine plan does not lessen his glory.[946] This raises the intriguing possibility that John's sponsorship of astrology has been airbrushed from historical memory by those that followed him, as Anna's contemporary criticism may imply, with it only surviving as a feature of Manuel's character because Choniates could hold it up as a sign of moral decline.[947] John, like Manuel, may have promoted the Komnenian imperial family as one favoured by the stars as another major tool of legitimacy amongst certain elite circles, or indeed may have believed in the power of the stars himself; either way the manipulation of historical memory demonstrates again how pervasive Choniates' and Kinnamos' narratives have proved.

Samson was, however, a fitting comparison for John as a great warrior and hunter, the latter pastime to be assumed from both the Philopation conspiracy and the manner of John's death in addition to rhetoric such as Prodromos' epitaph.[948] This is echoed in the contemporary *Digenis Akrites* romance, whose palace was said to have a dining hall decorated with images of Samson and other Old Testament and classical heroes, and whose father was described as akin to Samson in his valour.[949] The association of Digenis with Manuel is well attested, and for all the same reasons the association of the emperor with the epic hero may apply to John.[950] Such a portrait is integral to the rhetorical court sources, and so seeing it on the floor of the Pantokrator emphasises that such a portrayal was very much the 'party

[946] Ousterhout, "Komnenian Ideology at the Pantokrator Monastery", pp. 147-8.
[947] *NC*, pp. 95-6, 154, 220-1; *AK*, 6.6-7, pp. 179-83; Magdalino, "Pen of the Aunt", pp. 29-31; P. Magdalino, "Occult Science and Imperial Power in Byzantine History and Historiography (9th-12th Centuries), *The Occult Sciences in Byzantium*, ed. P. Magdalino and M. Mavroudi, (Geneva, 2006), pp. 146-7.
[948] *Prodromos*, XXV, lines 9-30 in particular.
[949] Ousterhout, "Komnenian Ideology at the Pantokrator Monastery", pp. 146-7.
[950] Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel*, pp. 1-2, 127, 431, 449, 469. The date of the text is c. 1100 in Constantinople, p. 396.

line' of the regime. [951] The Komnenian emperor was a hero, a new Samson and a new Constantine, an emperor who was himself guided at the battle of the Milvian Bridge by a sign in the heavens.[952]

Architecturally, there is one final parallel that reinforces these ideological messages, and adds one further dimension: the similarity of the Pantokrator with another Constantinian foundation, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The domes and triple church arrangement bear an ostensible similarity, and the eventual placement of the tombs of the Crusader kings and the Komnenoi are analogous.[953] The chroniclers quote John's desire to visit the Holy Sepulchre on his deathbed, while John's gift of the gold candelabra as one of his final acts expresses a personal connection of John with Jerusalem. [954] There is little information concerning the impact, if any, on the east Romans of the Holy City being in Christian hands once more. Equally though the increased number of pilgrims travelling from western Europe to the Levant through Byzantium has been scrutinised, there has been no such study on east Roman pilgrims and visitors to Jerusalem.[955] Just as Constantinople was the New Rome, so too it was the New Jerusalem in a tradition from Constantine and Justinian, and in some portraits from the twelfth century; thus John may have been emphasising these credentials in the

[951] Ibid. 421-5.
[952] Ousterhout, "Komnenian Ideology at the Pantokrator Monastery", p. 150.
[953] Ibid.
[954] *NC*, p. 42; *JK*, p. 25; *Prodromos*, XXII, lines 1-16.
[955] Frankopan has demonstrated the involvement of the Romans in the pilgrim trade through *xenodocheia*, and the growth of Latin/Greek phrasebooks and bilingualism in the period: P. Frankopan, "Levels of contact between West and East: pilgrims and visitors to Constantinople and Jerusalem in the 9th –12th Centuries'," *Travellers in the Levant*: *Voyagers and Visionaries*, ed. S. Searight and J. M. Wagstaff (Durham, 2001), pp. 87-108.

wake of the recapture of the original Jerusalem by the crusaders.[956] Such a focus can perhaps be seen in the philanthropic functions of the Pantokrator.

Contemporary with its erection was the foundation and development of the Hospital of St. John in Jerusalem, which was set up by those who would become the Knights Hospitaller, and it has been suggested that the inspiration for that hospital came from Byzantium, and the Pantokrator in particular.[957] Further scholarship has thrown up a great many problems with such an inspiration, however, demonstrating that there are no organisational similarities between them, an extreme difference in size (61 live-in patients compared to a probable 900), and the fact that the Jerusalem hospital evolved in a very specific set of circumstances to care for increased pilgrim traffic, and its more likely inspirations include the influence of Salernitan medicine through the Normans and the expansion of the Augustinian canons in Jerusalem.[958] To take this argument one step further, the reverse of the original argument may be the case: as John built a church reminiscent of the Holy Sepulchre, so too did he build a hospital based on pilgrim tales or diplomatic reports of the hospital of Jerusalem, though on the ordered Byzantine model rather than the *ad hoc* Jerusalem foundation. In founding a new Holy Sepulchre with its associated hospital John was imitating both Constantine and Christ. No clearer expression of legitimacy, piety or imperial restoration could be made.

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[956] An early twelfth-century English pilgrims account of the city as such, focusing on the Marian processions, and Nicholas Mesarites' c. 1201 inventory of relics are both pointed out by Henry Maguire as examples of Constantinople as a "New Jerusalem" or *Hagiopolis*. F. Grabler, "Die Kreuzfahrer erobern Konstantinopel," *Byzantinische Geschichtsschreiber* 9 (Graz, 1958), pp. 287-90; K. Cigaar, "Une description de Constantinople traduite par un pèlarin anglais," *REB* 34 (1976), pp. 211-68; Maguire, *Byzantine Court Culture*, p. 82.

[957] T. S. Miller, "The Knights of St. John and the hospitals of the Latin West", *Speculum* 53 (1978), pp. 725, 733.

[958] S. Edgington, "Medical Care in the Hospital of St John in Jerusalem", *The Military Orders* Vol. II ed. H. Nicholson (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 32-3.

John's duty as the "earthly God" was to bring justice and philanthropy to his subjects, whilst maintaining his special relationship with the heavenly God.[959] As John was so frequently out of the capital, such that he is only known to have promulgated three laws and the judgement he made in 1119 on the Lavra dispute, he had to be seen to give justice and philanthropy *in absentia*.[960] With such a portrayal secured in rhetoric, in ceremony, and most particularly in the spectacular edifice and philanthropy of the Pantokrator, John was secure enough in the capital to spend all of his reign from 1136 on longer campaigns away from it. He had been able to do this when his brother Isaac ruled for him in Constantinople, but between 1130 and 1136 John returned to the city for much of each year. During this time the final plan for the Pantokrator complex would have been formulated, and so this structure must be seen as a product of this period, epitomising the messages the regime needed to promulgate if John was to be able to accomplish what was required on the frontiers.

Some thought must here be given to some of the wider discourse that exists on the conception of the Byzantine emperor: from traditional views of the emperor as "King and Priest" to more recent critiques regarding the importance of the populace in imperial goverment.[961] This analysis endeavours to be firmly grounded in presenting the messages that John's regime disseminated through various media. Rather than trying to fit John into any specific conception of what a Byzantine emperor was or should be, this discussion displays the tools John used to secure his rule in the capital while he campaigned abroad. He presents himself as a philanthropic emperor, a Roman emperor, a warrior emperor, a God-favoured and

[959] R. Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine society and its icons* (London, 1985), p. 212.
[960] *Jus graeco-romanum III,* ed. K. E. Zachariä von Lingenthal (Leipzig, 1857), pp. 428, 430-1; *Actes de Lavra* (1970), p. 332.
[961] G. Dagron, *Emperor and Priest The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2003); Kaldellis, *Byzantine Republic*.

God-fearing emperor, perhaps even a star-chosen emperor: all adding up to a legitimate emperor. Deconstructions of the nature of imperial office by Kaldellis have removed many of the connotations of theocracy and absolutism that have clouded our conception for a number of years, but the constructions put in their place by Kaldellis and Papageorgiou have yielded a less secure picture when it comes to John. For though the Pantokrator certainly makes him an emperor presenting himself as a philanthropist, carrying a cross in a triumph and fighting against the Turks should not result in a conception of the emperor as a "crusader." [962] Indeed, such wars and the triumph are more evocative of a return to a more Roman, imperial method of rule. Such a conception does not divorce him from any form of sacral rulership however, as the judgement that John, or any emperor was merely wrapping himself in "God-talk to feel safe" undervalues the importance of such "God-talk" to the Constantinopolitan audience.[963] Indeed, were John not to use such "God-talk," he was if nothing else opening himself up to attack and the potential for a rival in the form of an emperor who was more willing to fulfil that segment of society's conception of an emperor, as indeed came close to fulfilment with Isaac. There may be no monolithic conception of what it meant to be the Roman emperor to derive from the reign of John, but the tools he used to control the capital are there to be seen in the sources, and from their analysis a conception of what it meant to be a Komnenian emperor may perhaps arise in future.

John's success at controlling the capital should be acknowledged as being as much a reason for his success as his military ability, if not more. John's control over the political theatre of Constantinople, most particularly through the Pantokrator as the supreme emblem of absent imperial power, was thus unquestionably an essential

[962] Papageorgiou, *John II Komnenos*, p. 13, 16, 23-4 and 28.
[963] Kaldellis, *Byzantine Republic*, pp. 196-8 in particular.

part of what facilitated his successes, and as such was integral to the nature of imperial rule in the new order of the twelfth century.

Conclusion

Choniates eulogised John and his reign with words that have shaped debates concerning John's reign ever since:

> He had governed the empire most excellently, and his life was well pleasing to God; in moral character he was neither dissolute nor incontinent; by way of gifts and expenditures he pursued magnificence, as is evidenced by his frequent distributions of gold coins to the City's inhabitants and the many beautiful and large churches he built from their foundations. More than all others, he was a lover of glory, and, bequeathing to posterity a most illustrious name, he was highly honoured…/he has been deemed praiseworthy by all, even to our own times, the crowning glory, so to speak, of the Komnenian dynasty to sit the Roman throne.[964]

To Choniates in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, John was the perfect Komnenian emperor from whom all others declined, and his presentation therefore focused upon John's philanthropy and piety, with his "love of glory" sounding almost a vice by comparison. By contrast, the epitaphs of Theodore Prodromos dwell longest on his military victories; the list of enemies vanquished and cities taken or guarded is the mainstay of every text.[965] These military victories were his labour for God and his people, as in each text Prodromos extols the emperor whose "labours have saved Rome," the one who: "endured staunchly for the sake of the Ausones."[966] The verse laments and rhetorically asks who is lying in the tomb, and in answering tells us that John's brilliance can be seen in his strength against the barbarians. He goes on: "just ask any living, and if none live who knew then ask of books and those who seek learning, and they will know."[967] For the scholar investigating John almost 900 years later, such a conception is indeed what the books and "those who seek learning" come to understand. John was a

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[964] *NC*, p. p. 27.
[965] *Prodromos*, XV-IXX.
[966] "καὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖς σώσαντι τὴν Ῥώμην πόνοις"; "οὕς καρτερῶς ἔστεγον ὑπὲρ Αὐσόνων." *Prodromos*, XV and XVIII, line 92 and line 6 respectively.
[967] *Prodromos*, XVI.

campaigning emperor, under whom the Pantokrator was also constructed: such is the usual summation of John's reign, unchanged as if Prodromos, Choniates or indeed Gibbon had written yesterday.

The seductive narratives of Choniates and Kinnamos have traditionally told John's story, but as we have seen when these narratives are read in conjunction with other sources, both textual and material, they cannot be accepted without conditions. Their narratives omit and obscure to such an extent that crisis points such as 1126 are overlooked, whole campaigns in the Balkans and Anatolia are amalgamated so that any military analysis is incomplete, and the dynamics of power in an empire and world based on family is a completely undiscovered country. Through this thesis, the historical narrative has been rewritten, and deeper questions at last answered as to the diplomatic, military and political workings of the twelfth-century empire in the new order of post-crusade Europe.

First with his father, and then his son, it had been up to John to fight for Byzantium's place within this changed world. He attempted to restore a Roman Empire that had been gone even before he was born, while at the same time guaranteeing his own place as emperor from his domestic enemies.

This study has revealed how John campaigned in Anatolia whenever the Turks were strong, but campaigned elsewhere when the Danishmendid and Ikonian leaders fought amongst themselves. He attempted to impose final settlements on his frontiers such that he could return to Anatolia stronger each time; with each campaign he thus had more troops for the one following as he gathered client peoples to his banner. Though when this failed he conquered some regions outright, his preference was to deal with distinct peoples as an imperial sovereign, incorporating some as subject clients: the Serbs, nomads, as well as Mas'ud,

Antioch and Edessa when he could. Others were enrolled as allied clients such as the Italian maritime republics and Jerusalem, while states such as the German empire, Georgia, Hungary and Kiev were bound by treaty as allies where possible. John's regime, in both rhetoric and practice, reveals that in the early twelfth century the nascent identities of these peoples could not be submerged any longer by any kind of pan-Roman or pan-Christian identity, and that the "Ausones" must dominate and negotiate if they were to rule over peoples whose distinctiveness from those Ausones could not be put back in the box.

The powerful Turks and the Norman kingdom were, however, perpetual enemies, as though John did not have the opportunity to face the latter in battle directly, they were an essential part of his planned endgame: the restoration of the empire as it had existed prior to the crises of the eleventh century. His father had lived in the world where that empire had still existed. He had seen it lost, but had begun a slow process of restoration before he died, and it was up to John to attempt to restore something he had never known, in a world that had wholly changed from that which had previously existed. John's successes in pushing this agenda were down to ceaseless campaigning on the model above, while at the same time guaranteeing the support of Constantinople while he was abroad. In the provinces, these conquests were secured by a huge network of fortresses in both the Balkans and Anatolia, a network that with every archaeological study seems to grow. These fortresses appear as ideologically relevant as they are defensively viable, demonstrating to all that the empire was in control, in addition to enabling further conquests through logistical support. John's use of the fleet by both river and sea to ensure logistical superiority should also be accepted as one of the most significant

factors in his military success living up to Clausewitz's adage that an amateur focuses upon strategy while an expert focuses upon logistics.

John made mistakes: trusting his brother Isaac and overcommitting in the mid-1120s were almost ruinous to his ambitions. At other times the whims of individuals shaped events beyond any expectations – the sudden deaths of Turkish rulers, instability in Cilicia or sudden betrayals of close kin often changed his fortunes on a macro-level far beyond what would be expected for any person's actions. The influence of others is more deeply hidden, as it is striking that only Stephanos Kontostephanos is listed as leading an independent campaign in this period, and then he is only mentioned in a non-Greek source.

This reveals the weakness of the system that John's sword carved out – it relied upon that very sword to enforce it. Papageorgiou is correct that John managed to preserve and strengthen what he himself inherited, but equally Deluigi's judgement that John's reign accomplished nothing of permanence aside from his fortress building can be justified, as Manuel had to rebuild all of John's client relationships and fought over much the same territory as his father.[968] John's reign may appear to exemplify what is known as the "Red Queen Effect," whereby just as the eponymous character in *Through the Looking Glass*, John had to run very fast just to stay still. His empire of client management was only as strong as the client manager. However, his own lament at the death of his sons Alexios and Andronikos demonstrates how the battles Manuel had to refight were not his intention: John had attempted to safeguard the stability of the empire's next generation. Had John died in Constantinople even a year hence, his designs fulfilled and the already long-reigning and battle-tested emperor Alexios the Younger receiving the homage of his

[968] Papageorgiou, *John II Komnenos*, p. 30; Deluigi, *Winter in the Land of Rûm*, p. 39.

clients from a position of strength, his legacy would have been inviolate, even if his plans to take Ikonion and invade southern Italy had still not come to pass. John's achievements would have been cemented and the new Alexios ready to build on them, as indeed John had on Alexios I's, without having to retread the same ground and fight the same battles. Only with the uncertainty and chaos of both his heir's and then his own unexpected death on campaign, with his Syrian settlement not yet accomplished, can his achievements seem ephemeral; and yet, even then, Manuel's ease at accomplishing similar deeds once more and following through on the latter designs bear tribute to John's successes. John's careful constructed historical memory may be artificial, yet these heroic deeds do conform to real achievements as he sought to become the emperor that such rhetoric held up as the ideal, even if he fell just short of the mark.

His reputation outside Byzantium, even among those who considered him an enemy, was equally positive. Though William of Tyre's judgement of him as a "lofty character, famous for prowess in war…/generous and pious, kind and merciful" may perhaps be expected for a chronicler holding up exemplars for crusaders to follow; the description of John as the "merciful prince" by Ibn al-Athir, even if used ironically as he praises Zengi as the true fount of mercy; both testify to the propagation of his reputation.[969] This reputation coalesced into his nickname, "Kaloioannes," John the Fair or Good, which is testified by Otto of Freising, the Priest of Diokleia, the Chronicle of Naples, and even given the name "Kalyani" by Ibn al-Adim.[970] Even further afield, the Abbot of the Church of St Victor at Marseilles gave to "Caloioannes" a relic of the eponymous saint as a gift –

[969] William of Tyre, 15.23, p. 706; Ibn al-Athir, p. 342.
[970] "Chronicon Ottonis episcopi Frisingensis", p. 259; *The Priest of Diokleia*: XLV, pp. 75-6; *Regii neapolitani archive* (vol. 6., 1858), nos. 596 and 600; Ibn al-Adim, p. 85.

demonstrating once more both the use of the nickname, and an intriguing diplomatic exchange no doubt part of John's positive reputation with western pilgrims in Constantinople.[971] The Innsbruck Dish may be a similar gift from John's court to the Turks of Anatolia, perhaps even to Mas'ud in his period of clientship according to recent scholarship – either way, such a reputation and evidence of diplomatic exchanges proves that John's reign was far more than a black-and-white period of reconquest for Byzantium, but one of renegotiating the empire's place within the changed world order of the twelfth century.[972]

Such fragmentary and intriguing evidence does, however, demonstrate that John's era requires further study. With the historical narrative more fully understood, aspects of his rule can now be more deeply investigated; were this study twice as long I would hope to examine the economy, administration and the church in addition to more fully understanding John's place in the broader history of the Komnenian era. With the chroniclers' strengths and weaknesses acknowledged and a broader range of sources incorporated, the narrative of John's reign can be brought out from the long shadows of his father Alexios and son Manuel. Now, deeper historical inquiry can begin.

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[971] P. E. D. Riant, *Exuviae sacrae constantinopolitanae* (vol. II, Geneva, 1878), pp. 23-4.

[972] S. Redford, "How Islamic is it? The Innsbruck Plate and its setting," *Muqarnas* 7 (1990), pp. 119-35; T. Steppan, "The Artukid Bowl: Courtly Art in the Middle Byzantine Period and Its Relation to the Islamic East," *Perceptions of Byzantium and its neighbors: 843-1261*, ed. O. Z. Pevny, W. D. Wixom, H. C. Evans. I. Ševčenko (New York, 2000), pp. 84-101. Dated to the reign of John by L. F. G. Dicks, "Power and triumph: Images of Alexander the Great in Medieval Byzantium and Beyond," paper given at XVII OUBS International Graduate Conference, Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Byzantine Word, c. 300-1500, 28th February 2015, Publication Forthcoming.

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