Ivan Marić

Legitimizing Usurpation: Romanos I Lekapenos and Nikolaos I Mystikos

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

Central European University
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by

Ivan Marić

(Serbia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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I, the undersigned, **Ivan Marić**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, __ May 2013

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Signature

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List of abbreviations

Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning*	Leslie Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1999).
Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*	Gilbert Dagron, *Emperor and Priest. The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2003).
DOC	*Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection, 3: Leo III to Nicephorus III (717-1081)*, 1-2, ed. Philip Grierson, (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1973).
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers (Washington).
DOS	*Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art, 6: Emperors, Patriarchs of Constantinople, Addenda*, ed. John Nesbit and Cecile Morisson, (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2009).
EHB	*The Economic History of Byzantium, From the Seventh, through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Angeliki E. Laiou, 1-3, (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002).
Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir"	C. Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir dans l'art byzantin a l'époque de la dynastie macédonienne", *Byzantion*, 57 (1987): 441-470.
Kresten-Müller, *Legitimationsprinzip*	Otto Kresten, Andreas E. Müller, *Samtherrschaft, Legitimationsprinzip und kaiserlicher Urkundentitel in Byzanz in der ersten Hälfte des 10. Jahrhunderts*, (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wiesenschaften, 1995).
Morrisson, "Byzantine Money	Cecile Morisson, "Byzantine Money: Its Production and Circulation", in *EHB*, 909-966.
Mystikos*, Letters*	*Nicholas I Patriarch of Constantinople Letters*, ed. R. J. H. Jenkins- L. G. Westerink, (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1973).
ODB	*The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 1-3, ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan (Oxford: OUP, 1991).
PmbZ	*Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit, 2. Abteilung (867-1025)*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009-2013.
Runciman, *Romanos*	Steven Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus*

	and his Reign, (Cambridge: CUP, 1929).
Stanković, *Patriarchs*	Vlada Stanković, *Carigradski patrijarsi I carevi Makedonske dinastije* [The patriarchs of Constantinople and the emperors of the Macedonian dynasty], (Beograd: Vizantološki Institut, 2003).
Th. Cont.	*Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. I. Bekker, (Bonn, 1838).

Introduction

The post-iconoclast period in Byzantium is characterized by the revival of images and the (tacit or not so tacit) redefinition of the two highest positions in the hierarchy, those of emperor and patriarch.[1] It has been recognized that Iconoclasm, in addition to the theological disputes involved, had a strong political component, becoming the "instrument of imperial policy" – just as opposition to iconoclasm turned into a tool of anti-imperial policy-making.[2] Similarly, after the "Triumph of Orthodoxy", iconophile, or rather anti-iconoclastic, behavior became the expectation.[3] One of the ways of expressing one's proper orthodoxy, apart from attending the liturgies and rituals in question,[4] was one's choice of image-program.[5] Not long after images of heavenly and saintly figures were reestablished, emperors began to associate themselves with members of the celestial hierarchy, personifying the ideology of the source of imperial power and authority. Thus, the holy images, became images of power.[6] Not surprisingly,

[1] The classical study on the relationship between the Church and the ruler in the middle ages, although more appropriately reflecting western medieval culture: Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. The Study of Mediaeval Political Theology*, (Princeton: PUP, 1997); Dagron's work is one of the most influential studies concerning the positions and relations between the emperor and the patriarch in Byzantium: Gilbert Dagron, *Emperor and Priest. The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2003) (henceforth: Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*); another useful study concentrating on the period of Macedonian dynasty: Vlada Stanković, *Carigradski patrijarsi I carevi Makedonske dinastije* [The patriarchs of Constantinople and the emperors of the Macedonian dynasty], (Beograd: Vizantološki Institut, 2003) (French summary, Les patriarches de Constantinople et les empereurs de la dynastie Macédonienne, 315–335) (henceforth: Stanković, *Patriarchs*).

[2] Politics and personal ties and relations in the highest strata of society mattered more than ideologies, as an example of the seemingly ambiguous figure from the last period of Iconoclasm illustrates. Theoktist, a former iconoclast supporter, after Theophilos's death played a signifcant role in the organization of the 'Triumph of Orthodoxy'. Leslie Brubacker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the iconoclast era c. 680-850: a history*, (New York, Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 400-404; 447-452. See also the various pertinent pieces in Marie-France Auzépy, *L'histoire des iconoclastes,* (Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d'Histoire et Civilization de Byzance, 2007) and Ead., *L'iconoclasme,* (Paris: PUF, 2006).

[3] Cyril Mango, "The Liquidation of Iconoclasm and the Patriarch Photios", in *Iconoclasm*, ed. Anthony Bryer, Judith Herrin (Birmingham: Center for Byzantine Studies Univeristy of Birmingham, 1977), 133-140 (henceforth: Mango, "The Liquidation of Iconoclasm").

[4] Relevant titles are introduced at the beginning of chapter I.

[5] The role of Patriarch Photios in the revival of sacred images is well-known: R. J. H. Jenkins, C. Mango, "The Date and Significance of the Tenth Homily of Photios", *DOP*, 9/10, (1956), 125-140); About Photios's usage of images for constructing imperial ideology: Leslie Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1999) (henceforthe: Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning*).

[6] Classical study on the representation of the emperor: Andre Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin*, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1936) (henceforth: Grabar, *L'empereur*); an influential article concerning the sacred images in the period of the Macedonian dynasty, and their propagandistic features: C. Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir dans l'art byzantin a

usurpers, quite numerous in the period of the Macedonian dynasty,[7] seeking approval of their position or justification for their deeds, were among the first, at least based on the surviving evidence, to associate themselves with the heavenly figures aiming at divine legitimacy.[8] However, the earliest surviving manifestation of this tendency on coins, and among the earliest in general, was not prompted by an usurper, at least not in the usual sense applied to the term, but by a member of imperial family, Emperor Alexander (r. 912–913), the youngest son of Basil I (r. 867–886).[9] His model became the favourite design of future usurper-emperors;[10] the first to follow was Romanos I Lekapenos (r. 920–944).[11] Since divine legitimacy was even stronger when confirmed by the highest spiritual authority, who claims to be the intercessor between God and men (even the emperor), the role of Nikolaos I Mystikos (901–907, 912–925),[12] patriarch during the reign both of Alexander and Romanos, is pertinent: as can be shown by the consent between the words of Mystikos preserved in his letters and the symbolics behind the image represented in coins.

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l'époque de la dynastie macédonienne", *Byzantion*, 57 (1987), 441-470 (henceforth: Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir").

[7] For the later periods, see Jean-Claude Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestat–ions à Byzance (963–1210),* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996).

[8] Classical study based on the interpretation of the ceremonial: Otto Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser-und Reichsidee nach ihrer Gestaltung im höfischen Zeremoniell*, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969) (henceforth: Treitinger, *Kaiser und Reichsidee*); see also Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*; and the most recent study: Otto Kresten, Andreas E. Müller, *Samtherrschaft, Legitimationsprinzip und kaiserlicher Urkundentitel in Byzanz in der ersten Hälfte des 10. Jahrhunderts*, (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wiesenschaften, 1995) (henceforth: Kresten-Müller, *Legitimationsprinzip*); *ODB*, 2, 1203.

[9] On Emperor Alexander, its reign and how he deserved a 'bad name' see: Karlin-Hayter "Alexander's Bad Name"; for Alexander's 'history' before he became the emperor see ch. 9 ('Alexander') of: Shaun Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886-912): Politics and People*, (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 219-232 (henceforth: Tougher*, Leo*).

[10] For a survey of pertinent representations of coronations in coins: Vangelis Maladakis, "The Coronation of the Emperor on Middle Byzantine Coinage: A Case of Christian Political Theology (10th-mid 11th c.)", *Acta Musei Varnaensis*, VII, 1 (2008), 342-360 (henceforth: Maladakis, "Corronation of the Emperor").

[11] Steven Runciman's classical study of the reign of Romanos I Lekapenos still retains value, although it is by now somewhat outdated and deliberately neglects representations in art: Steven Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and his Reign*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1929), 6 (henceforth: Runciman, *Romanos*); Toynbee does not take into account visual material as well: Arnold Toynbee, *Constantine Porphirogenitus and His World*, (London: OUP, 1973), 699. For the most recent treatment of Romanos's rule see: Jonathan Shepard, "Equlibrium to expansion", in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire,* ed. Jonathan Shepard, (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 493-536, sub-heading about Romanos's reign: "Romanos I Lekapenos: Regime, Achievements, and Exile", 505-511, (henceforth: Shepard, "Equilibrium to Expansion"); *PmbZ*, #26833.

[12] Cf. below.

Aims

In my thesis I plan to investigate, on the one hand, the propagandistic efforts the usurper-emperor Romanos I Lekapenos undertook in order to legitimize his position and replace the Macedonian dynasty with his own and, on the other hand, the role of Patriarch Nikolaos I Mystikos in supporting him. The focus will be on the usage of coins,[13] especially the coin representing Romanos crowned by Christ, and seals[14] for projecting legitimacy. The term propaganda implies a "more or less systematic effort to manipulate other people's beliefs, attitudes, or actions by means of symbols",[15] i.e. deliberate advertising of a certain message. Therefore, in order to answer my questions I will need to investigate characteristics of the medium that transfers the message, in order to understand its potential; identify the message, i.e. what is being projected; the origins of the image; its audience, and possible reception; finally, its place it in the specific historical context and wider ideological background. Since the image of an emperor being crowned by Christ belongs to the field of political theology, the role of Patriarch Nikolaos I Mystikos and the testimony found in his letters are important for understanding both the ideology and the context.

Sources and Methods

The main groups of sources used are: coins and seals from the period of Romanos I Lekapenos;[16] and

[13] Philip Grierson was one of the most prolific contemporary scholars. Yet, he is most memorable for his studies on money and coinage, both East and West: Philip Grierson, "The Origins of Money", in *Scritti Storici e Numismatici*, Colectanes 15, ed. Ermanno A. Arslan and Lucia Traviani, (Spoleto: Centro Italiano Di Studi Sullalto Medioevo, 2001), 69-106 (Grierson, "Origins of Money" henceforth: Grierson, "The Origins of Money"); Idem, *Numismatics,* (London: OUP, 1975) (henceforth: Grierson, *Numismatics*); Idem, "Byzantine Coinage as Source Material", in *Proceedings of the XIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Oxford, 1966* (London: OUP, 1967), 317-333 (henceforth: Grierson, "Coinage as Source Material"); Idem, *Byzantine Coinage,* (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1999; first published in 1982) (henceforth: Grierson, *Byzantine Coinage*), and the enormously important volumes 2, 3 and 5 of Dumbarton Oaks collection catalogue. Cecile Morrisson equally offers very useful contributions: Cecile Morrisson, "Byzantine Money: Its Production and Circulation", in *The Economic History of Byzantium, From the Seventh, through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Angeliki E. Laiou, 1-3, (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002), 909-966 (henceforth: Morrisson, "Byzantine Money"); Cecile Morrisson and Jean-Claude Cheynet, "Prices and Wages in the Byzantine World", in *EHB*, 815-878.

[14] Good introductory works on seals in Byzantium are: Nicolas Oikonomides, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1985); and Jean-Claude Cheynet, *La société byzantine: l'apport des sceaux,* Bilans de recherche 3, 1, (Paris: Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2008).

[15] Encyclopaedia Britannica, academic online edition: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/478875/propaganda; although the term originates from the seventeenth century, Auzépy demonstrates that it was practiced to promote re-established orthodoxy: Marie-France Auzépy, "Manifestations de la propaganda en faveur de l'orthodoxie", in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?*, ed. Leslie Brubaker, (Ashgate: Variorum, 1998), 85-100.

[16] The main edition used for coins: *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the*

letters, in the first place the surviving collection written by the Patriarch Nikolaos I Mystikos (901–907, 912–925), and, to a lesser extent, the letters of Theodore Daphnopates, written for the emperor Romanos.[17] Additionally, the sixth book of the so-called chronicle of Theophanes Continuatus,[18] the main chronicle for the period of Romanos' rule, is used as the main narrative source. The chronicle will provide basis for the historical narrative and the main events, helping place the evidence from the primary material.

Whittemore Collection, 3: Leo III to Nicephorus III (717-1081), 1-2, ed. Philip Grierson, (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1973) (henceforth: *DOC*), although the volume contains two parts, the pagination is continuous, thus I will only refer to the page and/or plate number, omitting the part number. Also, when refering to a coin, I will put only the main number of the specimen, without variations e.g. pl. xxv, 1, and not pl. xxv, 1a-1c, because those are specimens of the same design, and their variations are not important for my study. In any case the reader is advised to check all the specimens under the indicated number. The main edition for seals: *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art, 6: Emperors, Patriarchs of Constantinople, Addenda*, ed. John Nesbit and Cecile Morrisson, (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2009) (henceforth: *DOS*), when refering to a seal, I will put the page number, followed by the number of the specimen as marked in the edition.

[17] *Nicholas I Patriarch of Constantinople Letters*, ed. and tr. R. J. H. Jenkins, L. G. Westernick, (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1973; CFHB VI) (henceforth: Mystikos, *Letters*); Mystikos's miscellaneous writtings are occasionally referred to as well: *Nicholas I Patriarch of Constantinople Miscellaneous Writtings*, ed. and tr. L. G. Westernick, (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1981; CFHB XX) (henceforth: Mystikos, *Miscellaneous*); *Théodore Daphnopatès Correspondance*, ed. J. Darrouzès, L.G. Westerink, (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1978) (henceforth: Daphnopates, *Correspondance*).

[18] *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. I. Bekker, (Bonn, 1838), is named like this because it continues the chronicle of Theophanes the Conffessor. The whole chronicle coveres the period between 813 and 961; it is divided into VI books, and four different 'parts' are recognized – 1. 813-867; 2. *Vita Basilii* 867-886; 3. 886-948 which is very close to *Symeon Logothete*, the only example of 'Anti-Macedonian' text within the chronicle; 4. 948-963: Alexander Každan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (850-1000),* (Athens: National Hellenic Research Museum, 2006), *Theophanes Continuatus*: 144-152, *Symeon Logothete*: 162-170, (henceforth: Každan, *Literature*); *ODB*, 3, 2061-2062. Only the fifth book, the so-called *Vita Basilii*, an eulogized account of Basil I assembled under the supervision of his grandson Constantine VII Porphirogennetos, received the modern edition by Ihor Ševčenko, however, Juan Signes Codoñer and Jeffrey Michael Featherstone are preparing the new edition of the remaining books I-IV and VI. For the treatment of the autorship of Constantine Porphirogennetos concerning the books I-V, but also with remarks about DAI, see: Juan Signes Codoñer "Algunas consideraciones sobre la autoría del Theophanes Continuatus", *Erytheia*, 10.1 (1989), 17-28. The book VI covers the period between the rule of Leo VI and Romanos II (Th. Cont. 353-481), yet I am concerned mainly with the period after the death of emperor Alexander until the end of Romanos's rule (Th. Cont. 377-435). For this period compiler used, already mentioned, *Symeon Logothete*, with some addition from the now-lost biography of John Kourkuas, Romanos's leading general: Mark Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, (600-1025)*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), 8-9 (henceforth: Whittow, *The Making*), which is why it is still regarded as the best account for the reign of Romanos I, especially considering the gap in the contemporary chronicles for the period c. 870-950: Athanasios Markopoulos, "Costantine the Great in Macedonian historiography: models and approaches", in *New Constantines, the Rhytm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries*, ed. Paul Magdalino, (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), 159-170; 160. Alexander Každan's examination of the text marked the boundaries of the creation of the book VI in the period around 963: Alexander Každan, "Из истории византийской хронографии X в.", *Византийский временик,* 19 (1961), 76-96; 94-95. The authorship has been ascribed to Theodore Daphnopates: Každan, *Literature*, 153; and most-recently to Basil Lekapenos: Jeffrey Michael Featherstone, "Theophanes Continuatus VI and *De Cerimoniis I, 96*", *Byzantinisches Zeitschrift,* 104 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 115-123. For the comparison of accounts about Romanos's rule between Theophanes Continuatus and John Skylitzes' *Synopsis Historiarum*, see: Kresten-Müller, *Legitimationsprinzip*; and Catherine Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976-1025)*, (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 125-152.

Coins and seals

Although the practical function of coins and seals differed, on a more ideological level they were quite the same: symbols of imperial authority. The mint was located in the Great Palace, and there was a control of quality. An official stamp, that is the imperial effigy, vouched the weight and fineness of the coin "for it is the imposition of a recognizable mark that transforms a piece of metal into a specific unit of currency, guaranteed as such by an appropriate authority."[19] The practical function and value of both coins and seals turned them into a potentially useful medium for propaganda. Although it is difficult to estimate the effects of the messages they conveyed,[20] the evidence clearly suggests that they were intended to do so, implying that those who designed the message deemed it important. Although the main focus is on coins and seals belonging to the reign of Romanos I Lekapenos and the very co-emperor whom he tried to oust, Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos,[21] in order to better understand the peculiar status and usage of coins and seals, especially as tools of propaganda, relevant chronologically earlier or later examples are investigated as well.

Denominations

The coinage of the early Macedonian period (867–945) has many characteristic traits. After the loss of Italy, only two, easily distinguishable, mints remained: the main, and much more important one, in

[19] Grierson, "The Origins of Money", 71; Morrisson, "Byzantine Money", 917-919.

[20] It is suggested that uniformity plays more important role, i.e. that the users were more interested in the fineness than the subtle arrangements of propaganda: Grierson, "Coinage as Source Material", 321; about the propaganda in coinage see also: Alfred R. Bellinger, "The Coins and Byzantine Imperial Policy", *Speculum*, 31, 1, (1956), 70-81 (henceforth: Bellinger,"Imperial Policy"); or Grierson, *Numismatics*, 3-4.

[21] The longstandng fascination with this emperor in the scholarly world is well-known. Probably the best, and certainly the wittiest, overview and critic of myriad of titles dedicated to Constantine comes from the emperor himself: Ihor Ševčenko, "Re-reading Constantine Porphyrogenitus", in *Byzantine Diplomacy,* ed. Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1992), 167-197. However, coins from his period received comparably less attraction. To name a few still occasionally quoted studies: Hugh Goodacre, "The Story of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, from his Solidi," *Numismatic Chronicle*, 15 (1935), 114-119, is concerned only with gold coins; Alfred R. Bellinger, "Byzantine Notes, 6. The Coins of Constantine Porphyrogennetus and his Associates," *American Numismatic Society, Museum Notes*, 13 (1967), 148-166 (henceforth: Bellinger, "Byzantine Notes") undertook more in-depth investigation and included silver and copper coins as well. However, both of these studies made an erroneous interpretation, mistaking the coin of Constantine VII and Romanos II for Constantine VII and Romanos I (Goodacre: p. 116, pl. viii, 5; Bellinger: p. 155, pl. xxxiii, 7), which led to more difficulties. Furthermore, none of these studies take into account several numismatic features of the period, such as size of the letters, or other iconographical characteristics. These mistakes were noticed and corrected in the most comprehensive edition of coins for the period by Philip Grierson (*DOC*, 526-540, esp. 535).

Constantinople, and another in Cherson, which produced only low-quality copper coins.[22] In this period there was no debasement. The *nomisma*, famously, still kept its purity, as evidenced by the stable denomination system without shortages of precious metal.[23] The system of denominations pose no trouble for the historian, as there is only one for each of the three metals: gold (*nomisma*), silver (*miliaresion*), and copper (*follis*).[24] Every coin consists of iconography and inscription, and each of these types has its own idiomatic features.

The *nomisma*, without exception, has an iconographic representation on both obverse and reverse. The obverse, with few exceptions, carries the effigy of Christ (enthroned or bust). The bust of Christ, introduced for the first time by Justinian II (r. 685-695, 705-711),[25] was reintroduced to the obverse of coins after the end of Iconoclasm in 843,[26] just one generation before Basil I founded a new dynasty, and introduced a new type of iconography on the obverse, an enthroned Christ.[27] During the iconoclast period the dominant religious image on coins, like in other forms of visual representations, had been the cross, the 'relic' of which remained in use on the reverse of *miliaresia* for a long time after Iconoclasm ended.[28] The reverse of gold coins was reserved for the emperors and their junior colleagues, usually sons. The promotion of heirs was a well-established practice since the time of emperor Heraklios (r. 610-641),[29] and the most common usage of coins for propagandistic purposes in Byzantium.

The *miliaresion* is a silver denomination introduced by Leo III in 721 and designed with the Arab *dirham* as model.[30] This coin is a salient phenomenon in coinage as it remained virtually unchanged in its

[22] For more details about the mints see: *DOC*, 77-81 (Constantinople), 91-92 (Cherson).

[23] *DOC*, 19, 39; the *nomisma* remained pure to a level of 23, out of the ideal 24, carats: Morrisson, "Byzantine Money", 932.

[24] *DOC,* 14-15; Morrisson, "Byzantine Money", 930.

[25] Grierson, *Coinage*, 8.

[26] Ibid.., 9.

[27] This image was most likely based on the icon which was above the throne in the great palace – a throne-seated Christ above the throne-seated emperor – and it became a prominent feature of the early Macedonian coinage. It was easily recognizable by the contemporaries, and known as *senzaton*, a loan word from Latin, used for the imperial throne. Others argued very similar image of Christ, and identical throne, is represented in the famous narthex-mosaic of Hagia Sophia: *DOC,* 46, 147, 154-156, pl. xxx, 1.

[28] See below.

[29] Grierson, *Coinage,* 7-8.

[30] And indeed trying to compete with the *dirham*: Morrisson, "Byzantine Money", 928-929.

design for two centuries, and underwent only minor changes thereafter, so numismatists sometimes use the term "era of the miliaresion".[31] On the obverse it had always carried an inscription in five rows, and on the reverse a cross. The cross of Leo III's miliaresion was of rather simple design, and the first appreciable change came with Alexander I (r. 912–913) who placed a small medallion with Christ's bust in the middle of the cross-arms.[32] This innovation was abandoned by Alexander's successors, retaining the traditional look, until around 931, when Romanos Lekapenos followed Alexander's example, but replaced the bust of Christ with his own.[33] Curiously, the bust was abandoned during Constantine Porphyrogennetos' sole rule, only to be employed again by the usurper-emperors Nikephoros II (r. 963–969) and John I (r. 969–976), who had the medallion enlarged.[34] Interestingly, Basil II initially had one issue of the original non-bust type, then several issues with not one but two busts, to the left and the right of the cross, instead of one in the middle. Finally he introduced the first different type of a silver coin which showed the Virgin with the medallion of Christ on her chest (*Nikopoios*) on the obverse while retaining the traditional inscription in five rows on the reverse, thus ending the 'era of miliaresion'.[35]

In terms of design, copper *folles*, "which passed through humblest of hands",[36] seem to be half-way between the gold and silver, as there is usually, at least on the Constantinopolitan coins, a bust on the obverse, and an inscription on the reverse. Cherson folles were quite different; most of them just feature monograms, however, the quality of craftsmanship was way lower compared to coins minted in Constantinople.

Gold coins

Saying that gold coins were placed on a different, higher, level than the rest, and thus received special

[31] Ibid.., 928.

[32] Leo III: *DOC*, 225, 227, 231-232, 251-253, pl. ii-iii, 20-23; Alexander: Ibid.., 525, pl. xxxv, 3.

[33] Ibid., 554-558, pl. xxxvii, 17-18 (traditional type), 20-21 (new type).

[34] Nikephoros II: Ibid., 580, 585-586, pl. xli, 6; John I: Ibid., 590, 596-598, pl. xlii, 7.

[35] Silver coins with the Virgin on the obverse would become dominant in the future: Ibid., 610, 627, pl. xlvi, 16; the two busts miliaresion: Ibid., 600, 610-612, 628-632, pl. xlvi-xlvii, 17-18, 20; Virgin Nikopoios type: Ibid., 600, 611, 631, pl. xlvii, 19.

[36] Bellinger,"Imperial Policy", 70.

attention from the emperors might seem like stating the obvious given the nature of gold compared to other denominations or, more generically, to other metals. Still, I feel that some of its features deserve to be treated. It is noteworthy that merchants were officially not allowed to trade *nomismata* outside the empire's borders,[37] a measure which aimed to keep the amount of gold in circulation within the empire as high as possible, just like measures against the hoarding.[38] This also indicates that gold was primarily intended for internal use. And it was: taxes were collected in gold; salaries, and other imperial expenses, were paid in gold coins.[39] A picturesque account of the annual *rhogai*[40] ceremony is left by Liutprand of Cremona:

> But I reckon that this ought not to be passed over in silence, namely, what else I saw there that was novel and marvellous. [...] the emperor makes payment of gold coins both to the soldiers and to those appointed to the various offices, according to what their rank deserves. It happened in this way. A table ten cubits in length and four in width had been set down, which supported the coins, bound in bags according to what each was owed, with number written on the outside of each bag. Thereupon, they entered before the emperor, not in a jumble, but in an order, according to the summons of the herald who recited written names of the men according to the dignity of their rank. The first of them to be called in is the rector of the palaces, on whose shoulders, and not into whose hands, the coins are placed in four military cloaks. After him are called *o domesticos tis ascalonas* and *o delongaris tis ploos*, of whom the former commands the army and the latter the navy. These two, taking an equal number of coins and cloaks, as their dignity is equal, because of the volume could not carry them away on their shoulders but dragged them off with an effort, aided by others. After them twenty-four generals are admitted, to whom are issued pounds of gold coins, twenty-four to each, according to his number, with two military cloaks. Lastly, right after them the order of the patricians follows and is given twelve pounds of coins and one military cloak. [...] After that is summoned the immense horde of first swordsmen, swordsmen-in-training, chamberlains, treasurers, first headsmen, of whom the first received seven, and the others according to their dignity received six, five, four, three, two, and

[37] While other denominations circulated more freely, particularly the miliaresion, which was used by the emperors going on campaigns to tip the guards of the *scholai*, pages, and members of the *hetaireia.* Morrisson, "Byzantine Money", 951.

[38] Ibid., 936-939.

[39] Ibid., 918, 951.

[40] A remuneration paid annually to civil and military officials and court dignitaries. *ODB*, 3, 1801; see also: Morrisson, "Byzantine Money", 951.

one. Nor do I want you to think that it was all accomplished in a single day. Having begun on the fifth day of the week at the first hour of the day, it was finished by the emperor at the fourth hour of the sixth and seventh days; for to those who received less than a pound [less than seventy-two gold coins], the chief of the imperial bedchamber, not the emperor, makes payment throughout the whole week before Easter.[41]

Liutprand's description is important as it shows the splendor of the ceremony,[42] in which the emperor himself presents pounds of gold to his high-ranking courtiers, and illustrates just how many state officials were receiving the payment. All those pounds of gold were freshly minted coins and, coupled with the actual value each of these had, the impact that this ceremony must have had on contemporaries, receivers of salaries, and not least – observers such as Liutprand, should not be underestimated. Furthermore, the period in which the event is placed is significant – just before the Easter, the most important date in the Christian empire.

Thus, it can be concluded that the gold coins were primarily designated for the military and civil state officials and high-ranking dignitaries – those dependent on the emperor, and on whom the emperor most depended.[43] Having in mind the actual value of gold and the well-placed and elaborate ceremony during which the hand of the emperor distributed coins, gold coins possessed a considerable capacity for propaganda.

The number of examples found in the recent past, present, and future (from Romanos' vantage

[41] *The Complete Works of Liutprand of Cremona,* tr. and introduction notes Paolo Squatriti Squatriti, (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 200-202 (henceforth: Squatriti, *Liutprand of Cremona*).

[42] *Rogai* payment was not the only ceremony where emperors distributed gold. When the new emperor was crowned by the patriarch in the Hagia Sophia, he left as offering a huge bag of one hundred pounds of gold, and a smaller one as well. For the reconstruction of the whole ceremony see: George P. Majeska, "The Emperor in His Church: Imperial Ritual in the Church of St. Sophia", in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire, (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997), 1-11 (henceforth: Majeska, "Emperor in His Church"). In Philotheos *Kletorologion,* there is a near-contemporary account of the Broumalia feast, where Leo VI, his brother Alexander and Zoe distributed twenty, ten, and eight pounds of gold. Nicolas Oikonomides, *Les listes des préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles*, (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1972) 222-225. On Broumalia in general see: *ODB*, 327-328. For the list of expenditures see also: Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory. Triumphal rulership in the late antiquity, Byzantium and the early medieval West*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1986), ch. 5, esp. 228-230 (henceforth: McCormick, *Eternal Victory*).

[43] On emperor-elite interplay see the recent chapters by John Haldon, on "Social Elites, Wealth, and Power" (168-211), and Paul Magdalino, on "Court Society and Aristocracy" (212-232) in *A Social History of Byzantium,* ed. John Haldon (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

point) suggests that gold coins, as compared to other denominations,[44] and seals were employed more 'loosely' by the senior emperors. Leo VI (r. 886–912), known for his autocratic rule, ignored his brother Alexander (r. 912-913), crowned co-emperor and therefore official colleague, on gold coins,[45] but the latter's name does appear on *folles*,[46] while not one seal showing Leo without Alexander is known.[47] Perhaps in a sort of revenge to Leo, treating his heir with the equal measure, Alexander, for his part, ignored Constantine on his coin issues completely;[48] yet, one seal, from which the important half is unfortunately missing, probably represented Constantine.[49] Romanos I ignored Constantine on the most common series of *solidi* issued between 921 and 931,[50] but the latter's name appears regularly on *miliaresia*[51] and *folles*,[52] and, again, no seal ignored Constantine.[53] Another telling example comes from

[44] Especially the silver miliaresion which seems to have had an official character – order of names, cross, no effigy.

[45] *DOC*, 508-510, 512-514, pl. xxxiv, 1-2.

[46] Ibid., 508, 516-518, 522, pl. xxxiv, 6-7.

[47] *DOS*, 91-93, 53-54.

[48] *DOC*, 523-525, pl. xxxv, 1-4.

[49] The seal itself does not show any trace of Constantine which makes it a somewhat shaky piece of evidence. Although editors agree that the missing image was Leo's son, *DOS* provides no explanation, while Zacos-Veglery, only put a question mark next to Constantine's name. Arguments supporting it are that it was definitely created during Alexander's sole rule, and a logical question is who else could have been? We know from literary sources that Alexander had no children of his own. After his brother's death he replaced immediately Leo's men of trust with his own, and removed Zoe from the palace. Constantine was legitimate co-emperor, baptised by Patriarch Nikolaos I Mystikos in 906 and crowned by Patriarch Euthymios in 908, that is 'approved' official heir, and Leo did all he could to secure his son's future. Additionally, although the main sources are heavily biased against Alexander, giving him a 'bad name', there is no mention of Alexander promoting anyone to the rank of co-emperor. It is said that Alexander planned to castrate, or even murder, his nephew, but even if he really intended to do so, he simply did not have enough time to do it, he died too soon. Leo's long rule rooted his supporters and it was not an easy task to completely wipe them out within thirteen months. Interestingly enough, no less than five seals found in Bulgaria, most around Preslav, have only the right, co-emperor, half with the bust and 'Constantine' inscription on it. The option that it might be Basil's son Constantine is rejected as being a too early dating to be found near Preslav, which leaves Constantine VII as the only candidate for the surviving half. Unfortunately, as Ivan Jordanov notes, "the name of Constantine is of little help". There are two possibilities: either Leo and Constantine (908-912) or Alexander and Constantine (912-913). The third, theoretically possible, option, being that of Romanos and Constantine from the early period (920-921), has been previously excluded by Zacos-Veglery (p. 60), and confirmed by John Nesbitt and Cecile Morrisson in *DOS* edition (p. 100) based on the analogy with similar coins. Also, the earliest seals of Romanos and Constantine already bear Christopher's name as well, and those with only Romanos and Constantine VII are dated between 931 and 944. Professor Jordanov was intrigued by this phenomenon and adds: "it is an interesting ascertainment that the portrait and inscription of precisely the second emperor Constantine are preserved on the five extant specimens. Is it only a matter of chance?" Seal: G. Zacos, A. Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, 1, (Basel, 1972), 53, pl. 18, 61; *DOS*, 93-94, 55; Half-seals find in Bulgaria: *Corpus of Byzantine Seals From Bulgaria*, 3, ed. Ivan Jordanov, (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Science, National Institute of Archaeology with Museum, 2009), 87-88; on emperor Alexander: Karlin-Hayter "Alexander's Bad Name", 585-596; Tougher, *Leo*, 219-232.

[50] *DOC*, 534, 546-547, pl. xxxvi, 7.

[51] Ibid., 536-537, 554-557, pl. xxxvii, 17-18, 20.

[52] Ibid., 537, 560-561, pl. xxxviii, 23.

[53] *DOS*, 97-101, 59-62.

the period after 931, that is after Christopher Lekapenos' death. While both Stephen and Constantine Lekapenos' names do appear on post-931 *miliaresia*,[54] and at least Stephen's name and bust also appear on seals, famous for Romanos' beautifully crafted portrait,[55] there is no trace of any of the younger Lekapenoi on nomismata. Not long after the end of Romanos' rule, another usurper, Nikephoros Phokas, had one initial issue of gold coins showing also young Basil, but thence neither of Romanos II's sons appeared on coins.[56] Finally, John Tzimiskes, who rose to the throne by murder of his predecessor, ignored completely both Basil (II) and Constantine (VIII) on both coins and seals, as far as the extant examples show.[57]

The evidence presented here suggests that emperors, for the purpose of propaganda, were keener on bypassing the official status of their colleagues when it came to gold coins; on other denominations and especially on seals, an integral part of official documents, co-emperors were more consistently represented. The official co-emperor was important in the case of the death of the senior, as he was (presumably) expected to guarantee legal continuity. The significance of the co-emperor is especially true for still young Macedonian dynasty, and both of Basil I's sons had the experience of their eldest brother Constantine's death. Furthermore, Alexander had no children of his own, and Leo had had to wait agonizingly long for his heir, creating huge turmoil along the way. After Constantine Porphyrogennetos was eventually born, and had been baptised and crowned, Leo hastened to announce this by associating him on his *solidi* and *miliaresia*.[58]

What follows from the previous lines is that gold coins do not necessarily reflect the 'official status' of the college of emperors in the empire, and that it was exceptionally possible that even seals, although attested only in the case of John Tzimiskes, did not always reflect the 'actual' order. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a clear tendency of emperors to employ gold coins as they found fitting, i.e.

[54] *DOC*, 537, 556-557, pl. xxxvii, 20.
[55] *DOS*, 101, 62.
[56] Grierson comments that Nikephoros's coinage seems to have been modelled based on Romanos's. *DOC*, 580-588, pl. xli, 1-3 (with Basil).
[57] *DOC*, 589-598, pl. xlii.
[58] *DOC*, 508-510, 513-514, pl. xxxiv, 2 (*solidi*); Ibid., 510, 515, pl. xxxiv, 4 (miliaresia).

for propaganda, while as regards seals, on the other hand, such kind of political manoeuvring was less likely to manifest itself.

Letters

Essential for all letters,[59] whichever sub-genre they fall into,[60] is the distance, the separation of the sender and the addressee, be they friends, or envoys representing polities. Thus, letters emerged as the practical need for communication, in the beginning only to remind the messenger of the messages content.[61] Letter-writing in Byzantium is understood "somewhere at the intersection of politics and literature",[62] and politics in Byzantium was inevitably bound to diplomacy.[63] Discussing the 'diplomatic letters' genre, Margaret Mullett chooses the late ninth and early-tenth centuries as the best example of this type of letters in "its more usually accepted sense".[64] Most of the letters in both Nikolaos I Mysikos and Theodore Daphnopates' collections,[65] used for this research, fall into this category.

For the sake of understanding, diplomatic letters were composed in somewhat lower style,[66] i.e. free from some of the difficulties posed by other, more 'private' sub-categories, mainly the veiled

[59] A useful study dealing with letters in the middle ages in general, but focusing more on the medieval West: Giles Constable, *Letters and Letter-Collections*, (Louvain: Brepols, 1976) (henceforth: Constable, *Letters*). When it comes to letters, especially letters in Byzantium, Margaret Mullett's work is seminal. Here is just a selection: Margaret Mullett, "Writting in early mediaeval Byzantium", in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick, (Cambridge: CUP, 1990) 156-185, (henceforth: Mullett, "Writting") reprinted in *Letters, Literacy and Literature in Byzantium*, (Ashgate: Variorum, 2007), III, (henceforth: Mullett, *Letters*); Ead., "The madness of genre", in *Homo Byzantinus, Papers in Honor of Alexander Kazhdan*, ed. A. Cutler and S. Franklin, (Washington D. C.: DOP, 1992), 233-243 (Mullett, "The madness of genre" henceforth: Mullett, *The madness of genre*), reprinted in Mullett, *Letters*, IX; Ead., "The language of diplomacy", in *Byzantine Diplomacy,* ed. Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin, (Aldershot: Variorum, 1992), 203-216 (henceforth: Mullett, "Diplomacy"); Ead, *Theophylact of Ochrid. Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop*, (Aldershot: Variorum, 1997), esp. 1-43 (henceforth: Mullett, *Theophylact*). Apart from the works of Margaret Mullett see also: Michael Grünbart, *Epistularum byzantinarum initia*, (Hildesheim: Olms-Weidmann, 2001), and the most recent: Stratis Papaioannou, "Letter-Writting", in *The Byzantine World*, ed. Paul Stephenson, (New York: Routledge, 2012.), 188-199 (henceforth: Papaioannou, "Letter-Writting").

[60] For these difficulties see: Mullett, *The madness of genre*; and Papaioannou, "Letter-Writting", 188.

[61] Constable, *Letters* 13-15.

[62] Papaioannou, "Letter-Writting", 189.

[63] Mullett, "Diplomacy", esp. 216.

[64] Ibid., 210.

[65] Both of these collections have been deliberately selected and bounded, presumably by their authors, according to a criterion, which poses some challenges, not least for the editors. Concerning these challenges see: Constable, *Letters*, esp. 65.

[66] Mullett, "Diplomacy", 213, n. 81.

messages and riddles, or *asapheia*.[67] In several of her studies, based partly on the investigation of illuminations in the famous *Madrid Skylitzes*, Margaret Mullett expounds that letter-reception was a diplomatic ceremonial, much as if the sender was actually present,[68] and thus bound and regulated by *taxis*.[69] Finally, and most importantly for this work, letters, especially diplomatic letters, were rarely private, even if they were intended to be. Often, they were read publicly, as represented on some illuminations in the *Madrid Skylitzes*,[70] but, as one letter of Nikolaos Mystikos suggests, letters were also the target of the spy system.[71] Letters can carry vital informations, or disinformations, and the political value of control over the medium did not change to this day, as Mullett puts it "cunning and trickery could control communications and therefore power".[72] Thus, the method for dealing with these letters is discourse analysis, that is, the investigation of the backgrounds of sender and the adressee, the statements in the letter (including rhetoric etc), as well as the historical context, as much as possible.[73]

The Authors

The later patriarch Nikolaos I, who had acquired the epithet/surname Mystikos from previous service in the emperor's chancery, was born around 852, probably of Italian origin.[74] He was brought up by Photios, one of the most learned figures of the time, and belonged to the highest circles of Constantinopolitan society. Both being taught by Photios, it is said that the future emperor Leo (VI) and the future patriarch

[67] Mullett, "Writting", 178, n. 169; Eadem, "Diplomacy", 213. Despite this difference between the two types, "the same topoi, the same quotations, the same figures of speech, the same expectations of literary achievement can be found in both". Ibid., 213.

[68] Mullett, "Writting", 183-185; Eadem, "Diplomacy", 216; Idem, *Theophylact*, 31-43.

[69] The letters of Nikolaos Mystikos are exemplary in this case. In one letter to Symeon concerning the peace negotiations he says: " ... send a servant worthy of your Glory, ... and we of course will send from our side a similar person of equal standing ... " Mystikos. *Letters*, 126.95-97.

[70] Mullett, "Diplomacy", 205; "Theophylact complains of the difficulty of finding a good bearers". Mullett, *Theophylact*, 35, n. 115.

[71] Cf. below.

[72] Mullett, "Diplomacy", 216.

[73] Although text of the letter which one reads today is most-likely not the entire message, the other part could have been transmitted orally by *komistes*, or it might have been a gift: Mullett, *Theophylact*, 31-35; Ead., "Writting", 182-183; Ead., "Diplomacy", 214.

[74] For a general overview of Mystikos's life, as well as reference to the older titles, see the introduction to the edition of his letters: Mystikos, *Letters*, xv-xxvii; for an updated survey see: *ODB*, 1466–1467; and the most recent: *PmbZ*, #25885. Since various aspects of Mystikos's life are touched upon in the course of this thesis, I will provide here just a short reminder of key points of his career.

Nikolaos (I) became friends. However, after Leo became emperor, he exiled Photios, and Mystikos is said to have voluntarily followed, spending time in the monastery of St Tryphon where he became a monk. It was Leo who introduced Nikolaos to imperial chancery, appointing him to the seemingly fairly recently established office of *mystikos* ("private secretary").[75] After the death of Patriarch Stephen, Leo's brother, the emperor chose Mystikos for this position. Nevertheless, in the course of the tetragamy controversy, Mystikos again seems to have opposed the emperor; eventually he was forced to resign. Nikolaos was brought back to the patriarchal throne either by the penitent Leo or by the latter's brother Alexander, and remained at this position until his death on 15 May 925.[76] Mystikos had a long history of political activities, and has been recognized as the empire's master diplomat, a reputation which, reading his surviving letters, seem well deserved. He played an important role in the early period of Romanos's rule, of which the most memorable aspect was his correspondence with Bulgarian ruler Symeon.

The early history of Theodore Daphnopates[77] is rather obscure, but it is supposed that he was born between 890 and 900. Already by the 920's he was a high-ranking dignitary at the court of Romanos I Lekapenos. Based on the headings of his surviving letters, he bore titles of *protasekretis*, *patrikios*, and *magistros.* It is assumed that he was of Armenian origin because apparently he knew the language, as he translated one letter from Armenian into Greek for the emperor Romanos. Based on ten diplomatic letters he signed in the name of the emperor, it is deduced that he was Romanos's mystikos between 925 and 933. He was probably the author of an oration on the Bulgarian treaty in 927, so important for the politics of Romanos I Lekapenos.[78] Daphnopates has been recognized as one of the most important ministers of the emperor Romanos, but lost some influence under Constantine VII. Yet, he was appointed to the position of eparch of Constantinople during Romanos II's reign. He died some time after 963.

[75] Paul Magdalino, 'The Not-So-Secret Functions of the Mystikos', *REB,* 42 (1984): 229–240.

[76] Th. Cont. 410.

[77] Basic information about the author is drawn from the introduction of Daphnopates' letters edition, Daphnopates, *Correspondance*, 1-27; *ODB*, 588; and *PmbZ*, #27694.

[78] On this treaty and authorship of Daphnopates see: Ivan Dujčev, "On the Treaty of 927 with the Bulgarians", *DOP*, 32 (1978), 219-295.

Historical background

The critical decade (912-920) following the long 'aftermath of Iconoclasm' (867-912), which saw the gradual disappearance of the last generations directly involved with the struggle over the images, was characterized by intensive power-struggle in both major spheres of the Byzantine state, represented by the emperor and the patriarch. Emperor Leo VI involuntarily initiated this period of political uncertainty by leaving an heir of minor age and discord in the Church.[79] The emperor Alexander's short reign only made matters worse, as he began to sweep the highest strata of the state, but died after only thirteen months, and Patriarch Nikolaos Mystikos, brought back either by Alexander or Leo, was allowed to get revenge on his opponent, the interim patriarch Euthymios, and the latter's supporters, additionally aggravating the divide in the church.[80] After Alexander's death, elites contested for the regency over the young boy-emperor, Constantine VII. Immediately after the emperor died, Mystikos, presumably unknowing that he is the chief regent, invited the army general Constantine Doukas to come to the city and claim the throne. The streets of Constantinople and the hippodrome turned into the stage of a bloody fight which ended the coup and Doukas' life, and the repercussions were severe.[81] Furthermore, Symeon of Bulgaria (r. 893-927), a 'student of Byzantium', ceased the opportunity to extort diplomatic gains from the patriarch Mystikos, who seems to have agreed to an imperial marriage between Symeon's daughter and the young emperor, and performed some kind of "rite involving a crown" which Symeon understood as a recognition of his imperial title.[82] After these events, Mystikos was replaced by Constantine's mother Zoe. She removed the patriarch from the palace, forbidding him to come unsummoned, and did not wish to comply to his arrangements with Symeon, but sought to deal with the Bulgarian menace. However, in

[79] For detailed treatment of the tetragamy controversy see: Shaun Tougher, *Leo*, ch. 6 133-163.

[80] Karlin-Hayter, "Alexander's Bad Name".

[81] Th. Cont. 382-385

[82] In regard to Symeon and the challenges that he posed for Byzantium, works of Jonathan Shepard are the most important. Concerning the events of 913 and its aftermath see: Jonathan Shepard, "Symeon of Bulgaria – peacemaker", *Annuaire de l'Université de Sofia 'St Kliment Ohridski', Centre de recherches Slavo-Byzantines 'Ivan Dujčev'*, 83.3, (1989), 9-48, (henceforth: Shepard, "Symeon of Bulgaria") reprinted in collected studies: Jonathan Shepard, *Emergent Elites and Byzantium in the Balkans and East-Central Europe*, study III, (Ashgate: Variorum, 2011) (henceforth: *Emergent Elites*); and in general: Idem, "Bulgaria: The Other Balkan Empire", in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, 3, 900-1024,* ed. Timothy Reuter, (Cambridge: CUP, 2008) 567-585; 574 (henceforth: Shepard, "Bulgaria"). *PmbZ*, #27467.

two major battles, near Acheloos and Katasyrtas, the Byzantine army, lead by Leo Phokas, was heavily defeated by Symeon, suffering the loss of many high-ranking officials and dignitaries which left a vacuum in the upper echelons of the empire. In the aftermath, Romanos Lekapenos, the naval commander whose fleet did not suffer in the course of the battles, profited the most. On the pretext of protecting the young emperor from the pretensions of the army general Leo Phokas and his brother-in-law, the *parakoimomenos* Constantine, Romanos was accepted into the palace, and gradually built up his position from there.[83] Eventually, he was crowned augustus by the under-aged Constantine and Patriarch Nikolaos I Mystikos on 17 December 920.[84]

Romanos was a provincial general with few connections in the capital, and his rise to power did not go smoothly, as accounts of many plots against him testify.[85] In his efforts to ascertain his position, Romanos relied on two highly educated members of the Constantinopolitan society: Nikolaos I Mystikos and Theodore Daphnopates. Thus, my thesis plans to investigate some of the strategies Romanos employed in order to maintain his power and the role that the two ministers played, especially in the formative period of Romanos's government.

[83] Kresten-Müller, *Legitimationsprinzip*, 7-11.
[84] Th. Cont. 397-398. Runciman, *Romanos*, 62.
[85] Th. Cont. 398-400.

Chapter I

Romanos I Lekapenos as Divinely Ordained Emperor

The ceremony of coronation

When it comes to Byzantine court ceremonial, everything focused on the emperor.[86] Ceremonial was one of the primary means of communication between the emperor and the constitutional elements of Byzantine society, and of defining relations between them. From the various stages, such as the Hippodrome or Hagia Sophia, the emperor's power and authority was publicly proclaimed, and his legitimacy projected. Christopher Walter defines two distinctive type of ceremonies in the Christian Byzantine empire: "those which confer a 'character' and those' which facilitate or celebrate the final passage of the human soul to eternity". He further describes 'character': "the term character is applied to the supernatural capacity or quality acquired by the human soul as the consequence of undergoing a sacramental rite. It is appropriate to baptism and ordination. By extension it may also be applied to coronation (conferring the capacity to rule) and to marriage (constituting a single entity in Christ)."[87] It is noteworthy that conferring a quality in case of all four rites was symbolically performed by the gesture of the 'extended hand'.[88] From the perspective of this thesis, the ceremony of coronation is of particular importance.

[86] In general see Treitinger's classical study: Treitinger, *Kaiser und Reichsidee*; Dagron's work is indenspensible: Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*; esp. headings 2 and 3, 54-124; relating to the period of late antiquity until Justinian see: Sabine MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981) (henceforth: MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*); the study concerned about the religious aspect of ceremonies: Christopher Walter, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church*, (London: Variorum, 1982) (henceforth: Walter, *Art and Ritual*); for detailed study about the triumphs: McCormick, *Eternal Victory*; useful article is also: Idem, "Analyzing Imperial Ceremonies". *JÖB* 35 (1985) 1–20; concerning the ceremony of coronation and religious aspect of the emperor see: Majeska, "Emperor in His Church"; in the same volume see also: Ioli Kalavrezou, "Helping Hands for the Empire: Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics at the Byzantine Court", in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire, (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997), 53-79 (henceforth: Kalavrezou, "Helping Hands"); more recently, see collection of works: *Visualisierung von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen. Gestalt un Zeremoniell*, ed. F. A. Bauer, BYZAS 5, (Istanbul, 2005); or Jeffrey Michael Featherstone, "*De Cerimoniis* and the Great Palace", in *The Byzantine World*, ed. Paul Stephenson, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 162-173; in general: *ODB,* 400-402.

[87] Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 116, n. 3.

[88] Kalavrezou, "Helping Hands", 72, n. 76.

Between Roman late antiquity and the middle Byzantine period, the ceremonial of coronation saw various transformations. An originally distinctively military ceremonial – the raising on a shield and coronation by a torque followed by an acclamation from the army, and subsequent triumphant entrance into the city imitating a military takeover – was later complemented with a more civil/urban ceremony, as 'constitutional' elements changed due to the fact that emperors spent less time in military camps around the empire and more in the great palace of Constantinople.[89] The diadem slowly took the place of the torque, and it was the patriarch of the capital who crowned the emperor, at first in the Hippodrome and eventually in Hagia Sophia.[90] However, for a large part of this period both types of rites were staged with little consistency.[91] Although the description of the coronation ceremony as described in Constantine Porphyrogennetos's *De Cerimoniis*, 'disappointed' Dagron, one of his impressions is worth mentioning, namely that "the principal role seems to be devolved to the church, terminus of the itinerary, and to the patriarch, who places the crown on the head of the new sovereign or blesses the crown which the emperor will place on the head of the associated crown prince."[92] Thus, it was the senior emperor who crowned his colleague, and the patriarch performed the coronation only in the absence of the senior emperor, but nevertheless blessed the crown of any new colleague as well. As Walter notices, "only usurpers were crowned at the beginning of their reign."[93] The period under investigation is 'rich' with usurpers, which, coupled with the increased influence and power of the church after the end of Iconoclasm and the missionary successes in the second half of the ninth century, resulted in an amplification of the patriarch's role.

Representations in art

The image of coronation in Byzantine art, like the ceremony itself, has its roots in the traditions of

[89] Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 59-64 MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 242-243.
[90] Starting with Constans II in 641. *ODB*, 534.
[91] Dagron provides survey of a number of coronations that occurred: Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 70-78; MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 242-246.
[92] Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 54-56.
[93] Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 119.

antiquity. Victorious emperors were depicted crowned by personification figures, such as Nike or impersonal *manus Dei,* but, as Grabar eloquently explains, even if Nike is replaced with the image of the Virgin or an angel, it can be seen that the iconographical scheme is the same.[94] The gesture of placing a crown on the head, or touching one already in place, remains the same; the meaning, however, does not; it changed over the centuries. Already in antiquity two types of crowns, bearing different symbolism, were distinguished: the laurel wreath, always signifying victory; and the bejewelled crown, or diadem, which was the insignium of sovereignty.[95] From the fourth century onward, imperial art 'kept' only the diadem as a symbol of the emperor.[96] Under the historical occurrences symbolism and its visual representation changed. The shrinking of the empire resulted in fewer victories to celebrate. Also, emperors fixed their residence in Constantinople, which in turn prompted a shift in the focus of ideology from military connotation to a more civil one. Increasing influence of the church on the ideology of power brought additional innovations. The emperor was now depicted as being crowned by Christ, the Virgin, an angel, or a saint; that is, agents of the Christian God were represented to confer the gift of God's sacred power upon the emperor, as symbolized by the diadem.[97] All the power was perceived as transferred from God onto the emperor, who, likewise, acting as God's representative on earth, was conferring power further on his subjects. Given the nature of Iconoclasm, the earliest surviving examples of depictions of coronations, performed by the Christian agents by virtue of the notion of investiture, come from the late ninth century. In the period of the Macedonian dynasty we have examples of both 'ancient' iconography (*manus Dei* – however, only on the *solidi* of John Tzimiskes)[98] and 'ancient' meaning (triumphant representations), so it is perhaps more precise to say that the symbolisms multiplied. Thus, for the period under scrutiny, we can, based on the extant examples, discern three distinctive, yet intertwined, types of coronation scenes symbolizing: triumph, investiture, and blessing.

[94] Grabar, *L'empereur*, 115; Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir", 446; Walter, *Ritual*, 118.

[95] Walter, 118; more about the crown: MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 241.

[96] Christopher Walter describes that "the crown-diadem persisted into the Christian epoch, aptly signifying the Messianic kingship of Jewish tradition, which combined the notions of sovereignty and providential victory". Walter, 118-119; MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 241.

[97] Grabar, *L'empereur*, 117.

[98] Cf. below

The three earliest extant examples of the coronation by a celestial figure in Byzantine art, which all predate Alexander's coin, are to be examined.

Arguably the earliest such representation is an ivory carving on a casket lid, kept today in Rome (*Palazzo Venezia*) and representing, most probably, Basil I and his second wife Eudokia as being blessed by Christ (fig. 1).[99] This would be a blessing or a benediction type which is in most cases connected to the family portraits, or more specifically, blessing a marriage. Jolivet-Levy notices that it is not always easy to discern the meaning in case of the representation of Christ blessing a couple,[100] as this motif has been exceedingly used, having often the wife as the carrier of legitimacy. Most examples come in ivories, however a later numismatic specimen of this scene survives as well. On the reverse of the *histamenon* of Romanos IV Diogenes (r. 1068-1071), the so-called 'six-header', Christ is represented blessing him and his wife Eudokia Makrembolitissa.[101] As Eudokia was of legitimate dynastic origin, ex-wife of the late emperor Constantine X Doukas, this *histamenon* is a good example of the 'mixed' symbolism that Jolivet-Levy had in mind – both blessing the marriage and bestowing legitimacy upon the emperor. Or in the terms defined previously, blessing and investiture.

The next example also comes from the time of Basil I; it is one of the splendid illuminations found in the famous manuscript containing the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus nowadays kept in Paris (*Bibliotheque Nationale* Paris. gr. 510) (fig. 2).[102] Here, Basil is flanked by the prophet Elijah (to the left of Basil from the spectator's viewpoint) who passes a *labarum*[103] to him, and the archangel Gabriel (to the right) who is crowning the emperor. This image offers an obvious example of the triumphant meaning. Not only does Elijah pass a labarum to Basil, but the inscription above Gabriel reads: "Gabriel

[99] Identification is not definite, but by analysis of the text and images on the casket, Henry Maguire concludes that the strongest candidates for the blessed couple are Basil I and Eudokia Ingerina. Henry Maguire, "The Art of Comparing in Byzantium", *The Art Bulletin*, 70, (1988): 88-103; 89-93, fig. 1-5.

[100] Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir", 449.

[101] *DOC*, 786-790, pl. lxv, 1-2

[102] Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning*, 158-162, fig. 5.

[103] Labarum was a symbol of Constantine's military standard which he adorned with Christian insignia (Christogram) after seeing the cross in the heavens. *DOC*, 134-138; about symbolism of Constantine's cross, the cross in general, and labarum as well see: Leslie Brubaker, "To legitimize an emperor: Constantine and the visual authority in the eighth and ninth centuries", in *New Constantines, the Rhytm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries*, ed. Paul Magdalino, (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), 139-158, esp. 139-151 (henceforth: Brubaker, *New Constantines*).

Archistrategos".[104] For the 'triumphant' type of image we have another similar example from a later period – the famous image of Basil II from the Psalter now kept in Venice (*Biblioteca Marciana*).[105] The emperor is represented in armour, standing on a *suppedion.* While Christ above him places a crown on his head, the archangel Michael (to the left of the emperor from the spectator's viewpoint) hands him a spear, and the archangel Gabriel (to the right), much like the same agent in the case of Basil I, makes a gesture of coronation or benediction by touching the emperor's golden stemma. Furthermore, under the emperor's feet prisoners of war, defeated enemies, are in the position of *proskynesis*, and to the left and right of the emperor, warrior saints are depicted, holding spears and wearing armour much like Basil himself. Jolivet-Levy concludes that indeed, Basil resembles a victorious military general, or, more likely, sacred warrior like the ones depicted, whose presence reinforces triumphal character of the image, and emphasises the divine origins of imperial victory.[106]

The final example is yet another ivory, presumably originally a tip of the sceptre,[107] nowadays located in Berlin (*Staatliche Museen*) (fig. 3). For some time scholars argued whether it belonged to Leo V or VI, yet, Kathleen Corrigan argued convincingly that this sceptre was indeed owned by son and successor of Basil I.[108] On one side, Christ is represented flanked by Peter and Paul,[109] and on the other, Leo VI (on the far left from the spectator's viewpoint) is being crowned by the Virgin (in the middle) in the presence of an archangel (far right), again identified (by Jolivet-Levy) as Gabriel.[110] Corrigan concluded that Leo used the sceptre during the feast of Pentecost, and that he was indeed projecting his

[104] Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir", 446.

[105] Ibid., fig. 6.

[106] She adds that this image is not, as supposed previously, in relation to his 'Bulgarian' victory. Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir", 450.

[107] Kathleen Corrigan dealt with this artefact in detail: Kathleen Corrigan, "The Ivory Scepter of Leo VI: A Statement of Post-Iconoclastic Imperial Ideology", *The Art Bulletin*, 60 (1978): 407–416, figg. 1–2 (henceforth: Corrigan, "The Ivory Scepter"); see also: Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning*, 398, fig. 177; Anthony Cutler, *The Hand of the Master. Craftsmanship, Ivory, and Society in Byzantium (9th–11th Centuries)*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 200–201, fig. 158a, (henceforth: Cutler, *Hand of the Master*). However, note that the latest examination led to the suggestion that the object is the grip of a solid one-row comb, see: Gudrun Bühl and Hiltrud Jehle, "Des Kaisers Altes Zepter – des Kaisers Neuer Kamm", *Jahrbuch Preußischer Kulturbesitz,* 39 (2002): 289–306.

[108] For more details about this discussion see: Corrigan, *Ivory Scepter*, esp. 407, n. 2; Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir", 447, n. 20; or Cutler, *Hand of the Master*, 200, n. 56.

[109] Cutler, *Hand of the Master*, fig. 158 a.

[110] Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir", 446–447, fig. 2.

imperial power. Furthermore, both Corrigan and Jolivet-Levy concludes that the presence of Peter and Paul flanking Christ is to remind us that the emperor was successor of the apostles.[111]

There may be additional reason why Leo chose the Virgin as the divine agent. Leo's association with the Virgin is attested on coins, as one type of his *solidi*, presumably a ceremonial issue, has the Virgin *Orans* on the obverse, with the rarely attested inscription "MARIA", and an abbreviated nomen sacrum "MR" "ΘΥ" to the left and right of the effigy.[112] Perhaps it was difficulties in securing a living male heir that incited Leo to project the Theotokos's benediction, as suggested by another instance. It is said says that Zoe became pregnant only after miraculous intervention by the Theotokos, prior to which she wore a silk scarf with the image of the Virgin around her loins.[113] Furthermore, during the period of Zoe's regency, one coin, assumed to be a pattern, and several tesserae, had the Virgin Nikopoios on the obverse.[114]

The role of the Virgin was to intercede,[115] she is conferring a blessing upon the emperor as an agent of Christ, represented on the other side of the ivory. Thus, Leo's ivory would act to symbolize investiture, but may have had an additional meaning of blessing.

While all three images belong to a specific context within which they should be primarily placed and understood, at a more abstract level of interpretation, they do show certain similarities. All represent the intention of the emperors in question to associate themselves with celestial agents which conferring a blessing of supernatural quality upon them through the gesture of the 'extended hand'.[116] They also share the audience to whom the message was conveyed, that is the highest echelons of

[111] Corrigan, "The Ivory Scepter", 416; Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir", 447, n 21.

[112] *DOC*, 508-509, 512, pl. xxxiv, 1.

[113] Vivien Prigent, Cécile Morrisson, Pagona Papadopoulou, "Quatre Tesseres de Plomb et un Portrait de L'empereur Christophore Lecapene", *Нумизматика, Сфрагистика и Епиграфика*, 5 (2009), 207, n. 36 (henceforth: Prigent-Morrisson-Papadopoulou, "Quatre Tesseres").

[114] It should be add that the nature of the tessere, which was used for charity purposes, may be the main reason for having the Virgin on the obverse, as she was regarded as the main protector of the city and her cult was the most venerated one. Coin: DOC, 533, 541, pl. xxxvi, 1; Tesserae: DOS, 96, 58.1-58.2.

[115] Testimony concerning the intercession role of the Virgin is found in one of the letters that Nikolaos Mystikos sent to Symeon. The patriarch ended his writing with the words: "Of which [felicity] be you not deprived, but be granted it by Christ our God through the intercession of our most Holy and Pure Lady, who is the Christians' hope and salvation, and of all the saints!", Mystikos, *Letters*, Ep. 7, 44.40-43; 45.

[116] i.e. *Cheirotonia*

Constantinopolitan court society. Although the traits mentioned are also shared by the two unique coins under scrutiny in this work, there are significant distinctions regarding to the nature of the medium and its audience that need to be underlined. The size of a gold coin, which is around 20 millimeters, does not provide much space for elaborated and lavish representations, but, as the coins testify, the skill of craftsmanship and level of sophistication was still exquisite. So, compared with ivories and manuscript illuminations, images on coins are much simpler, yet the messages they carried are more immediate/direct. While the target audience was similar in composition, coins travelled much further, ultimately reaching a wider audience. Tens of thousands, and most likely hundreds or more,[117] of gold coins circulated across the empire, and even beyond its borders,[118] propagating a straightforward and clearly understandable political and ideological message: the highest celestial authority conferring sacred power onto his terrestrial representative, which thus becomes the highest authority on earth, i.e. in the Christian world. Since they were obviously employed for the purpose of propaganda, it can be assumed (at least) that whoever designed them expected the audience to understand the message.

Alexander's coronation coin

While a whole series of coins issued during Romanos's rule is investigated – occasionally also drawing on chronologically earlier or later examples – the so-called 'coronation coin', already introduced, is of high importance for my thesis and our understanding of Byzantine power politics during the period under examination. However, before examining more closely Romanos's specimen, its 'predecessor' ought to be discussed in detail. Emperor Alexander's short reign (912-913) is of remarkable importance with regard to Byzantine coinage and its iconography. Thus Alexander was the first to:

- employ a full-length representation of an emperor being crowned by a sacred figure on the reverse of coins: he introduced the effigy of St John the Baptist crowning him;[119]

[117] If estimations about gold coins output for the period are sound. Morrisson, "Byzantine Money", 941, table 6.

[118] Liutprand, for example, was given a bag of gold coins by Constantine. Squatriti, *Liutprand of Cremona*, 202.

[119] This coin, and especially effigy of the saint, arroused some confusion. At first, saint was recognized as St Alexander (first bishop of Constantinople and Arius' opponent), in analogy to some later cases when emperors connected themselves with their namesake saints, but already Bellinger expressed some concern ("if the analogy is sound",

- modify traditional iconographic patterns of the *miliaresion*: the medallion displaying the bust of Christ which Alexander placed at the intersection of the arms of the cross was the forerunner of those types in which later emperors, starting with Romanos, inserted their own effigies;[120]
- use the title *autokrator*, reserved for the senior emperor, on coins, more precisely on the reverse of his *miliaresia*.[121]

For the time being I am interested in Alexander's 'coronation' solidus (fig. 5). The obverse shows the standard image for the period, the enthroned Christ as introduced for the first time by Alexander's father, Basil I (r. 867–86), and by then already in use for more than forty years. On the reverse it featured two figures in full length. On the left (from the spectator's viewpoint), Emperor Alexander (identified by an inscription) is represented frontal, bearded, wearing the traditional loros, and a crown surmounted by cross. While holding a *globus cruciger* in his right hand, he reaches with his left hand toward the right, i.e., St John the Baptist. The latter is represented in a three-quarter turn towards Alexander, bearded, bareheaded and *without* a halo, wearing a tunic and himation, holding a long cross in the left hand, and placing a crown on Alexander's head with his right hand. Inscription reads on the obverse: +IhSXSREX REGNANTIUM (Ιησοῦς Χριστός *rex regnatium*); *Rex Regnatium* frequently accompanies representations of Christ.[122] On the reverse inscription reads: +ALEXANd ROSAVGUSTOSROM' (Ἀλέξανδρος αὔγουστος Ῥωμαίων); which is a standard formula.[123]

"Imperial Policy", 76, n. 23). Grierson accepted this interpretation and passed it on without any comment (*DOC*, 523). Based on the face (long hair and beard), cloths (characteristic camel-hair coat), and attributes (long cross in the left hand), Nicole Thierry and Catherine Jolivet-Levy, apparently independantly, came to the same conclusion that the saint represented is in fact St John the Baptist. N. Thierry, "Apports de la numismatique byzantine à l'iconographie impériale: quelques innovations monétaires", *Bulletin de la Société Française de Numismatique*, 41/10, (1986), 124-125; Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir", 447-448. This interpretation was recognized as sound by scholars e.g. Henry Maguire, "Style and Ideology in Byzantine Imperial Art," *Gesta*, 28/2, (1989), 226-227 (henceforth: Maguire, "Style and Ideology"). In responce to Thierry's article, another interesting, albeit erroneus, interpretation was offered by Andreas Sommer, who proposed that the 'saint' is actually the patriarch of Constantinople at the time, Nikolaos I Mystikos. A. Sommer, "Der Patriarch von Konstantinopel auf einer byzantinischen Münze: Ein Solidus des Kaisers Alexander," *Schweizer Münzblätter*, 154, (1989), 42-44. Nicole Thierry responded with yet another, more thorough, article, finally ending the discussion. N. Thierry, "Le Baptiste sur le solidus d'Alexandre (912–913)," *Revue numismatique*, 34, (1992), 237-241 (henceforth: Thierry, "Le Baptiste"). Coin: *DOC*, 523-525, pl. xxxv, 2.

[120] Ibid., 523-525, pl. xxxv, 3; Romanos's miliaresion: Ibid., 537, 556-557, pl. xxxvii, 20.

[121] *DOC*, 523, 525, pl. xxxv, 3.

[122] *DOC*, 182.

[123] *DOC*, 176-183.

This beautiful coin of exquisite craftsmanship features a representation of St John the Baptist unparalleled in Byzantine numismatics. On the other hand, the emperor's effigy is quite standardized, much like the representations of his father and brother had been.[124] Grierson assumed that the designers used various images to be found around the city as models.[125] In that regard, although Alexander's effigy is schematized, his mosaic in Hagia Sophia might have served as a model for the die-sinker, if he needed one.[126] If we compare the images, a certain resemblance is noticeable (figg. 4–5). We should keep in mind that the die-sinker, if he was looking at this image, carved a negative, so when the coin is actually struck it turns the other way around, i.e. globe in the left hand on the mosaic moves to the right on the coin, which makes the mosaic a perfect model. The disposition on the coin would in any case place the emperor on the left position for reasons of both protocol and practicality: it is the place of honour, and the saint should perform the coronation with his right hand, which would be highly inconvenient if the arrangement was the other way around in order to respect the hierarchy of the sacred figure.[127]

By employing this scene, using the *autokrator* title on silver, completely ignoring Constantine on the coins, and representing himself alone on the mosaic in Hagia Sophia,[128] Alexander obviously aimed at displaying himself as the sole emperor. While Leo was alive, Constantine was heir-apparent with Alexander being his colleague, hence the latter's effort to assert himself as *autokrator* and to draw upon divine legitimacy. It has also been noted that this scene might have been provocative: Both Jolivet-Levy

[124] *DOC*, Basil I: 480, 487, pl. xxx, 1; Leo VI: 508-509, 513-514, pl. xxxiv, 2.

[125] *DOC*, 146-147.

[126] For the detailed treatment of the mosaic see: Paul A. Underwood, Ernest J. W. Hawkins, "The Mosaics of Hagia Sophia at Istanbul: The portrait of the Emperor Alexander: A Report on Work Done by the Byzantine Institute in 1959 and 1960", *DOP*, 15 (1961), 187-217, fig. 5.

[127] Later extant examples, as there are none before Alexander's specimen, show that the celestial agent is usually on the place of honour to the left, unless performing coronation by the gesture of extended hand, in which case it is always placed on the right. Examples for the first case are: Nikephoros II: Ibid., 580-581, 583-585, pl. xli, 4-5; Michael IV, Ibid., 721-722, 726, pl. lviii, 2; the coronation examples: John I: Ibid., 589-590, 592-596, pl. xlii, 1-6; Romanus III: Ibid., 711-712, pl. lvi, 1; Michael VI: Ibid., 754, 756-757, pl. lxii, 1; Constantine X: Ibid., 764-765, 767-770, pl. lxiv, 2. An exception to this practice is attested on the coin of Empress Theodora (period of sole reign 1055-1056). She represented herself on the left while the Virgin is on the right: Ibid., 748-752, pl. lxii, 1.

[128] Although Oikonomides pointed out that the mosaic was placed in a private narrow space, implying that the purpose was not propaganda. Nevertheless, even if Alexander only 'flattered himself' with this mosaic, it still shows his wish to present himself as a sole ruler. Nicolas Oikonomides, "The significance of some imperial monumental portraits of the X and XI centuries", *Zograf*, 25 (1996), 23-26; reprinted in collected studies: Nicolas Oikonomides, *Society, Culture and Politics in Byzantium*, (Ashgate: Variorum, 2005), XI, 1-11; 5.

and Maguire agree that with this image, Alexander recalled the scene of *Epiphany*, widely recognizable in this period, and compared himself with Christ, which must have been scandalous.[129] This would, seemingly, fit into the image of Alexander's unorthodox behaviour, a practitioner of pagan rituals and magic, yet it should not be forgotten that the accounts which portray Basil's youngest son in the highly negative manner come from heavily biased sources.[130] However, Ioli Kalavrezou, analyzing the ceremony of Epiphany as described in *De Ceremoniis*, concluded that the motif of parallelism between the emperor and Christ was indeed recognizable to contemporaries as the established ritual of restating imperial office.[131] She further notices that "immediately upon his [Alexander's] accession he issues a solidus which represents literally, or more appropriately graphically, what was until then only expressed through allusion and parallel compositional symbolism."[132] She does not comment about it being scandalous.

Omitting the halo in the representation of Prodromos, which nobody deems worthy of mentioning, would enhance the association with Christ, and consequently assumed 'scandalousness'. As already mentioned, this was the first representation of the saint on Byzantine coinage; however there are a couple of comparable specimens, all closely related to Alexander. A *tessera*[133] representing Basil I with his two sons Constantine and Leo on the reverse had an effigy of St Basil on the obverse, but the saint is represented with the halo.[134] Another *tessera* represented Leo VI and Alexander himself on the reverse, while the nimbated archangel Michael was depicted on the obverse.[135] Finally, the only comparable example, not of a saint, but of the Virgin – the first appearance of the Virgin on a coin – was the aforementioned nomisma of Alexander's brother Leo VI: here the Virgin was also represented without a halo. Perhaps the fact that these are the earliest examples found in coinage, or in seals i.e. *tesserae*, have

[129] Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir", 447-448; Maguire, "Style and Ideology", 226-227, n. 46-47.
[130] Karlin-Hayter, "Alexander's Bad Name".
[131] Kalavrezou, "Helping Hands", 72-73; she also emphasizes significance of the term used – kerutto – 'to proclaim', 'to announce', in comparison with the more commonly used 'blessing'. Ibid., 73, n. 83.
[132] Ibid., 74.
[133] Tessera is a seal-like object which does not have a channel for the tread, thus it could not perform the function of the seal. It has been used for the purpose of charity, the owner could exchange the token for grain, i.e. bread, or a visit to a public bath. *ODB*, 69-70; *DOS*, 234.
[134] *DOS*, 91, 52.1
[135] *DOS*, 93, 54.1

some pertinence to this phenomenon.[136] Alexander's choice was indeed an unusual one as it was never repeated in this form.[137] However, Christ is not omitted, He is represented on the obverse of the coin in a well-established manner – seated on the throne, which seems to complicate interpretation further.

Romanos's coronation coin, reviving Alexander's paradigm?

The coin bearing the same representation of divine investiture struck by Romanos I Lekapenos had (at least) two very similar issues – the so-called types "V" and "VI" (fig. 6).[138] Both issues are extremely rare suggesting that they were minted for a short period of time. Coupled with its extraordinary iconography, this implies a coin of a ceremonial character. The obverse of both types is exactly the same while the reverse shows some differences particularly relevant for the present argument.

Occasion?

Since these are ceremonial issues, but based also on numismatic[139] evidence, Grierson proposes the year 921 as the date of the coin, or more precisely the occasion of Christopher's coronation.[140] As it is known (cf. the chronological table in the Appendix), Christopher was crowned co-emperor on 20 May 921; Romanos himself was crowned augustus on 17 December 920, and had his wife Theodora crowned augusta on 6 January 921. One thus encounters double, or triple if we include Theodora, coronation within the, now imperial, family, because after Helene married Constantine VII on 4 May 919, Romanos received the *basileopator* title, and attached himself, and his family, with the imperial dynasty, thus taking important step towards legitimacy. Therefore, Grierson's proposed dating sounds reasonable.

[136] It would be reasonable to look for representations of St John the Baptist in other forms of art, but that exceeds the limits of this thesis. Nevertheless, it can be mentioned that material investigated in the course of this research offer several examples, and that one is representing Prodromos without a halo as well: Kalavrezou, "Helping Hands", fig. 9. Examples depicting John the Baptist nimbated are numerous: Ibid., fig. 10, 13; Thierry, "Le Baptiste", fig. 2-3.

[137] The only extant example of St John the Baptis on coins comes from the distance of more than four centuries, during the reign of John V and John VI. It was a copy of Florentine coin, and it represented Prodoromos alone on obverse, thus, it had nothing to do with this coin. *DOC*, 5, 79-80, pl. 63, 1207.

[138] For convenience's sake, I kept the classification numbers as in the edition: *DOC*, 544, pl. xxxvi, 5; Ibid., 545, pl. xxxvi, 6.

[139] The lettering on the coin is large. Starting from 920's onward, letters on coins diminish, which helps with dating, especially with some of Romanos's coins. *DOC*, 530-531.

[140] *DOC*, 534.

The Obverse

On the obverse, Romanos is represented to the left (from the spectator's viewpoint) facing, in full-length, bearded, wearing traditional ornamented *loros* and crown with cross and *perpendulia.* In the right hand he holds the globus cruciger, and the left hand is extended towards Christ. To the right, Christ is represented also in full-length, only slightly higher than Romanos, facing, with a cross behind his head, bearded, wearing tunic and himation. In the left hand, he holds the manuscript of the gospels while with the right hand, he crowns Romanos. The inscription runs: +KEbOHΘEI ROM A NΩδECPOTH (Κύριε βοήθει Ῥωμανὸς δεσπότης).[141] There is no doubt that Romanos's coin used Alexander's issue as a model, however the design differs in several respects. The major difference meeting the observer's eye is that the scene is now placed on the obverse, and that the coronation is now performed by Christ himself. Further differences are connected to the figure of Christ: unlike St John the Baptist, Christ bears a nimbus, more precisely, a cross behind his head; furthermore, while John the Baptist is represented as looking in Alexander's direction, while Christ is shown frontal like Romanos;[142] finally, Christ is represented slightly higher than Romanos,[143] while on Alexander's specimen it was the other way around. I will return to comparison between two issues after describing the reverse of Romanos's coin.

The Reverse: beardless then bearded, or other way around?

On the reverse, Romanos's two 'colleagues' are represented: his eldest son Christopher and Leo VI's son Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos. Both are identified by the inscriptions which provide the order. For type V, the inscription reads: XPISTOF'ETCONST'AUgg'b (Χριστοφόρος καὶ Κωνσταντῖνος *augusti*[144]

[141] *DOC*, 534, 544-545, pl. xxxvi, 5-6; cf. Appendix, fig. 3; Concerning models, Grierson supposes that the model for Christ might have been 'Christ Chalkites'. Ibid., 147, 155-156; a detailed analysis of this famous image can be found in chapter four, "The Image of Our Lord", of Mango's seminal work about the Chalke gate: Cyril Mango, *The Brazen House,* (København: Munksgaard, 1959), 108-149; the *despotes* Nikolaos Mystikos refers to Romanos with this title in several of his letters: Mystikos, *Letters*, Ep. 95, 362.2, 363; Ep. 156, 474.2, 475. See also: *DOC*, 178, n. 531.

[142] Maguire emphasizes this: Maguire, *Style and Ideology*, 227.

[143] Henry Maguire explains that relationship is "no longer one of parallelism [as with Alexander's coin], but of definite subservience of the one to the other." Maguire, "Style and Ideology", 227.

[144] Grierson suggests that double 'g' for plural indicates Latin rather than Greek. *DOC*, 177.

Ῥωμαίων);[145] and for type VI: CONSTANT'ETXPISTOF'b'R' (Κωνσταντῖνος καί Χριστοφόρος βασιλεῖς Ῥωμαίων). The effigies of the junior colleagues are depicted in a traditional manner, with schematized portraits. Between the two types, several important differences are detected. On class V, Christopher is represented on the senior left position (from the observer's viewpoint), frontal, bearded,[146] wearing traditional *loros* and crown with cross. Constantine is represented on the right, lower than Christopher, frontal, beardless wearing *chlamys* and crown with cross.[147] On class VI, Constantine is represented on the senior left, frontal, bearded, wearing *loros* and crown with cross. Christopher is represented slightly lower on the right, frontal, bearded, wearing *chlamys* and crown with cross.

Therefore it can be noticed that, unlike Constantine, Christopher is represented bearded in both cases. Grierson places class V before the other, arguing that "since it shows Constantine as beardless in relation to Christopher, it must be earlier than class VI", and advances a hypothetical interpretation that Christopher was placed senior to Constantine immediately after his coronation, which "aroused so much disapproval that their relative position had to be reversed". Commenting on the next issue (VI), he adds that "the fact that both figures are shown bearded is sufficient in itself to show this issue to be abnormal in character", and concludes that "it must be interpreted as a compromise arrived at in a very difficult situation."[148] If compared with the next issue, which is commonly considered to have been Romanos's standard *solidi* during the 921 to 931 decade (marked as class VII), whereby Constantine is completely omitted,[149] this interpretation sounds less convincing. If Grierson's assumption that type V aroused too much opposition were true, it is reasonable to ask how come the complete absence of Constantine on the next class did not? Still, Vivien Prigent, Cécile Morrisson, Pagona Papadopoulou, accept this interpretation and comment that it was easier to just ignore Constantine than to represent him in a

[145] Small "b" is frequently used instead of "R". *DOC*, 183.
[146] Beard was a sign of seniority, particularly important and helpful when more than one figure represented. *DOC*, 110.
[147] *DOC*, 544, pl. xxxvi, 5.
[148] *DOC*, 534.
[149] Design of this coin is completely standardized, used by emperors to promote their heirs. Obverse is the usual Christ-enthroned type, and on the reverse it features Romanos on the senior left, bearded, and Christopher, to the right, beardless. *DOC*, 534, 546-547, pl. xxxvi, 7.

subordinated position compared to Christopher.[150] Commenting on this class, Belliger says that "this issue of gold, which was a large one, though like the legal documents it was official, had as function a propaganda which they did not. It tells the truth about the imperial situation, not the whole truth, but that part of the truth which Romanos intended to have known and accepted."[151]

Like Grierson, Bellinger also places type V before the type VI connecting the former with the occasion of the so-called Bulgarian marriage and Christopher's promotion,[152] and the latter with Christopher's fall out of grace because of his supposed involvement with the rebellion against Romanos in 928. The chronicle does not offer any additional information, and Runciman, commenting on this incident concludes that "Romanos never lost his affection for Christopher."[153] Indeed this issue seems difficult to interpret, so perhaps every aspect should be revised.

The date, which was accepted as sound, places this coin in the difficult period for Romanos's rule when "plot after plot was discovered". The sequence of events described in Theophanes Continuatus lists two plots immediately after Christopher's coronation.[154] Furthermore, evidence suggests that already at the occasion of Christopher's coronation Romanos took a step towards ousting Constantine, in so far as it is said that "only two of them [Romanos and Christopher] proceeded in the Pentecost procession".[155] It has also been noticed that the last of the conspiracies against the new emperor involved *sakellarrios* Anastasios, master of the treasury and the mint.[156] As for the rebellions, I would say that, other than the natural resistance toward a newcomer, ignoring the heir of the dynasty in the important ceremony (Pentecost) was the major cause for the plots.

[150]Prigent-Morrisson-Papadopoulou, "Quatre Tesseres", 205

[151] Bellinger, "Byzantine Notes", 158.

[152] Kresten-Müller, *Legitimationsprinzip*, 22-33, 37; for more details about the Bulgarian marriage see below.

[153] Th. Cont. 417.3-7; Bellinger, "Byzantine Notes", 160-161; Runciman, *Romanos*, 71-72.

[154] Th. Cont.'s sequence is: Christopher's coronation: 398.4-8; announcement of the union in the church 398.8-11; plots: 398.12-399.7; quote: Runciman, *Romanos*, 65.

[155] Th. Cont. 398.7-8: καὶ μόνοι δύο ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ προελεύσει προῆλθον. Bellinger also comments on this incident: Bellinger, "Byzantine Notes", 158, n. 26.

[156] Runciman, *Romanos*, 67, n. 1; Bellinger adds that "it is interesting to think that the master of the mint might have been roused to rebelion by the maneuvering of the gold types to the disadvantage of his lawful sovereign": "Byzantine Notes", 157, n. 35. Sakellarios was at the head of the *Sakellion* the treasury of money: Oikonomides, *Les Listes*, 312; *ODB*, 3, 1828-1829.

I believe that it is reasonable to observe this difficult case in combination with Romanos's rise of 'status' in coins class III–IV), which is safely dated.[157] He himself slowly improved his projected rank, being first on the right side (III), but bearded, just like Christopher, and then moved to the senior left (IV). So, perhaps these should be looked at in the reverse order, which would be allong the lines with Romanos's case. As Grierson's notices, this issue seem to be abnormal in character, but, perhaps it was 'compromise' in Christopher's favour on the occasion of his coronation, introducing him as the co-emperor, while still keeping Constantine at the senior left (i.e. class VI). This necessitates an explanation for the class V. One possibility would greatly broaden the framework; is it possible that the two specimens, although virtually identical in design, were not issued in sequence? It should be kept in mind that both of them were ceremonial issues. In this sense, they may not have been affected by the reduced size of letters that is recognized on regular issues and has been used to support an early dating. If so, one highly likely date when this coin was presumably issued has already been proposed – although Bellinger connected it with the previous class (VI): that is the Bulgarian marriage when Christpoher was advanced in front of Constantine in the official status.

Therefore, I would like to propose another hypothesis. Namely, that the class VI representing both colleagues bearded was indeed struck on the occasion of Christopher's coronation, while Romanos was still ascertaining his position, thus Constantine kept his senior left. This was followed by the class VII which ignored Constantine completely, showing only 'part of the truth'; and finally, another ceremonial issue to celebrate the Bulgarian marriage and announce Christopher's official precedence over Constantine.

Applying Alexander's paradigm

Commenting on Alexander's 'provocative' coin design and comparing it with Romanos's issue, Henry Maguire concludes that "it is perhaps not altogether surprising that this coin type was not repeated by

[157] *DOC*, 533, 542-543, pl. xxxvi, 3-4; Kresten-Müller, *Legitimationsprinzip*, 11-14, 37, 67-69.

later emperors."[158] It should be added that Romanos had a more practical reason not to repeat Alexander's paradigm . There were two co-emperors to represent on the coin as well, and, as he obviously wanted to propagate his divine legitimacy by representing himself being crowned by an agent of the celestial hierarchy, it was not possible to achieve all this on one side of a coin. This 'forced' Romanos to transfer his own representation onto the obverse – the side reserved for divine figures in previous coinage. As the 'holy' side was usually 'occupied' by Christ, with only on surviving exception of rather ceremonial character,[159] this arrangement was a perfect solution for Romanos's intentions. Indeed, repeating Alexander's scene, with St John the Baptist on the obverse of the coin, potentially arousing opposition by comparing himself with Christ, if that was the reaction in the case of Alexander's coin, would not serve Romanos's purpose at all. He needed to demonstrate and advertise the divine approval of his position, as well as his orthodoxy, and present himself as a proper Christian ruler. Thus, positioning himself on the 'holy' side, Romanos added further to his legitimacy, as did the fact that he was being crowned by Christ himself. Finally, with this disposition he separated himself spatially from Constantine – a purpose already achieved by the difference in their titles[160] – and thus diminished Porphyrogennetos's position even more.

It can thus be safely concluded that with this gold issue Romanos was promoting his coronation and divine ordination by Christ, and advertising his son as co-emperor. Having Christopher in mind, class VII seems even more important than the 'coronation' coin. It was issued over a long period, presumably almost a decade, and did so on the well-established 'co-emperor' type of coin used by senior emperors to promote their successors for a long time. As Alfred Bellinger notes: "when it was a question of establishing succession tradition was felt to be much safer mode of expression."[161]

[158] Maguire, "Style and Ideology", 227.
[159] The already mentioned *solidi* of Leo VI featuring Virgin *Orans* on obverse.
[160] Romanos is titled *despotes*, while junior colleagues are *augusti.*
[161] Bellinger, "Imperial Policy", 75.

Further evidence of propaganda from coins and seals

As numismatic and sigillographic evidence further implies, Romanos seem to have 'advertised' Christopher among the lower strata of society as well. The copper coinage of Romanos I and Constantine VII, as it came down to us, did not produce as many varieties as gold did. Two major types from Constantinople are identified and relatively safely dated before and after 931,[162] when the general redesigning of coinage took place, i.e. after Christopher's death. The Cherson mint had more varieties, but, as already mentioned, coins were of lower quality and most of them did not show effigies but monograms, yet, not a single specimen from Cherson, not even a monogram one, bears any trace of Constantine.[163]

Two specimens among the lowest denominations, one from each of the two mints, are cases in point. A Constantinopolitan coin is known from a single specimen, once again implying ceremonial issue. On the obverse, the bust of Christopher is represented frontal, bearded, wearing chlamys and crown with cross. In his left hand, he is holding the *akakia*. The inscription reads: XPISTOFO PbASPOM' (Χριστοφόρος βασιλεὺς Ῥωμαίων). On the reverse there is only inscription in four rows: +PISTO / ENΘEObA / SILEVSP / OMEON (Πιστὸς ἐν Θεῷ βασιλεὺς Ῥωμαίων).[164] However, it must be said that this specimen is somewhat problematic. It has been re-struck over an issue ascribed to Leo VI, and some scholars express doubts about its identification. Still, Grierson suggests that concerns might have arisen due to a low quality of reproduction, and that the coin should be ascribed to Christopher.[165] The second specimen coming from the Cherson mint is yet another very rare type, which suggests a short period of time during which it was issued thus implying a ceremonial character. On the obverse, the bust of Romanos is represented frontal,

[162] The first one, is a common issue and represents Constantine VII beardless. These are the main arguments for dating it to the period 920-931. Grierson adds that in this way Constantine has been given some role in coins, while he was banished from *solidi*. *DOC*, 537, 560-561, pl. xxxviii, 23; The second specimen is also quite common one. It represents Romanos alone, and based on numismatic evidence, and somewhat elaborated bearded effigy, characteristic for the coinage of the period after Christopher's death, Grierson dates it between 931 and 944. *DOC*, 538, 562-565, pl. xxxviii-xxxix, 25.

[163] Ibid., 539-540, 571-573, pl. xl, 32-38.

[164] Ibid., 537-538, 561, pl. xxxviii, 24.

[165] Ibid.. 537-538; Leo's folles on which this one was restruck: Ibid., pl xxxv, 8.

wearing loros and crown with trefoil ornament. To the left and right of the effigy letters 'P' and 'O' are inscribed. On the reverse, the bust of Christopher is represented frontal, wearing robes and crown with three pinnacles and *perpendulia.* To the left and right of the effigy the letters 'X' and 'P' are affixed. Despite its crude craftsmanship, especially compared to the coins from the capital, its identification is certain due to the abbreviated inscriptions which accompany the busts.[166] Both coins might have been issued on the same occasion – Christopher's coronation.

Another specimen, possibly highly important for Romanos's efforts in promoting Christopher, is not a coin but a seal or, more precisely, a *tessera*; unfortunately, its interpretation is not without problems.[167] On the obverse we can see the effigy of a man with a pointy beard, and a dotted halo around his head. He wears a chlamys and a crown with pearls with a single *perpendulion* hanging from the crown. In the left hand he holds a long sceptre, and in the right, an object which may be a scroll, but the state of the specimens does not allow a safe identification. Neither the sceptre nor the crown shows a cross, which is a bit unusual as those are standard repertoire of imperial insignia of emperors on coins and seals. Christopher is identified by the abbreviated inscription running in the field to the left and the right of the effigy 'XR' and 'OR' (Χριστοφόρς).[168] On the reverse, there is an inscription in five rows following the usual cross: + / RomAnO / XRISToFOR / CE ConSTAN / En XW EVSE / [S BACIΛ R]/ (Ῥωμανὸς Χριστοφόρος καὶ Κωνσταντῖνος ἐν Χριστῷ εὐσεβεῖς βασιλεῖς Ῥωμαίων). As can be seen from the inscription, Christopher is the second in precedence, which makes the dating, at least, quite safe and narrow. It can be only placed in the period between 927, when he was advanced before Constantine Porphyrogennetos, and his death in 931.[169]

The major difficulty with this specimen is, however paradoxical it may sound, the identity of

[166] Ibid., 539, 571, pl. xl, 31.

[167] I am very grateful to Prof. Werner Seibt (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna) for pointing out to me this specimen and the article which treats it. Prigent-Morrisson-Papadopoulou, "Quatre Tesseres".

[168] Description of a specimen: Ibid., 201-203, pl. xx, 1a-1e. Images of a better quality can be found in the catalogues of two auction houses: Triton: Classical Numismatic Group Triton XI, January 8-9, 2008, item no. 1142; Gorny and Mosch: Gorny & Mosch Giessner Munzhandlung - Auction 160, October 8-9, 2007, Ancient Coins and Lots, item no. 2829, which is the best preserved specimen (1e in Prigent-Morrisson-Papadopoulou).

[169] Prigent-Morrisson-Papadopoulou,"Quatre Tesseres", 206.

Christopher. The presence of a halo, which, in representations on coins and seals, is only ever attributed to the celestial figures – and even then it is sometimes omitted, as the aforementioned examples of Virgin or St John the Baptist show –,[170] suggests that the effigy is that of a saint – St Christopher. However, a team of scholars who worked on this specimen undertook a thorough investigation of St Christopher's cult, its representations, and its presence in the capital at the time of Lekapenos's rule, and came to a conclusion that the effigy probably does not represent the saint, but Christopher Lekapenos himself.[171]

The "Bulgarian Marriage"

The occasion of this issue seems somewhat easier to identify. *Tesserae* were found near Lake Ochrid in Macedonia, which was within the Bulgarian 'empire' in the beginning of the tenth century.[172] As the *tessera* is of a ceremonial character, it is assumed that it was struck on the occasion of the 'Bulgarian marriage', that is the marriage between Maria Lekapene, Christopher's daughter, and Peter of Bulgaria, son of Symeon, held in Constantinople in 927. This was a politically important event, which provided Romanos the opportunity of further improving his position. The end of the long period of war, which was particularly devastating for the neighbouring Thracian territory, brought liberation both for the population in the proximity of the capital and for the Byzantine government, which could concentrate its forces more freely on the east, i.e. Asia Minor. To emphasise even more the importance of the peace which was finally agreed, Maria symbolically adopted the name Eirene.[173] As it seems, Romanos I Lekapenos exploited this opportunity masterfully. Jonathan Shepard thoroughly analyzed this event, and concluded that the feast that was organized by Romanos three days after the wedding and took place in the church of the Mother of God at Pege, was deliberately designed as a public spectacle. It was held in the open, on the imperial *dromon* anchored in the wharf of Pegai, so that the citizens of the capital could

[170] Cf. Leo's and Alexander's solidus.

[171] Prigent-Morrisson-Papadopoulou, *Tesseres*, 206-212.

[172] Prigent-Morrisson-Papadopoulou, *Tesseres*, 201.

[173] Jonathan Shepard, "A marriage too far? Maria Lekapena and Peter of Bulgaria", in *The Empress Theophano. Byzantium and the West at the Turn of the First Millennium*, ed. A. Davids, (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 121-149, reprinted in collected studies: *Emergent Elites and Byzantium in the Balkans and East-Central Europe*, (Ashgate: Variorum, 2011), study V, 129 (henceforth: Shepard, "A marriage too far?").

follow the festivities.[174] Shepard adds that, as positions of the church and the warf implies, it seems that the newly-weds had to travel from the south to the north of the city and assumes that "this sort of activitywould have been quite compatible with a desire on Romanos's part for maximum publicity for the wedding and the celebrations".[175]

As already mentioned, ceremonies in Byzantium were addressed to various layers of society, and designed to project the emperor's power and authority.[176] By staging the ceremony as described, Romanos managed to address both to the high-ranking officials and dignitaries present at the wedding, and the lower strata of the Constantinopolitan populace which could observe the splendour and presumably also receive some kind of charity – and this is where our specimen comes into play – that would advertise the *philanthropia* of Romanos and, more importantly, that of Christopher.

Concerning questions of legitimacy and ideology, another aspect connected with this wedding deserves to be treated. Lines from Theophanes Continuatus suggest that, allegedly, "the Bulgarians insisted strongly that Christopher should be acclaimed first, and only then Constantine, Emperor Romanos accepted to fulfill their request, and it was done what they asked for".[177] Thus, Romanos, under 'pressure' from the Bulgarians, promoted his son over Constantine Porphyrogennetos.[178] As our *tessera* already have Christopher as the second in rank, it would confirm our understanding of the event, meaning that Romanos prepared the tokens before the wedding in order to proclaim his son's promotion.[179]

An unprecedented number of specimens allows us observe the gradual development in the way

[174] Shepard, "A marriage too far?", 129-130; Shepard also points out that such a detailed account of the wedding reflect Lekapenan propaganda. Ibid., 128.

[175] Ibid., 129, n. 26.

[176] And marriage in particular is understood as purely imperial ceremony: Walter, *Art and Ritual*, 117.

[177] Th. Cont. 414.15-18: τῶν δὲ Βουλγάρων ἔνστασιν οὐ μικρὰν ποιησαμένων πρότερον εὐφημισθῆναι Χριστοφόρον, εἶθ' οὕτω τὸν Κωνσταντῖνον, ὑπεῖξε τῇ ἐνστάσει τούτων Ῥωμανὸς ὁ βασιλεύς, καὶ γέγονεν ὅπερ ᾐτήσαντο. *DAI*, ch. 13, 74.161-164, 75: she "was not daughter of the chief and lawful emperor, but of the third and most junior, who was still subordinate and had no share of authority in matters of government".

[178] Kresten-Müller, *Legitimationsprinzip*, 32-33.

[179] It should be added that Christopher's death has been proposed as the other possible occasion which may have been the cause for issuing the specimen, which was nevertheless refuted by: Prigent-Morrisson-Papadopoulou, "Quatre Tesseres", 211-212. The identity of 'Christopher', however, remains problematic.

that Emperor Romanos projected his increased rank and that of his son, Christopher. The latter's promotion was Romanos's main priority. This is confirmed not just by the examples reflecting Christopher's rapid elevation in the rank of co-emperors, but also by the conspicuous absence of Romanos's other two sons from the extant specimens. Although Stephen and Constantine were crowned in 924, there is no trace of any of them on either coins or seals, before Christopher's death.[180] Even after 931, none of them appears on gold or copper – two denominations used by Romanos to promote himself and Christopher – and the only trace can be found on silver miliaresia in the form of an inscription, where Constantine Porphyrogennetos takes precedence over both. Stephen also appears on seals, however, only third in rank. It should also be noted that at the time of Christopher's death, Constantine was already twenty-six years old, too old to be easily ousted, presumably by Stephen. All this seems to confirm additional sources suggesting that Romanos placed all his hopes for establishing a dynasty into Christopher.

[180] At least none of the extant specimens. However, written sources suggest that one such coin, presumably another ceremonial issue, might have been issued. Both Grierson (*DOC*, 46, n 151) and Bellinger (*Byzantine Notes*, 165, n. 40) comment that according to an odd entry in the chronicle of Theodore Skoutariotes, Emperor Romanos issued gold coins nicknamed *pentalaimia* (lit. "five throaths") because they represented "five emperors". Both scholars comment that in this respect, Skoutariotes is not "very reliable"; on the other hand the nickname, similar to Romanos IV's coins nicknamed "six-headers", seems perceivable. Until such a coin is discovered one can only speculate about its actual production. If it did exist, it can be assumed to have been another ceremonial issue on the occasion of Stephen's and Constantine's coronation. The distribution of images would have had to be two effigies on one and three on the other side of the coin, as four on one side is not attested and practically impossible to execute. If it had really been the five members of the "imperial family", the identification would not pose much of a problem: these would have been Romanos, his three sons, plus Constantine Porphyrogennetos. However, although not impossible, the effigy of Christ is unlikely to have been omitted. This would leave us with four places reserved for the imperial college. Romanos would without a doubt have been among them; presumably depicted in a 'coronation' scene on the obverse. Christopher would also definitely have been present; the only real question is whether Constantine Porphyrogennetos would have been omitted or not. By analogy to the type VII, and if the occasion for the supposed issue was coronation of the other two sons, then it is reasonable to assume that this might have been the case. So, hypothetically, this coin might have shown Romanos crowned by Christ on the obverse, just as types V and VI, and Christopher as the senior flanked by his two brothers on the reverse, perhaps like type VIII (*DOC*, pl. xxxvi, 8).

Chapter II

Supporting the usurper: the role of Nikolaos I Mystikos

In the second chapter I plan to investigate certain passages from letters of Nikolaos I Mystikos, which seem to corroborate the image that Romanos I Lekapenos employed in order to support his divine legitimacy. Moreover, I am interested in the possibility that the patriarch was more intimately involved with the choice of this particular design.

Symeon of Bulgaria: challenging Romanos's position

The early period of Romanos's rule saw many challenges. Chroncile of Theophanes Continuatus speaks of several plots against the new emperor.[181] A letter of Nikolaos Mystikos sent to Romanos's on behalf of one of the Church officials (the *oeconomos* of St Sophia) testifies to this opposition to the new emperor. In the introductory part of the letter, Mystikos suggests to Romanos that he should be "disposed toward your subjects in accordance with the elevation of your imperial goodness, and not according to the folly of those who often rave and speak improperly of your Imperial Majesty" "as regards the *oikonomos*, I sent for him and gave him the proper instruction, and I believe he will not again vex your honorable heart, as he used formerely to do, by speaking improperly of [you] and, it would seem, insulting your most honorable majesty."[182] However, the best documented challenge to legitimacy of Romanos's position, although not as immedate as plots within the palace, but probably counting on them, came from Symeon of Bulgaria.

Symeon, at first, ignored Romanos, and the communication continued via Mystikos, who re-established correspondance with the Bulgarian ruler after the Acheloos disaster, when he regained his position in the palace. If Nikolaos Mystikos's account is not his fabrication, already in his first letter after

[181] Th. Cont. 398-400.
[182] Mystikos, *Letters*, Ep. 86, 346.6-9, 347; 346.11-348.14, 347-349 (slightly adapted by I. M.).

Romanos's coronation, Symeon asked for the latter's abdication.[183] Next, judging from the patriarch's letters, Romanos attempted to establish a direct communication channel, yet Symeon responded not to the emperor but to the Senate.[184] When he eventually did write to Romanos – as it seems only after their meeting in 924[185] – Symeon accused him of being a "stranger" and an "usurper".[186] Symeon was most likely aquainted with the situation in the capital – as suggested in Mystikos's letter announcing Romanos's coronation: "as I dare say you have heard yourself"[187] – and probably attempted to further destabilize Romanos's position with this diplomatic actions,[188] counting on the fact that a willing listeners were found within the palace. On these terms, it is worth remembering that imperial letters in Byzantium were rarely private, as reported by Mystikos himself. In the letter sent to Peter, the archbishop of Alania, he complains:

> If such a thought has entered your head because no letters have arrived from me, you must first consider I am badly off for bearers. I am in such a plight that most people are even afraid to meet me. Secondly, you must also bear in mind that I myself cannot write without some danger lest those who, for my sins, are eager to conspire against me may, even from my letters, obtain, in some unexpected way, a lever for action against me.[189]

Mystikos was writing in the period after 914, when he was forbidden to come into the palace unsummoned, and his influence on politics, although still a patriarch, was reduced. While his account should, of course, be taken with caution as it may be an exaggeration, the patriarch knew better than anyone else how things functioned in the high circles of court politics. Thus, this strategy may have seemed sound for Symeon, who had firsthand experience of the Byzantine court as explained below.

Tsar Boris I (r. 852–889) prepared Symeon for the career of a bishop, presumably to take the see of the newly-established archbishopric of Bulgaria, and sent him to Constantinople to be educated, probably

[183] Mystikos, *Letters*, Ep. 18, 120-127.
[184] Mystikos, *Letters*, Ep. 28, 194-197.
[185] Daphnopates, *Correspondance*, 16.
[186] The Greek terms are ξένος and ἀλλότριος: Daphnopathes, *Letters*, 73.51, 72.
[187] Mystikos, *Letters*, Ep. 16, 108.68, 109.
[188] Shepard considers this option as possible: Shepard, "Equilibrium to Expansion", 508.
[189] Mystikos, *Letters*, Ep. 133, 434.47-53, 435.

as a guarantee of peace as well, following the usual practice.[190] Symeon was educated in Constantinople not just in the holy scriptures, but also in grammar and rhetorics,[191] of which Liutprand of Cremona left a famous account: "And they used to say Symeon was half-Greek, on account of the fact that since his boyhood he had learned the rhetoric of Demosthenes and the logic of Aristotle in Byzantium."[192] We have yet another trace which may refer to Symeon's education. In one of the twenty-six surviving letters adressed to Symeon, Nikolaos Mystikos writes: "I know the greatness of your wisdom, not by rumor (φήμαις) but by personal experience."[193] Mystikos rarely misses the opportunity to 'remind' Symeon that he was versed in the teachings of the holy scriptures, because he bases his usual arguments for peace on those, but he makes remarks about Symeon's acquaintance with the ancient authors as well: "read diligently what I write, and then go back to the ancient history, since I know you study that too,"[194] or "I know that you (my beloved Son), as a keen student of the past and a reader of books, know the truth of what I write."[195] It is important to bear Symeon's Constantinopolitan education in mind, because it indicates that he was well acquainted with Byzantine ideology, i.e. quite capable of understanding what Mystikos was writing about. Thus, both the sender and the adressee can be identified as full participants in Constantinopolitan learned discourse.

The most important testimony for this thesis is to be found in the first letter sent to Symeon soon after Romanos was crowned emperor on 17 December 920, that is roughly at the same time when Romanos's coin was struck. The letter is a part of a series, as Mystikos sent at least five letters[196] to Symeon in the three years between the Acheloos battle and Romanos's coronation. In the introductory part of the letter, as usual, Mystikos explains his position as the "watchman over the salvation of men"

[190] Shepard dealt with the young princes at the Byzantine court, including Symeon: Jonathan Shepard, "Manners maketh Romans? Young barbarians at the emperor's court." in *Byzantine Style, Religion and Civilization. In Honour of Sir Steven Runciman*, ed. E. M. Jeffreys, (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), 135-158 reprinted in: *Emergent Elites*, study XII.

[191] For more information about the education available in Constantinople during this period see: Paul Speck, *Die Kaiserliche Universität von Konstantinopel. Präzisierungen zur Frage des höheren Schulwesens in Byzanz im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1974).

[192] Squatariti, *Liutprand*, 124, and n. 56.

[193] Mystikos, *Letters*, Ep. 27, 186.20-21, 187.

[194] Ibid., Ep. 31, 210.66-68, 211.

[195] Ibid., Ep. 26, 184.64-66, 185.

[196] Ibid., Ep. 9-11, 14-15.

and "advocate of peace", and describes how horrible the war between brothers in Christianity, Bulgarians and Romans, must be for Christ, their common father.[197] After making reminiscence of the Acheloos battle, Mystikos urges Symeon to take his advice in order to attain his desires, and finally comes to the point: "Now attend to what I say. God by His inscrutable Judgments has established on the throne of the empire (as I dare say you have heard yourself) the kyr Romanos."[198] Then he adds an offer of marriage alliance: "You desired to be the relative by marriage of the emperor of the Romans: now opportunity brings you this gift. Think it no obstacle that he has but recently ascended to the height of empire, but rather conclude from the facts that he was led by the hand of God and was thus so easily – more so than almost any other – set on the throne,"[199] and concludes: "But he [Romanos], as I say, attained to this rule as though guided by the very hand of God."[200]

In the same letter, Mystikos provides more 'proofs' of God's favour for Romanos:

> If, moreover, you will take the condition of the Church into consideration, you will better realize the favor of God shown to this man. Your Honor is aware of how much toil was undergone by *kyr* Leo the emperor, and then by those who governed our commonwealth after him; but they did not see the fulfillment of their efforts, since this was not, it seems, the will of God. But when he, *Romanos*, was appointed to govern our state, then those long-standing offenses were dissolved, and that mighty tempest and disturbance of the Church; and, instead, the affairs of the Church are seen to be in calm and peace, and those who fought and were divided have come together in union by the Grace of the Holy Spirit. How can this have come about except by the undoubted assistance of Divine Providence, which has approved that it should be performed in these days? I add this so that you may know that it was not without God's favor that the scepter of empire was put into his hand [...].[201]

The calm and peace in the Church about which Mystikos is writing is of course the so-called *Tomos of Union*, which ended the tetragamy controversy, established on 9 July 920.[202] Mystikos had

[197] Ibid., Ep. 16, 104-107.
[198] Ibid., Ep. 16, 108.67-68, 109.
[199] Ibid., Ep. 16, 108.77-8, 109.
[200] Ibid., Ep. 16, 108.82-83, 109.
[201] Ibid., Ep. 16, 108.84-110.95-96, 109-111.
[202] It seems that Mystikos was not keen on ending the discord, i.e. he was mistrustful, and wanted written

already announce the union to Symeon in one of his previous letters, however, he just says that "God has approved it".[203] This example shows how quickly Mystikos adapted his writtings to any newly-emerging purpose, which should be no surprise; it has been recognized that he tweaked historical accounts to fit his purposes as well.[204]

The similarity between the symbolic message projected on the 'coronation' coin of Romanos I Lekapenos, and the idea expressed by these lines is obvious. The support that Mystikos provides for Romanos's position agrees with the established ideology of the source of imperial power known to Symeon, as Nikolaos explains in the next letter: "And I trust the heavenly King and God, from Whom cometh every dominion and rule ..."[205] Mystikos was in fact confirming Romanos's divine legitimacy and seeking to justify his position.

It is interesting now to compare Mystikos's account to that of the emperor 'himself', and observe the way in which Romanos defended his position in the similar circumstances. The letter, presumably written by Theodore Daphnopates rather than Romanos himself, is dated not long after the meeting between Symeon and Romanos which occurred in November 924.[206] Responding to Symeon's allegations, Daphnopates, in the name of Romanos, writes:

> But, since your letter also insinuated that we [i.e. Romanos] hold in possession something which does not belong to us, quoting the words of the apostles to corroborate your arguments, we will prove that Your Rationale perceived this carelessly. For we have indeed shown the greatest loyalty and obedience toward our son-in-law the emperor. Those who were excercising power at the time conspired against him, slandered against him, already sharpening the knife. I received an order from him to expel them from the palace; and I obeyed faithfully and banished them. I did not come to his rescue at my own instigation, but obeying his orders. I liberated him from their godless conspiracy and gave him, God is the witness, his life. For these reasons and because I was his faithful guardian and protector, he proclaimed me his father and companion in empire – God's

confirmation of loyalty.

[203] Mystikos, *Letters*, Ep. 14, 92.29, 93.

[204] Barry Baldwin, "Nicholas Mysticus on Roman History", *Byzantion*, 58 (1988), 174-178; although it is possible that Mystikos simply made a mistake: Liliana Simeonova, "power in Nicholas Mysticus' letters to Symeon of Bulgaria", *Byzantinoslavica*, 54 (1993), 89-94.

[205] Mystikos, *Letters*, Ep. 17, 118.147-148.

[206] Daphnopates, *Correspondance*, 15-16.

> intervention affecting this in every respect and [God] encouraging me afresh urging me on to save [this very (?)] emperor from danger. [...] And he [i.e. the emperor] did not repulse me as a stranger, but greeted me as a friend and protector. We did not unsheathe the sword, did not banish him from his office of empire, did not burn one part of the lands and cities, did not enslave the rest with force and weapons, in order to attain imperial power [...] but calmly, without turmoil and bloodshed, and peacefully, we were elevated to this very imperial throne. Therefore no sane man could consider me as a stranger or an usurper but, if you wish to comprehend this, there is one and the same judgment by me and him, as father and son, because we became one body and one limb through the bond of marriage, and therefore we also the imperial power is common.[207]

It can be seen that Romanos was vigorously justifying his legitimacy against Symeon's accusations, as Shepard correctly notices: "The furiousness of Romanos' denial said it all; the Bulgarian had put his finger on the speciousness of the pretext for Romanos' rise to power."[208] Now, if the notion of multi-layered discourse which may have been on the minds of both Symeon and Romanos is taken into account, these lines allow for a slightly different interpretation as well. The letter was probably written in the late 924, when Romanos's position was more secure than had been the case in 921. This is perhaps why Symeon finally started communicating with the emperor instead of with Mystikos or the senate. It seems that Romanos was not so eager for peace anymore; more precisely, he adopted a strategy of defence and waiting.[209] Still, the emperor could not ignore Symeon, especially since Romanos's words

[207] Ibid., Ep. 6, 71.35-73.54 (simplified): ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰ ξένα κατέχειν ἡμᾶς ὑπηγόρευέ σου τὸ γράμμα, τὸ ἀποστολικὸν ἐκεῖνο ῥητὸν εἰς ἀποδείξεως ἀφορμὴν προβαλόμενον, ἀποδείξομεν ὡς οὐ νουνεχῶς τοῦτο διεσκέψατό σου ἡ σύνεσις. Μεγίστην γάρ, ὅτι μεγίστην πίστιν καὶ ὑποταγὴν πρὸς τὸν ἡμέτερον ἐπεδειξάμεθα γαμβρὸν καὶ βασιλέα. ἐπεβούλευον αὐτῷ οἱ τηνικαῦτα κρατοῦντες, ἐμελέτων κατ' αὐτοῦ, τὴν μάχαιραν ἠκόνουν. προετράπην παρ' αὐτοῦ τούτους ἐξεῶσαι τοῦ παλατίου· ὑπήκουσα, ἐξέωσα ὡς εὐγνωμονῶν, οὐκ οἴκοθεν πρὸς αὐτὸν κινηθείς, ἀλλὰ ταῖς αὐτοῦ πεισθεὶς προτροπαῖς· ἐλυτρωσάμην αὐτὸν τῆς τούτων ἀθέου ἐπιβουλῆς, ἐχαρισάμην, εἰ δεῖ σὺν Θεῷ φάναι, τὴν ζωήν. διά τοι τοῦτο, καὶ ὡς πιστὸν αὐτοῦ φύλακα καὶ ἐκδικητήν, πατέρα ἑαυτοῦ ἐπεγράψατο καὶ κοινωνὸν τῆς βασιλείας πεποίηκε, πάντως τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦτο κινήσαντος, καὶ παρορμήσαντος τοῦ ἀναρρώσαντός με ἐκκομίσαι [...ν ...ν] τὸν βασιλέα· καὶ οὐχ ὡς ξένον ἀπώσατο, ἀλλ' ὡς φίλον καὶ κηδεμόνα προσέλαβεν. οὐ μήν γε τὴν μάχαιραν ἐστιλβώσαμεν, οὐδὲ τοῦ τῆς βασιλείας ἀξιώματος ἀπώσαμεν· οὐδὲ χώρας καὶ πόλεις, ἃς μὲν πυρὶ κατεκαύσαμεν, ἃς δὲ δορυαλώτους πεποιήκαμεν, ὅπως τῆς βασιλείας ἐπιβησώμεθα [...], ἀλλ' οὕτως ἡσύχως, ἀθορύβως, ἀναιμάκτως καὶ εἰρηνικῶς πρὸς τουτονὶ τὸν βασιλικὸν θρόνον ἀνεβιβάσθην. διά τοι τοῦτο οὐδὲ ξένος καὶ ἀλλότριος τοῖς εὖ φρονοῦσι λογισθείην, ἀλλ' εἰ συνορᾶν ἐθέλεις, μία ἐμοὶ κἀκείνῳ δόξα, ὡς πατρὶ υἱῷ ἓν σῶμα καὶ μέλος διὰ τῆς τοῦ γάμου συναφείας γενόμενος, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡ βασιλεία κοινή. My translation (I. M.).

[208] Shepard, "Equilibrium to Expansion", 508.

[209] There are several reasons for that. Firstly, the heavy defeats inflicted by Symeon at Acheloos and Katasyrtai must have left traces and certainly shrunk the number of (experienced) soldiers. Secondly, pragmatic as he was, Romanos understood well that, although the Thracian population suffered from Bulgarian raids, Symeon could not breach the massive walls of Constantinople and that, in the long term, a waiting strategy costs less. The same strategy had already

were circulating at court, which would also have given him a fine opportunity of explaining in details his legitimacy, as founded on his relation with Constantine Porphyrogennetos.

Whatever Symeon's agenda was, Romanos's reactions to the challenge he posed provide first-rate insights into the understanding of the imperial ideology of early-tenth-century Byzantium. On several occasions Mystikos as the highest spiritual authority in the Byzantine Christian world, described himself as the advocate of peace among Christians, yet from his letters sent to Symeon, it is obvious that he acted as the defender of the Byzantine emperor. What is more, he defended the whole theoretical system (the essence) behind the ideology of the empire's power and authority among the Christian world, which was the basis of Mystikos's authority as well.

The significance and influence of the patriarch Photios

Patriarch Photios was one of the most prominent figures of the ninth century, and played an exceptionally significant role in shaping the world of images in post-iconoclast Byzantium. Additionally, he was the teacher and spiritual father of the future emperors Leo and Alexander, and of the future patriarch, his relative, Nikolaos Mystikos.[210] Thus, it is important to make a short excursus about him while emphasising two characteristic aspects of his career: his strongly iconophile, or anti-iconoclastic, behaviour reflected also in his caring for the sacred images, especially the image of the Virgin, and "the balance of power between church and state [...] a favourite theme of the patriarch Photios".[211] Additionally, the relations between Photios and Nikolaos Mystikos, expressed by the latter, will be underlined as well.

Photios (810–893; first patriarchate 858–867; second 877–886)[212] came from a notable family; his

been practiced for several decades in Asia Minor, Romanos's homelands, as described/prescribed by military manuals of the period. On these terms see: Whitow, *The Making*, 175-181 (on the defensive strategy in general), 316-322 (on military matters during Romanos's rule). Furthermore, war is expensive, and, if the testimony from Mystikos's letters is correctly dated, there was even a church levy for the 'Bulgarian war' at the beginning of Romanos's rule: Mystikos, *Letters*, Ep. 92, 354-357; Ep. 94, 358-361.

[210] Photios was even a godfather to one of Basil's sons, probably Leo. Tougher, *Leo*, 49-50, n. 36-38.

[211] Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning*, 413.

[212] Patriarch Photios induced immense interest of scholars. For a survey of these works and concerning the ecclesiastical conflicts see: Francis Dvornik, *The Photian Schism, History and Legend*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1948; reprinted in 1970); Cyril Mango's article is regarded by Leslie Brubaker as the "best modern assessment of Photios" (*Vision,* 201, n. 1):

father Sergios was a wealthy dignitary,[213] his mother Eirene "related by marriage to the imperial family",[214] and Patriarch Tarasios (784-806) was his uncle, or "relative on the father's side".[215] The whole family was banished by the last iconoclast emperor, Theophilos (r. 829–842), probably, in 832/3, and both of Photios's parents died in exile.[216] After the end of Iconoclasm, Photios entered the imperial administration and became the head of the imperial chancery (*protasekretis*). Family ties with the Amorian dynasty, and especially close relation with Bardas,[217] the uncle of Emperor Michael III (r. 843–867), brought Photios to the patriarchal throne on Christmas 858.[218] Since he was a lay civil servant, Photios was quickly – namely in five days – led through all the ranks of ordination and on the sixth he was ordained patriarch.[219] Immediately after the murder of Michael III (867), Basil I removed Photios from the position of patriarch, and Ignatios was brought back. Nevertheless, Photios seem to have quickly regained the emperor's favour. According to legend this was achieved by forgery of documents and trickery.[220] Scholars suggest that this reinstatement occurred because Basil I "was an emperor without an imperial past",[221] and needed an experienced politician like Photios, who is recognized as the chief architect of Basil's ideology.[222] Furthermore, Basil I found in Photios the ideal teacher for his sons

Mango, "The Liquidation of Iconoclasm" and the Patriarch Photios", in *Iconoclasm*, (Birmingham: Center for Byzantine Studies Univeristy of Birmingham, 1977), 133-140 (henceforth: Mango, "The Liquidation of Iconoclasm"); Brubaker provides extensive bibliography about the patriarch: Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning*, 201, n. 1; and a short biography with emphasis on Photios's image-patronage in chapter five of her book "The patriarch Photios and visual exegesis", Ibid., 201-238; for Photios's relation with Leo VI, and its final exile see chapter three of: Tougher, *Leo*, 68-88; for Photios's role in the relations between patriarch and emperor see: Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*; also: Stanković, *Patriarchs*; in general see also: *ODB*, 3, 1669-1670, and *PmbZ*, #26667.

[213] Mango, "The Liquidation of Iconoclasm", 139.

[214] Ibid., 138.

[215] Ibid., 137; Tougher, *Leo*, 68.

[216] Mango notices that "... there can be no doubt that Photios grew up in the shadow of the Iconoclastic persecution." Mango, "The Liquidation of Iconoclasm", 139.

[217] Bardas is said to have shared the love of education with Photios. Tougher, *Leo*, 69.

[218] He replaced patriarch Ignatios, who opposed Bardas, triggering a conflict in the church. Ibid., 139; Tougher, *Leo*, 69.

[219] Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 226-227.

[220] About the story that Photios regained favour by trickery and magic: Tougher, *Leo*, 70; Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning*, 238, n. 190; Stanković, *Patrijarsi*, 63.

[221] Leslie Brubaker, "To legitimize an emperor: Constantine and the visual authority in the eighth and ninth centuries", in *New Constantines, the Rhytm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries*, ed. Paul Magdalino, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), 139-158, esp. 151.

[222] On Photios role in shaping the ideology of Basil I: Athanasios Markopoulos, "An Anonymous Laudatory Poem in Honor of Basil I", *DOP*, 46 (1992), 225-232; 228-229; Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning*, chapters 4, 5, esp. 199-200; Tougher, *Leo*, 70-71; Tougher adds an interesting question "who was creating Basil's ideology in the beginning of his reign?" Ibid., 71, n. 16.

Constantine, Leo, Alexander, and especially Stephen, who remained under his tutorship longer than his brothers as he was groomed to become the next patriarch.[223] Nikolaos Mystikos, a relative of Photios, although approximately fourteen years older than Leo, attended the same lessons.[224] Thus, Photios was closely connected to, and had an influence on, several figures that subsequently shaped the life of the empire by occupying its highest positions.

Mango's assessment of Photios's life-long anti-iconoclast strife is generally accepted. He concluded that Photios's experience of iconoclast persecution alone was enough to explain it. He also argued that Photios exploited, for political purposes, the fact that his family had died in exile fighting for the 'just cause', so he could rightfully employ anti-Iconoclasm as a weapon in fighting his opponents, namely Ignatios and his supporters.[225] Indeed, political controversy was one of the reasons why Photios embarked on a program of church decoration, which had not started immediately after the – official – end of Iconoclasm. Many if not most projects took place during the period Photios's patriarchal tenure.[226] The most famous episode of this program was the unveiling of the Theotokos mosaic[227] in the apse of Hagia Sophia on 29 March 867, which was the first mosaic in the Great church after Iconoclasm. On this occasion Photios wrote, and performed, one of his homilies.[228] It is worth mentioning that Photios was the first post-iconoclast patriarch to use the image of the Virgin as the obverse-type on his patriarchal seals, and from then on, until the fall of empire, the Virgin remained the (obverse-type) symbol of patriarchal seals. Similar to coinage, the transition after the end of Iconoclasm is reflected in seals as well.

[223] Tougher, *Leo*, 49.

[224] R. J. H. Jenkins, "A Note on the Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus", *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarium Hungaricae,* 2, (1963), 146-147, reprinted in *Studies on Byzantine history of the 9th and 10th Centuries,* V (London: Variorum Reprints, 1970) (henceforth: Jenkins, *Note*). Although editors of Mystikos's letters comment that there is no positive evidence about this, it is generally accepted as valid: Tougher, *Leo*, 50, n. 40; Stanković, *Patriarchs*, 88.

[225] "Glorious death of his father, his early sufferings conferred on him an aura of martyrdom or, at any rate, of great respectability"; compared to Photios "his opponent Ignatios could not claim much credit in the struggle against Iconoclasm", Mango, "The Liquidation of Iconoclasm", 139-140; basically the same view is provided by Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning*, 413: "Perhaps in part because he was the first patriarch after 843 who had never had connections with iconoclasts, Photios linked himself with the iconophile cause throughout his career..

[226] For the list of the churches and their decoration dates see: R. J. H. Jenkins, C. Mango, "The Date and Significance of the Tenth Homily of Photios", *DOP*, 9/10, (1956), 125-140; 139-140.

[227] Or fresco, as suggested by: Nicolas Oikonomides, "Some Remarks on the Apse Mosaic of St. Sophia", *DOP*, 39 (1985), 111-115.

[228] Mango, "The Liquidation of Iconoclasm", 140.

While patriarchs of the iconoclast period used cruciform invocative monograms on the obverse,[229] the first post-iconoclast patriarch(s) used the bust of Christ, just as the emperors did. Patriarch Ignatios (847-858, 867-877) used two types, presumably one for each of his two patriarchates: the bust of Christ (recognized as the 'Pantokrator' type) and Christ standing (presumably 'Christ-Chalkites').[230] Photios changed the motif, presumably to distinguish himself from his opponent, and used also two types, perhaps for the same reasons as Ignatios: the standing Virgin holding Christ-child in her left arm (*Hodegetria* type) and the bust of the Virgin holding a medallion of Christ on her chest (*Nikopoios* type).[231] It is interesting to compare these with the imperial seals, where the image of Christ remained as the dominant obverse-type. In all likelihood, distinguishing patriarchal seals from imperial ones was nne reason for this differentiation. The wish to identify the patriarchate with the Virgin, that is, the protector-patroness of the capital, may well have been an additional reason.

Concerning Photios's role in the shaping, or rather the reshaping, of the ideology of the highest positions in the empire, it is worth mentioning the famous introductory chapters of the *Eisagoge* ascribed to him, as the reflection of his political theology.[232] Christ's law is introduced first, followed by the definition of the emperor as "legitimate authority" and, third, the patriarch as the "incarnate and living image of Christ" (thus forming a triad).[233] Scholars agree that the competences of the emperor and the patriarch were redefined to provide the latter with a more important role, or, as Dagron puts it "everything that patriarch gained was stolen from the emperor".[234] Dagron analyzed the formulations,

[229] Like Anthony I Kassymatas (821-837). *DOS*, 201-203.

[230] *DOS*, 203-204.

[231] *DOS*, 204-205; about these types of images, and its usage on coins, see: *DOC*, 169-172.

[232] The list of bibliographical references about these chapters is quite long, so here only a short selection where the most of previous titles can be found as well: Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*; Lokin analyzes links between *Eisagoge* and Justinian's laws: J. H. A. Lokin, "The Significance of Law and Legislation in the Law Books of the Ninth to Eleventh Centuries, in *Law and Society in Byzantium: Ninth-Twelfth Centuries*, ed. Angeliki E. Laiou and Dieter Simon, (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994), 71-91, esp. 78-80 (henceforth: Lokin, "The Significance of Law"); see also: Stanković, *Patriarchs*; esp. 66-69; and the most recent discussion about particular choice of words used to describe the patriarch and its meaning: Vlada Stanković, "Living icon of Christ: Photios' Characterization of the Patriarch in the Introduction of the Eisagoge and Its Significance", in *ΣΥΜΜΕΙΚΤΑ. Collection of Papers Dedicated to 40th Anniversary of the Institute for Art History*, ed. Ivan Stević, (Belgrade: Faculty of Philosophy University of Belgrade, 2012), 39-43. (henceforth: Stanković, "Living icon of Christ"); in general about the *Eisagoge*: *ODB*, 1, 703-704.

[233] Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 230-231; Stanković, *Patriarchs*, 68.

[234] Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 231; Lokin, "The Significance of Law", 78-80; Stanković, *Patriarchs*, 66.

and concluded that "the formulation is original, but all words are coded".[235] The definition of the patriarch, recognized as the only original formulation, is particularly interesting. It has been interpreted as 'living truth'[236] and as "assertion that the patriarch of Constantinople was a *Christ on Earth,*" thus undermining the emperor's position which is no more directly connected with Christ.[237] Finally, and most-importantly for this research, the passages ascribed to Photios's have been seen as the possible theoretical background for the representations, on coins and elsewhere, of emperors with divine agents.[238]

The role of the patriarch according to Mystikos

Some traces of a similar understanding of positions of the emperor and the patriarch can be found in the letters of Nikolaos Mystikos. In one of the letters he sent to Symeon, Mystikos is explaining why it is his duty to act and try to make peace between the Bulgarians and Romans: "Set as I am to be the watchmen (though unworthy) over the salvation of men, I cannot be silent, lest He Who by His inscrutable judgments has made me that watchman ..."[239] In another letter, sent some time after the death of emperor Leo or Alexander, to Constantine *protoasekretis*, concerning the removal of one of his men, Mystikos writes: "I have heard a report, since the emperor's departure from us, that you are expelling an archbishop ordained by my Humility – I mean, him of Neapolis – and sending another who had been consecrated and dispatched thither by him who, as you know yourselves, usurped the *throne* to which I, though humble and most sinful of men, was nonetheless wedded by the inscrutable Judgments of my Christ Who confirmed me in it."[240] The second version of Mystikos's written abdication, which Leo VI forced him to sign during the tetragamy controversy, begins with the words: "I, Nicholas, archbishop of

[235] Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 231.
[236] Ibid., 231.
[237] Stanković, "Living icon of Christ", 42. Compare also Marie-France Auzépy, "Le Christ, l'empereur et l'image (VII^e–IX^e siècle), in *EYΨYXIA. Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler,* (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne, 1998), 35–47 [= Ead., *L'histoire des iconoclastes,* 77–89].
[238] Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning*, 159.
[239] Mystikos, *Letters*, 104.6-9, 105.
[240] Mystikos, *Letters*, Ep. 146, 460.2-9, 461.

Constantinople, who only by the Grace of God have received this great and heavenly gift ..."[241] These testimonies show that Mystikos understood the source of the patriarch's authority in similar terms as that of the emperor, directly from Christ, or at least projected this view to his correspondents.

Several other examples reveal in more detail how Mystikos presented the patriarch's position (or his own?) as "equal to the apostles" (*isapostolos*).[242] In the letter to an unknown addressee, dated by its content to the period when Mystikos was the chief regent (June 913–February 914), the patriarch warns: "All I have to say to you is this: know that you have not rejected me, but, in my person, the Heavenly Father, Whose law it is that children should honor their fathers."[243] This relation is expressed even more directly in another letter to Symeon, sent soon after Romanos's coronation: "... you are not ignorant of what Our Lord said to His disciples: *He that rejecteth you, rejecteth me*, and their succession has come down from His time even until today upon me the worthless, by God's inscrutable Judgments."[244]

In the letter sent to the archbishop of Bulgaria, in an attempt to influence Symeon through him as well, Mystikos describes in more detail 'their' role, the role of an archbishop that is their 'rights':

> since we are held worthy to stand at the Holy Sanctuary and are put here to mediate on behalf of men upon earth, turning from our earthly station toward the Lord Who is in heaven ... and, while deprecating the sins committed by men against God, we must be even more ready to dissolve their transgressions against one another, and to deprecate the punishments inflicted from time to time by those in authority, since our right to speak and our grounds for intercession are incomparably more valid when we plead before men.[245]

Finally, in the letter sent to the pope Nicholas, soon after he had returned to the patriarchal throne, Nikolaos Mystikos, explaining his viewpoint of the tetragamy controversy, presents his perception of the emperor in relation with the law: "The emperor, they say, is 'an unwritten law', not so that he may break laws and do whatever he pleases, but so that he may be such in his unauthorized

[241] Mystikos, *Miscellaneous*, #194/II, 18.4-6.
[242] Concerning the term see: Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 135-143, esp. 141-143.
[243] Mystikos, *Letters*, Ep. 186, 518.7-8
[244] Ibid., Ep. 17, 110.12-112.14, 111-113.
[245] Ibid., Ep. 4, 22.8-16.

actions as a written law would be. If the emperor is the enemy and opponent of the laws, who shall fear those laws ?"[246] Perhaps this example has the most in common with the lines from *Eisagoge*.

Thus, in Mystikos's extant writings the origins of the patriarch's authority and power is described exactly the same as that of the emperor. Furthermore, the patriarch has the right to speak freely with and criticize the rulers, i.e. those in authority. These perceptions can be seen along the lines established by Photios in the *Eisagoge*.

"My father – I mean Photios"

Some more general aspects of connection between Photios and Nikolaos Mystikos have already been touched upon previously. However, there are several more aspects of this relationship, expressed by Mystikos, that are worthy of attention. When Leo exiled Photios for the second and last time, under the accusation of treason, Mystikos is said to have voluntarily left as well, following his spiritual father's exile, and spent his time in the monastery of St Tryphon, where he became a monk.[247] Furthermore, on several occasion in his letters, Mystikos emphasises Photios's qualities and refers to him as his (spiritual) father. The first example is provided by the letter sent to the emir of Crete during the period when Nikolaos was the chief regent (June 913–February 914). With this letter, Mystikos was trying to establish a connection ('friendship') with the Emir, in his own name, and to negotiate about the exchange of the prisoners.[248] At one point he mentions that Photios and the father of the addressee were in good relations: "For your wisdom is aware that the greatest among the archpriests of God, the renowned Photios, my father in the Holy Spirit, was united to the father of your nobility ..."[249] The next testimony is found in the letter titled 'To the prince of princes', which was the Armenian king Ashot II (r. 922-954), sent between 924 and 925 for the purpose of appointing the new Archbishop. Mystikos mentions that: "On this matter my Father – I mean Photios, the most holy patriarch ..."[250] The final example comes from the letter sent to the emperor

[246] Ibid., 220.89-92.
[247] Ibid., xvi; Tougher, *Leo*, 80.
[248] On dating and the addressee: Ibid., 526.
[249] Ibid., Ep. 2, 12.17-19, 13.
[250] Ibid., 139, 450.49-50, 451.

Romanos – who was not yet crowned as the emperor at the time – while negotiations were still underway for concluding the schism in the Church. At one point Mystikos, in an attempt to extort a written declaration of loyalty from those who were to be accepted back into the Church, demonstrates to Romanos how dangerous carelessness can be:

> When *kyr* Photios the patriarch and all whom he had ordained were expelled, the grandfather of our emperor *kyr* Constantine [Basil I], by careful and sustained zeal, destroyed Tephrike, captured Bari, subjugated Longibardia, and tore Taranto and other cities from Saracen dominion. But when *kyr* Ignatios died and kyr Photios and those whom he had ordained were united in the Church, Syracuse was lost and all of Sicily. And why? Because of the carelessness of the then admiral of the fleet, I mean Adrian.[251]

As can be seen from these lines, Mystikos is using Photios to make an example: in the first case, although Photios was removed, meaning that God's favour was not with Basil, he still managed to achieve great victories by 'careful and sustained zeal'; in the second example, however, although Photios and those whom he had ordained were back in office and power, the empire suffered defeats because of the general' carelessness, despite having the proper men at the head of the Church.

Though certainly not the only one, Photios played an important role in the revival of the Christian iconography and in employing this medium for his political agendas. The connection between the patriarchs Photios and Nikolaos Mystikos is well-documented. Compared to Photios, it seems that Mystikos did not have as many chances to oversee programs similar to those that the former has advertised, or at least there is no surviving evidence of it. Nevertheless, when it comes to the political power of the patriarchs, Mystikos exceeded his predecessor's reach, and given the fact that he was a master diplomat and a skilled politician, it is reasonable to assume that he understood well the importance of the images. With regard to the 'images of power', it is worth mentioning that one of the most intriguing images in the Byzantine art, the famous 'Narthex mosaic of Hagia', representing an emperor in *proskynesis* in front of the enthroned Christ, originates from this period.[252]

[251] Ibid., Ep. 75, 326.52-60, 327.

[252] Nicolas Oikonomides, "Leo VI and the Narthex Mosaic of Saint Sophia", *DOP* 30 (1976), 151-172, proposed that it was

Mystikos "the advisor"

Throughout his career, Mystikos expressed clear tendencies towards the 'secular' power. The not so 'spiritual' function of Mystikos has long been recognized, but several aspects concerning his activities deserve to be mentioned, namely, his role as the advisor of the emperor. It has already been pointed out that Mystikos served as negotiator between Romanos and Symeon. Thus, it would not be a surprise if Mystikos had indeed prepared the speech for the emperor when the latter met Symeon in November 924, as has been suggested.[253] Before speaking with Romanos, Symeon was greeted by Nikolaos Mystikos, but the Bulgarian ruler was not particularly happy to see the patriarch, whose letters he had been receiving since 913, and insisted to speak with the emperor himself. Eventually, Romanos appeared and the two rulers negotiated peace. The chronicler records that the Romanos addressed Symeon with these words:

> I have heard that you are a pious man and a true Christian, but I see that your deeds do not match the words. A pious man and Christian welcomes peace and love, if indeed God is love and is said [to be love], but the sight of the impious and unbelieving man takes delight in slaughter and the unjust shedding of blood. If you are indeed a true Christian, as I am assured [you are], end the unjust slaughter and unholy bloodshed, and make peace with us, Christians, being and being called a Christian yourself, and do not covet to stain your hands with the blood of Christians, of the co-religionists Christians your brothers in faith? You are a man who awaits death, resurrection, judgment, and retribution; you exist today, [and] tomorrow you will be dissolved into dust. One fever will put out wanton behavior. What is the answer you will give to the God about the unjust slaughter, when you depart there? With what kind of face will you look at the fear-inspiring and righteous judge? If you do this for the love of wealth, I will fill you until you are full [glutted] of that what you wish [wealth]: just extend your right hand. Embrace peace, cherish harmony in order to live a life of peace and unstained with blood and without disturbance, and the Christians for once will be free of misfortunes and refrain from killing Christians, for it is not

penitent Leo who is represented on the mosaic, and dates it to the period after 907. This interpretation has been widely accepted, but Peter Schreiner, "Der Kaiser und die Proskynese. Das Narthexmosaik in der H. Sofia und der Versuch einer paläograpischen Datierung", *Bolletino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata,* N. S. 54 (2000): 97-108, dates it to the period before 890. Jolivet-Levy, "L'image du pouvoir", 453–454, comments that despite Oikonomides' enticing interpretation, the image does not represent any particular emperor.

[253] Mystikos, *Letters*, xxvii.

right that these [Christians] raise weapons against those of the same faith.[254]

It is further said that Symeon, moved and embarrassed by this speech, agreed to finally make peace, and left the Constantinople. Yet, an omen appeared in the sky while the two rulers were negotiating: two eagles met but then parted their ways, one going towards the City while the other one flew towards Thrace; this was interpreted as a bad sign regarding the peace that had been agreed.[255] Indeed, the words placed into Romanos's mouth sound as though written by Mystikos. The other candidate to have provided Romanos's words was Theodore Daphnopates. However, the oration described in Theophanus Continuatus resembles much more Mystikos's rhetorics contained in his letters to Symeon, than the account in Theodore Daphnopates' letter sent to the same addresee and with a similar agenda. The story about Symeon's shame and awe by the emperor's words is very difficult accept. Symeon was unaffected by quite similar words from the patriarch for more than ten years, and even ridiculed Mystikos, so why would he be moved by the similar words now?

Apart from being Romanos's negotiator with Symeon, Mystikos had something to say on various other occasions and affairs. In one letter, he advises the emperor to raise the rank of *antigrapheis*, adding that they "are not asking for more pay", and suggests to Romanos what he should say to further 'encourage them'.[256] Although not entirely clear, the function of the *antigrapheus* had something to do

[254] Th. Cont, 408.7-409.5: ἀκήκοά σε θεοσεβῆ ἄνθρωπον καὶ Χριστιανὸν ὑπάρχοντα ἀληθινόν, βλέπω δὲ τὰ ἔργα τοῖς λόγοις μὴ συμβαίνοντα. ἴδιον μὲν γὰρ ἀνθρώπου θεοσεβοῦς καὶ Χριστιανοῦ τὸ τὴν εἰρήνην καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην ἀσπάζεσθαι, εἴπερ ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἔστι τε καὶ λέγεται· ἀσεβοῦς δὲ καὶ ἀπίστου τὸ χαίρειν σφαγαῖς καὶ αἵμασιν ἀδίκως ἐκχεομένων. εἰ μὲν οὖν ἀληθὴς Χριστιανὸς ὑπάρχεις, καθὼς πεπληροφορήμεθα, στῆσόν ποτε τὰς ἀδίκους σφαγὰς καὶ τὰς τῶν ἀνοσίων αἱμάτων ἐκχύσεις, καὶ σπεῖσαι μεθ' ἡμῶν τῶν Χριστιατῶν εἰρήνη Χριστιανὸς καὶ αὐτὸς ὢν καὶ ὀνομαζόμενος, καὶ μὴ θέλε μολύνεσθαι Χριστιανῶν δεξιὰς αἵμασιν ὁμοπίστων Χριστιανῶν. ἄνθωπος εἶ καὶ αὐτός, θάνατον προσδοκῶν καὶ ἀνάστασιν καὶ κρίσιν καὶ ἀνταπόδοσιω· καὶ σήμερον ὑπάρχεις, καὶ αὔριον εἰς κόνιν διαλυθήσῃ. εἶς πυρετὸς κατασβέσει τὸ φρύαγμα. τίνα οὖν λόγον δώσεις τῷ θεῷ ἐκεῖ ἀπελθὼν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδίκων σφαγῶν; ποίῳ προσώπῳ τῷ φοβερῷ καὶ δικαίῳ ἐνατενίσεις κριτῇ; εἰ πλούτου ἐρῶν ταῦτα ποιεῖς, ἐγώ σε· κατακόρως τοῦ ἐπιθυμουμένου ἐμπλήσῳ· μόνον ἐπίσχες τὴν δεξιάν.ἄσπασαι τὴν εἰρήνεν, ἀγάπφυν τὴν ὁμόνοιαν, ἵνα καὶ αὐτὸς βίον ζήσῃς εἰρηνικὸν καὶ ἀναίμακτον καὶ ἀπράγμονα, καὶ οἱ Χριστιανοί παύσωνταί ποτε τῶν συμφορῶν καὶ στήσωνται τοῦ Χριστιανοὺς ἀπαιρεῖν· οὐ θέμις γὰρ αὐτοὺς αἴρειν ὅπλα καθ' ὁμοπίστων.

[255] Th. Cont. 409.6-17.

[256] Mystikos, *Letters*, Ep. 95 A, 362.8-9, 363. In several other letters Mystikos proposes to various (mostly) church officials what they should say in the particular situation, e.g. in two letters Mystikos is instructing the archbishop of Bulgaria what he should say and what arguments he should employ in order to induce Symeon to agree to make peace with the empire. Ibid., Ep. 4, 22-23, Ep. 12, 86-87.

with judicial offices and the issuing of laws.[257] In another letter, responding to the news of the Bulgarian intrusion, Mystikos proposes that this threat should be countered "... either by the dispatch of home-based ships of the line, if available, or even of a couple of galleys from here, to guard and rescue the place."[258] On both occasions it looks as if Mystikos is dealing with affairs falling outside the area of his expertise. The latter example is particularly interesting, as Mystikos is offering advice about military affairs, more precisely, concerning the navy, to Romanos, who had been the commander of the fleet for seven years. It is interesting to imagine how Romanos may have perceived this letter.

These examples reflect Mystikos's meddling in diverse spheres of the political life in Byzantium. His tendency to instruct and advise about affairs not befitting a patriarch, is likely to have come from his long-standing position at the summit of court politics, particularly during the period when he was the chief regent and de facto running the empire. I believe that it also illustrates Mystikos's *paideia*,[259] and, consequently, implies its importance in the period under investigation.

Romanos's political literacy

In her recent study,[260] Catherine Holmes emphasizes the importance ascribed to the written word, that is to education, in late ninth and early tenth-century Byzantium. She explains that: "The more salient point is that Byzantium was characterized by a political culture in which those charged with office were expected to exhibit command over the medium of writing", or "if a rich graphic environment constitutes one element of political literacy in medieval Byzantium, then another was a contemporary expectation that those with power should be able to exercise command over the written word".[261] Basil I seems like a good 'specimen' for examining the pertinence of education in the period. Since he was an "infamously

[257] They were under the *quaestor* in the hierarchy. *ODB*, 112; *quaestor*: Ibid., 1765-1766.

[258] Mystikos, *Letters*, 363; Ep. 95, 362.11-13.

[259] There is at least one example of Mystikos ironically describing to one of his opponents how he can write in a simple manner, so the adresee could understand it: "I write plain language [apla grafw] ... even in simple words [idioteia logwn]", and adds after a couple of sentences: "You see, don't you, how plainly I write? [apla grafw is repeated]" Mystikos, *Letters*, Ep. 146, 460.1; 460.9, 461.

[260] Catherine Holmes, "Political Literacy", in *The Byzantine World*, ed. Paul Stephenson, (New York: Routledge, 2012.), 137-148 (henceforth: Holmes, "Political Literacy").

[261] Ibid., 138-139.

uneducated emperor",[262] Basil is said to have been intellectually dependant, particularly on Photios.[263] Holmes concludes her article with an open question: "could it be that in order to maintain some room for political manoeuvre and prevent entrapment within this bureaucratic network, Basil was determined to cultivate an alternative and exceptionally daunting image: that of the emperor for whom writing was of next to no importance?"[264]

In analogy to Basil's case, it is justified to investigate, on a limited scale, the 'political literacy' of Romanos Lekapenos, and point out several instances in sources which bear on Romanos's education. The most direct account of Romanos's education and origin comes from the emperor Constantine Porphyrogennetos in his *DAI*. In a famous chapter, the emperor advises his heir, Romanos, of the items he must not ever give to foreign nations: imperial crowns, liquid fire, and purple-born princesses.[265] In relation to the last notion, more precisely concerning the occurrence of the Bulgarian marriage, Constantine comments that: "kyr Romanus, the emperor, was a common, illiterate fellow (*idiwths* kai *agrammatos*), and not from among those who have been brought up in the palace, and have followed the Roman manners from the beginning; nor was he of imperial and noble stock ..."[266] Considering relations between Romanos and his son-in-law, Porphyrogennetos's account must be taken with extreme caution; nevertheless, the notion that Romanos was not 'brought up in the palace ... nor was he of imperial and noble stock' is beyond doubt.[267] A letter that Nikolaos Mystikos sent to Romanos during the negotiations about ending the schism in the Church, might provide some indication concerning both the emperors' low origin and his education. Mystikos, trying to extort affidavit from the bishops – Euthymios's supporters – before receiving them back into the church, makes a comparison with the deserters in the army: "Is it not true (my son), that in the military ranks in which you have been brought up and educated

[262]Tougher, Leo, 71.
[263]Ibid., 70-72.
[264] Holmes, "Political Literacy", 147.
[265] *DAI*, ch. 13, 66-77.
[266] Ibid.., ch. 13, 72.149-152.
[267] Although sources offer next to nothing on his early life, he certainly was of provincial origin. Runciman, *Romanos*, 63; *PmbZ,* #26833.

from a small command to the greatest ..."[268] This is, however, not a particularly strong point, because Mystikos is primarily concerned with Romanos's military career since there lies the strength of his argument. Yet, considering the shrewdness of Mystikos and the cynicism occasionally manifested in his letters, this account may well have intended to hint at Romanos's 'history'.

The question of Romanos's political literacy necessitates a more detailed analysis than can be provided here. Romanos has been recognised as a "politician to his fingertips".[269] This, however, does not imply that he was 'politically literate', as Holmes defined the term. Basil I, 'specimen' in this discussion, showed much of the political skills as well, yet he was, as it seems, highly dependent on Photios. Furthermore, he entrusted the education of his sons, future emperors and the patriarch, to Photios. Perhaps Basil I indeed "was determined to cultivate an alternative image of the emperor for whom writing was of next to no importance", but did he wanted the same for his heirs?

To return to Romanos and the issue of his dependence on his highly educated associates. It is perhaps possible only to make a general remark towards the crucial role of the patriarch Mystikos in supporting Romanos in the beginning of his rule, while he was still taking care with plots around the court, and his position yet to be asserted. It has also been recognized that Romanos relied significantly on Theodore Daphnopates. It is interesting to remember the story about Daphnopates translating a letter from Armenian to Greek for the emperor, which may be exemplary on these terms.

[268] Mystikos, *Letters*, Ep. 75, 324.22-25.
[269] Shepard, "Equilibrium to Expansion", 506.

Conclusions

In the introductory chapter the potential of coins, especially the gold ones, for propaganda has been investigated. They were under the special attention; constant 'quality control' ensured that the denomination was stable; laws against hoarding and trading outside borders aimed to secure the steady circulation within the empire. Distributed in a various ceremonies, not just on the annual 'pay-day', i.e. the *rhogai* ceremony which filled courtiers and foreign envoys alike with awe, coins (= wealth) represented one, perhaps the most substantial, source of the emperor's power. Harnessing its potential, emperors used this medium to communicate with their subjects.

As a mark of quality, emperors placed their busts and promoted heirs on coins, but after Iconoclasm ended, the bust of Christ, which had been introduced for the first time durign the reign of Justinian II, came back to the place of honour. The period under scrutiny was particularly rich with various regular but also some extraordinary specimens, usually described as of ceremonial character. This diversity also demonstrates the various ways in which emperors employed the medium, as Romanos's maneuvering in order to oust young Constantine shows. It could have been a tacit exclusion of Leo's heir, or a direct demonstration of imperial order, i.e. the one Romanos wanted to create. Coming from the province with no connections to the capital, the latter still managed to survive the initial period of plots, in the name of young Constantine, against his rule/usurpation. As every other usurper, Romanos needed to prove his legitimacy, or rather the approval of his position: it was a matter of projecting divine legitimacy. Thus Romanos presented himself as the legitimate choice, approved by Christ himself. This motif, although in repeat performances not involving Christ, became favourite amongst usurpers, as the extant evidence shows. Legitimacy was particularly effective if confirmed by the highest authority: in heaven and on earth.

Thus, the second part of this thesis looked into role of the patriarch, Nikolaos I Mystikos. He undoubtedly backed the usurper-emperor Romanos. He negotiated with Symeon instead of the new

emperor, whom the Bulgarian initially ignored. He also supported the Church-levy necessary for the Bulgarian war, contrary to the situation during Zoe's regency. The circumstances of the tetragamy controversy and his involvement with the unsuccessful coup by Constantine Doukas, suggest that Nikolaos Mystikos was not particularly inclined towards Leo's dynasty, or perhaps, that he did not identify the empire with (t)his family. Therefore, given his enmity with Zoe, and presumably because he was a *stranger* to the Constantinopolitan high echelons, Romanos Lekapenos must have seemed a much better choice for the office of emperor in the eyes of Mystikos, compared to e.g. Leo Phokas. Simply, their mutual interests overlapped, and there was greater hope of influencing a social climber, a *homo novus*, than the scion of one of the empire's leading aristocratic families (this may have been a lession Mystikos had learnt from his own mentor, Photios). Mystikos supported Romanos also in order to keep 'that much envied see', for which he was prepared to swallow some of his pride and recognize Zoe as augusta, something that his opponent in Church, Euthymios, rejected to consent to.

While defending the new emperor, Mystikos also defended the ideological background of Byzantium's leading role in the Christian world, thus protecting the position of the patriarch at the same time. As the highest spiritual authority, and intercessor between God and men, he verified the divine legitimacy of Romanos Lekapenos, confirming his own position (again as patriarch) at the same time. It is interesting to notice that in his letters sent to Symeon of Bulgaria, Mystikos mentions Romanos's name only once, when he announces to Symeon, that *kyr* Romanos has been chosen by God, and thence, if referring to emperor it is always an impersonal form that he uses.

As he participated in all sort of affairs within the empire, closing the circle to the first chapter of this thesis, would it thus reasonable to assume/conclude that he may have influenced the design of coins as well? Mystikos had plenty of motives and reasons to support the new emperor and to justify his position. He also performed, together with the young Constantine, Romanos's coronation. It is obvious that he possesed theoretical knowledge and had some of Photios's, his spiritual father, experience concerning the images of power. Furthermore, he was the patriarch during Alexander's rule, when the image of the emperor's divine investiture appeared for the first time on coins. And he had supported

Alexander as well, for motives similar to those accounting for his support of Romanos.

Two conclusions can be safely drawn from the previous pages. Mystikos definitely supported Romanos Lekapenos and his position as emperor; and he did so by employing an ideological background which agrees completely with the symbolic meaning of the image represented on the coin. He was in the position to propose its design. Whether he actually did, remains difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain.

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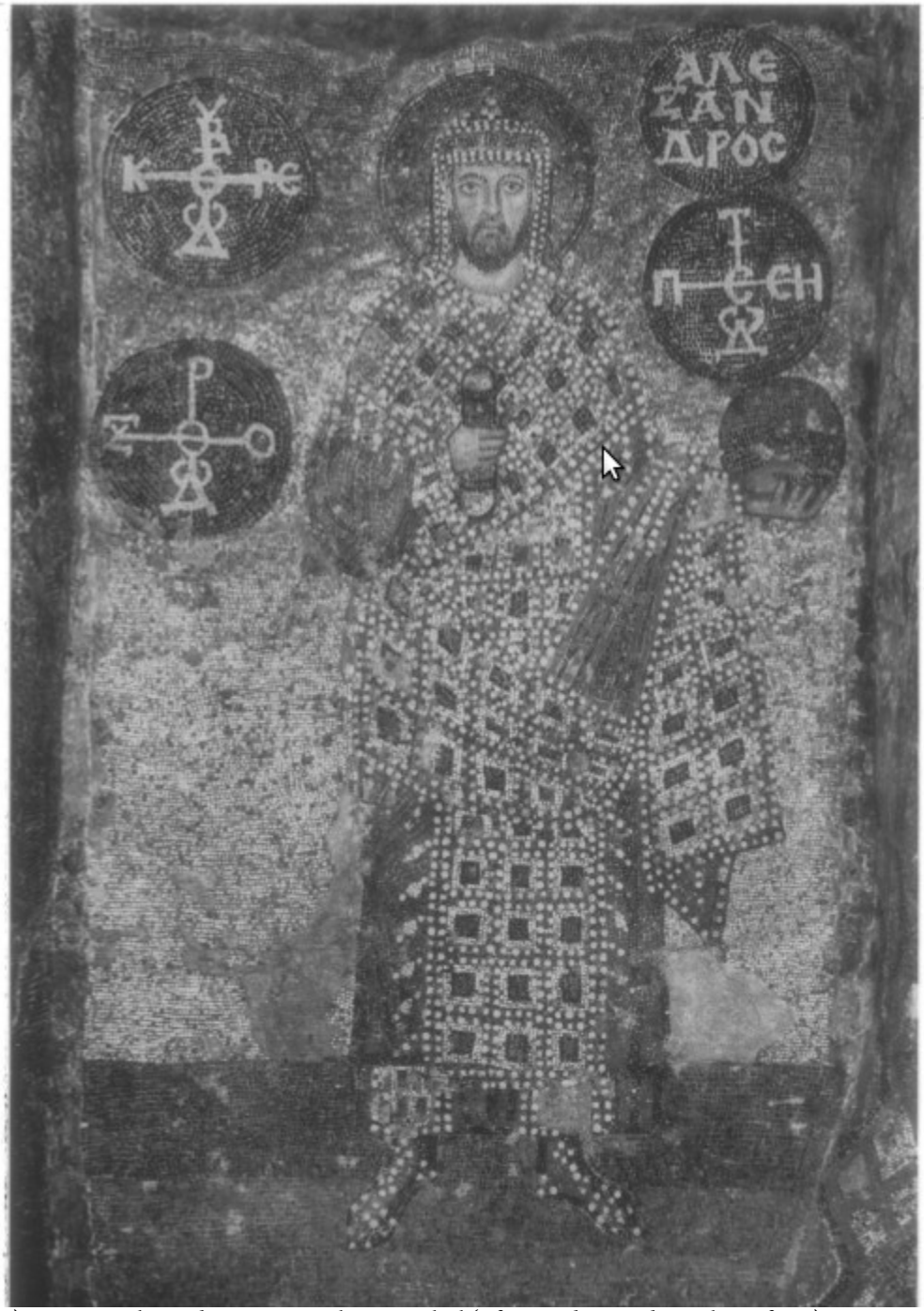
Plates

(fig. 1) Basil I and his second wife Eudokia as being blessed by Christ, ivory-casket lid, Palazzo Venezia, Rome (After Brubaker, Vision and Meaning, fig. 84)

(fig. 2) Basil I crowned by Gabriel, illumination from the manuscript containing the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus, Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. gr. 510. (After Brubaker, Vision and Meaning, fig. 5)

(fig. 3) Leo VI blessed by a Virgin; tip of the sceptre (?), Staatliche Museen, Berlin (After Brubaker, Vision and Meaning, fig 177)



(fig. 4) Emperor Alexander, Hagia Sophia, Istanbul (After Underwood-Hawkins, fig. 5)

(fig. 5) Solidus of Emperor Alexander; Throne-seated Christ on the obverse, Alexander crowned by St John the Baptist on the reverse (Dumbarton Oaks Collection)

(fig. 6) Romanos crowned by Christ on the Obverse, Christopher and Constantine 'switching places' on the reverse (DOC, 3, pl. XXXVI, 5-6)