

GRANHOLM GENEALOGY

BYZANTINE ROYAL ANCESTRY
Emperors, 578-1453

INTRODUCTION

During the first half of the first century Byzantium and specifically Constantinople was the most influential and richest capital in the world. Great buildings, such as Hagia Sophia were built during these times. Despite the distances, contacts with the Scandinavians took place, in some cases cooperation against common enemies. Vikings traded with them and served in the Emperors' Court. Sweden's King Karl XII took refuge there for four years after the defeat in the war against Peter the Great of Russia in Poltava. Our 6th great grandfather, "[Cornelius von Loos](#)" was with him and made drawings of many of the famous buildings in that region.

The Byzantine lineages to us are shown starting from different ancestors. There are many royals to whom we have a direct ancestral relationship and others who are distant cousins. These give an interesting picture of the history from those times. Wars took place among others with the Persians, which are also described in the book about our *Persian Royal Ancestry*. Additional text for many persons is **highlighted** in the following lists.

This story begins with **Emperor Tiberius II**, (47th great grandfather) born in 520 and ends with the death of **Emperor Constantine XI** (15th cousin, 17 times removed) in battle in 1453. His death marked the final end of the [Roman Empire](#), which had continued in the East for just under one thousand years after the fall of the [Western Roman Empire](#).

No relations to us, the initial Emperor of the Byzantine was [Justin I](#), born a peasant and a swineherd by initial occupation, reigned 518 to 527. His nephew [Justinian I](#) succeeded him and was succeeded by [Justin II](#), who was the son of his sister Vigilantia. Justin II selected **Tiberius II** to succeed him.

Descendants of: Tiberius II Emperor of Byzantium As Related to: Lars Erik Granholm

- 1 **Tiberius II Emperor of Byzantium** #18268 b. 520 d. 582 (47th great grandfather)
m. **Ino Anastasia Empress of Byzantium** #18269 d. 593
- 2 **Constantia Empress of Byzantium** #18267 b. 560 d. 605 (46th great grandmother)
m. **Maurice Tiberius Emperor of Byzantium** #18266 b. 539 d. 602
- 3 **Maria Princess of Byzantium** #18265 (45th great grandmother)
m. **Khosrau II Parvez Emperor of Sasanian Persia** #18264 d. 628 (42nd great grandfather) (See [Persian Royal Ancestry](#))

Descendants of: Heraclius the Elder As Related to: Lars Erik Granholm

- 1 **Heraclius the Elder** #18274 (46th great grandfather)
- 2 **Heraclius I Emperor of Byzantium** #18218 b. 575 d. 641 (45th great grandfather)
m. **Eudokia Empress of Byzantium** #18219 b. 580 d. 612
m. **Martina Empress of Byzantium** #18276
m. **Unknown** #18278
- [Children of Heraclius I Emperor of Byzantium and Martina Empress of Byzantium]
3 **Heraclonas Emperor of Byzantium** #18277 (45th great-uncle)
- [Children of Heraclius I Emperor of Byzantium and Fabia Eudoxia Empress of Byzantium]
3 **Constantine III Emperor of Byzantium** #18216 b. 612 (44th great grandfather)
m. **Gregoria** #18217
- 4 **Manyanh Princess of Byzantium** #18214 (43rd great grandmother)
m. **Yazdagird III Emperor of Sasanian Persia** #18215
[grandson of Khosrau II Parvez Emperor of Sasanian Persia]
- 5 **Izdundad Princess of Sasanian Persia** #18212 (42nd great grandmother)
m. **Bustanai ben Haninai Exilarch of Jews** #18211
[son of Haninai Exilarch of Jews in Babylon #18213]
- 4 **Constans II the Bearded Emperor of Byzantium** #18224 b. 630 Assassinated d. 668 (44th great-uncle)
Fausta Byzantine Empress #18275
- 5 **Constantine IV Emperor of Byzantium** #18225 d. 685 (first cousin, 44 times removed)
m. **Anastasia Empress of Byzantium** #18226
- 6 **Justinian II Emperor of Byzantium** #18227 b. 669 d. 711 (second cousin, 43 times removed)
m. **Theodora Princess of the Khazars** #18228
- 7 **Tiberius Emperor of Byzantium** #18229 (third cousin, 42 times removed)
- 5 **Tiberius III Emperor of Byzantium** #18230 d. 705 executed (first cousin, 44 times removed)
- 5 **Heraclius III Emperor of Byzantium** #18231 (first cousin, 44 times removed)
- 3 **Heraclius II Konstantinos Emperor of Byzantium** #18220 b. 612 d. 641 (45th great-uncle)
m. **Anastasia Gregoria Empress of Byzantium** #18221 b. 611
[daughter of Niketas Exarch of Carthage #18222]
- 3 **John Athalarichos** #18279 (45th great-uncle)
- 3 **Epiphanes Princess of Byzantium** #18234 b. 611 (45th great-aunt)
m. **Kaghan King of the Khazars** #18235
- 4 **Anastasia Queen of the Khazars** #18236 (first cousin, 45 times removed)
- 5 **Caganus King or Kaghan of the Khazars** #18237 (second cousin, 44 times removed)
- 6 **Tzitzakion Empress of Byzantium** #18238 (third cousin, 43 times removed)
m. **Constantine V Emperor of Byzantium** #18239 b. 718 d. 775
[son of Leo III the Isauri Emperor of Byzantium #18241 and Maria Empress of Byzantium #18242]

Descendants of: Leo III the Isauri Emperor of Byzantium As Related to: Lars Erik Granholm

- 1 **Leo III the Isauri Emperor of Byzantium** #18241 (39th great grandfather)
m. **Maria Empress of Byzantium** #18242 b. 695 Constantinople
- 2 **Constantine V Emperor of Byzantium** #18239 b. 718 d. 775 (39th great-uncle)
m. **Tzitzakion Empress of Byzantium** #18238
[daughter of Caganus King or Kaghan of the Khazars #18237]
 - 3 **Leo IV Emperor of Byzantium** #18240 b. 749 d. 780 (first cousin, 39 times removed)
m. **Irene Empress of Byzantium** #18250 b. 752 d. 803
 - 4 **Konstantinos VI Emperor of Byzantium** #18251 (second cousin, 38 times removed)
m. **Maria Empress of Byzantium** #18252
 - 5 **Euphrosyne Empress of Byzantium** #18253 (third cousin, 37 times removed)
m. **Michael II the Stammerer Emperor of Byzantium** #18254 b. 775 d. 829
[son of Leon of Amoria #18294]
- 2 **Anna Princess of Byzantium** #18285 b. 705 d. aft 743 (38th great grandmother)
m. **Artabasdos Emperor of the Byzantine Empire** #18291 d. 743
- 3 **Nicephorus I Emperor of Byzantium** #18245 (first cousin, 39 times removed)
 - 4 **Staurakios Emperor of Byzantium** #18246 (second cousin, 38 times removed)
m. **Theophano Empress of the Byzantine Empire** #18306
 - 4 **Prokia Princess of Byzantium** #18247 (second cousin, 38 times removed)
m. **Michael I Rhangabe Emperor of Byzantium** #18248
[son of Theophylaktos Rangabe Admiral of the Aegean fleet #18308]
 - 5 **Theophylactus Emperor of Byzantium** #18249 (third cousin, 37 times removed)
 - 5 **Ignatius Patriarch of Constantinople** #18305 b. 797 d. 877 (third cousin, 37 times removed)
- 3 **Mannus of the Mamik** #18292 (37th great grandfather)
m. **Theoctista of Pahlago** #18293
- 4 **Theodora Empress of Byzantium** #18257 (36th great grandmother)
m. **Theophilos Emperor of Byzantium** #18256
[son of Michael II the Stammerer Emperor of Byzantium #18254 and Thekla Empress of Byzantium #18255]
- 5 **Thecla Princess of Byzantium** #18311 b. 831 d. aft 867 (36th great-aunt)
m. **Basil I the Macedonian Emperor of Byzantium** #18312 d. 886
- 5 **Michael III Emperor of Byzantium** #18258 (35th great grandfather)
m. **Eudokia Ingerina Empress of Byzantium** #18259 b. 835 d. 882
- 6 **Leo VI the Wise Emperor of Byzantium** #18260 (34th great grandfather)
m. **Zoe Karbonopsina Empress of Byzantium** #18261
[Daughter of **Stylianos Zautzes of Byzantium**, #18419]
- 7 **Anna Princess of Byzantine** #17451 (33rd great grandmother)
m. **Louis the Blind King of Provence and Italy** #17442 b. 880 d. 928
[son of Boso Count of Vienne King of Provence #17441 and Ermengard Princess of Italy #17440]
- 8 **Constantine VII Emperor of Byzantine** #17396 b. 905 d. 959 (first cousin, 34 times removed)(30th ggf)
m. **Helena Lekapene** #17395
[daughter of Romanos I Lekapenos Emperor of Byzantine #17397 and Theodora Empress Mother of the Byzantine #17398]
- 9 **Theodora Empress of Byzantine** #17394 b. 946 (second cousin, 33 times removed)
m. **John I Tzimiskes Emperor of Byzantine** #17293, (first cousin, 33 times removed)
[son of Kourkouas from Armenia #17292 and daughter of **Bardas the Elder** #17291, 33rd great grandfather]
- 9 **Romanos II Emperor of Byzantine** #17295 b. 938 d. 963 (second cousin, 33 times removed)
m. **Theophano Empress of Byzantine** #17294
- 10 **Basil II the Bulgar-slayer Emperor of Byzantine** #17296 b. 958 d. 1025 (third cousin, 32 times removed)

10 **Constantine VIII Emperor of Byzantine** #17297 b. 960 d. 1028 (third cousin, 32 times removed)
m. **Helena daughter of Alypius** #17298

11 **Zoe the Macedonian Empress of the Byzantine** #17275 b. 978 d. 1015 (4th cousin, 31 times removed)
m. **Constantine IX Monomachos Emperor of Byzantium** #15208 b. 1005 d. 1064 (28th great grandfather) **See lineage below**
[son of Theodosios Monomachos #17285]
m. **Michael IV the Paphlagonian Emperor of Byzantine** #17299 b. 1010 d. 11041
m. **Romanos III Argyros Emperor of the Byzantine** #18296 b. 968 d. 1034 (2nd cousin, 30 times removed)

11 **Theodora the Macedonian Empress of Byzantine** #17300 b. 984 d. 1056 (4th cousin, 31 times removed)

10 **Anna Porphyrogeneta Princess of the Makedones** #18307 b. 963 d. 1011 (third cousin, 32 times removed)
m. **Saint Vladimir I the Great Grand Prince of Kiev** #15065 b. 960 Kiev d. 1015 Kiev (29th great grandfather)
[son of Sviatoslav I Grand Prince of Kiev and Malusha of Lybeck] (30th great grandparents, [Russian Viking and Royal Ancestry](#))

Descendants of: Comita Nikola As Related to: Lars Erik Granholm

1 Comita Nikola d. 30 Jan 970 (31st great grandfather)
m. Ripsimia Of Armenia
[daughter of Ashot II The Iron King Of Armenia and Marie Of Kachum]
2 Aron Of Bulgaria d. 976 (31st great-uncle)
3 Ivan Vladislav Tsar Of Bulgaria d. 1018 (first cousin, 31 times removed)
4 Catherine Empress Of Bulgaria (second cousin, 30 times removed)
m. Isaac I Komnenos Emperor Of Byzantine b. 1007 d. 1061
4 Alusian Tsar Of Bulgaria (second cousin, 30 times removed)
5 Anna Princess Of Bulgaria (third cousin, 29 times removed)
4 Trayan Prince Of Bulgaria (second cousin, 30 times removed)
5 Maria Princess Of Bulgaria (third cousin, 29 times removed)
m. Andronikos Doukas d. 1077

6 **Irene Doukaina Princess Of Bulgaria** b. 1066 d. 1133 (4th cousin, 28 times removed)
m. Alexios I Komnenos Emperor Of Byzantine b. 1056 d. 1118
[son of Ioannis Komnenos and Anna Dalassena]

7 **John II Komnenos Emperor Of Byzantine** b. 1087 d. 1143 (5th cousin, 27 times removed)
m. Saint Irene (Piroska) Empress b. 1088 d. 13 Aug 1134
[daughter of Saint Ladislaus I King and Adelaide Of Swabia]

8 **Manuel I Komnenos Emperor Of Byzantine** b. 1118 d. 1180 (6th cousin, 26 times removed)
m. Maria Princess b. 1145 d. 1182
[daughter of Raymond Of Poitiers Prince Of Antioch and Constance Of Antioch]

9 **Alexios II Komnenos Emperor Of Byzantine** d. 1183 (7th cousin, 25 times removed)

8 **Alexios Komnenos Emperor Of Byzantine** b. 1106 d. 1142 (6th cousin, 26 times removed)
m. Maria Komnene

8 **Isaac Komnenos Emperor Of Byzantine** b. 1113 d. 1154 (6th cousin, 26 times removed)
m. Irene Synadene

7 **Theodora Komnene Princess Of Byzantine** b. 1096 (5th cousin, 27 times removed)
m. Konstantinos Angelos

8 Andronikos Dukas Angelos (6th cousin, 26 times removed)
m. Euphrosyne Kastamonitissa

9 **Alexios III Angelos Emperor Of Byzantine** b. 1153 d. 1203 (7th cousin, 25 times removed)
m. Euphrosyne Doukaina Empress Of Byzantine b. 1155 d. 1211

10 Eirene (Irene) Angelina Princess Of Byzantine (8th cousin, 24 times removed)
m. Andronikos Doukas Komnenos Palaiologos

11 **Michael VIII Palaiologos Emperor Of Byzantine** b. 1223 d. 1282 (9th cousin, 23 times removed)
m. Theodora Doukaina Empress Of Byzantine b. 1215

- 12 **Andronikos II Palaiologos Emperor Of Byzantine** b. 1259 d. 1332 (10th cousin, 22 times removed)
m. Anna Princess Of Hungary b. 1260 d. 1281
[daughter of Stephen V King and Elizabeth The Cuman Queen]
- 13 **Michael IX Palaiologos Emperor Of Byzantine** b. 1277 d. 1320 (11th cousin, 21 times removed)
m. Rita Princess Of Armenia
- 14 **Andronikos III Palaiologos Emperor Of Byzantine** b. 1297 d. 1341 (12th cousin, 20 times removed)
m. Anna Countess of Savoy
- 15 **John V Palaiologos Emperor Of Byzantine** b. 1332 d. 1391 (13th cousin, 19 times removed)
m. Helena Kantakouzene Empress consort b. 1333 d. 1396
- 16 **Andronikos IV Palaiologos Emperor Of Byzantine** b. 1348 d. 1385 (14th cousin, 18 times removed)
m. Keratsa Princess of Bulgaria
- 17 **John VII Palaiologos Emperor of Byzantine** b. 1370 d. 1408 (15th cousin, 17 times removed)
- 16 **Manuel II Palaiologos Emperor Of Byzantine** b. 1350 d. 1425 (14th cousin, 18 times removed)
m. Helena Dragas Princess of Serbia b. 1372 d. 1450
- 17 **Thomas Palaeologus Despot Of Morea** b. 1409 d. 1465 (15th cousin, 17 times removed)
m. Catherine (Caterina) Zaccaria Of Achaea
- 17 **John VIII Palaiologos Emperor Of Byzantine** b. 1392 d. 1448 (15th cousin, 17 times removed)
m. Anna Vasilievna Princess Of Moscow b. 1393 d. 1417
[daughter of Vasily I Grand Prince Of Moscow and Sophia Princess Of Lithuania]
- 17 **Constantine XI Palaiologos Emperor Of Byzantine** b. 1404 d. 1453 (15th cousin, 17 times removed)

Direct Lineage from: Constantine IX Monomachos Emperor of Byzantium to: Lars Erik Granholm

- 1 **Constantine IX Monomachos Emperor of Byzantium** b. ABT 1005 d. 1064
m. Helena (Maria ?) Sclerina Empress of Byzantium d. ABT 1033
- 2 **Irene (Anastasia) Maria Princess of Byzantium** b. ABT 1032 d. NOV 1067
m. Vsevolod I Yaroslavich Grand Prince of Kiev b. 1030 d. 13 Apr 1093
- 3 **Vladimir II "Monomach" Grand Duke of Kiev** b. 1053 d. 19 May 1125
m. 1074 Gytha Haraldsdotter Princess of England b. ABT 1053 d. 1 May 1107
m. N N Byzantine Princess d. 7 May 1107
- 4 **Mstislav I (Harald) Grand Duke of Kiev** b. 1076 d. 15 Apr 1132 m. Christina Ingesdotter Princess of Sweden
- 5 **Ingeborg Princess of Russia** b. ABT 1099 d. 1140 m. Knud Eriksson Lavard King of Denmark b. 12 Mar 1091 6
- 6 **Valdemar I the Great King of Denmark** b. 14 Jan 1131 d. 12 May 1182
m. Sofiya Vladimirovna Princess of Russia b. 1140 d. 5 May 1198
- 7 **Richiza Valdemarsdotter Princess of Denmark** b. ABT 1178 d. 8 May 1220
m. Erik X Knutsson King of Sweden b. 1180 d. 10 Apr 1216
- 8 **Märtha Eriksdotter Princess of Sweden** b. ABT 1213 m. Nils Sixtensson Sparre av Tofta b. ABT 1188
- 9 **Sixten Nilsson Sparre av Tofta** d. 1310 m. Ingrid Abjörnsdotter b. Abt 1220
- 10 **Abjörn Sixtensson Sparre av Tofta** b. ABT 1240 d. 1310 m. Ingeborg Ulfssdotter Ulf b. 1258 d. AFT 1307
- 11 **Ulf Abjörnsson Sparre** b. 1348 m. 1330 Kristina Sigmundsdotter Tre Klöverblad b. 1295
- 12 **Karl Ulfsson Sparre av Tofta** m. Helena Israelsdotter b. 1340 d. 1410
- 13 **Margareta Karlsdotter Sparre av Tofta** d. 1429 m. Knut Tordsson Bonde b. ABT 1377 d. 1413
m. 1414 Steen Tureson Bielke
- 14 **Karl VIII Knutsson Bonde King of Sweden** b. 1409 d. 15 May 1470
- 15 **Karin Karlsdotter Bonde** m. Erengisle Björnsson Djäkn d. bef 1447
- 16 **Märta Erengisledotter Djäkn** m. Johan Henriksson Fleming b. 1465 d. AFT 1514
- 17 **Anna Johansdotter Fleming** b. 1435 d. 1505 m. Olof Pedersson (Wildeman) Lille d. 1535
- 18 **Karin Olofsdotter Wildeman** b. 1465 d. 1535 m. Ludolf Boose b. 1465 d. 1535
- 19 **Johan Ludolfsson Boose** b. 1526 d. 1596 m. Ingeborg Henriksdotter
- 20 **Kirstin Johansdotter Boose** b. 1576 d. 1646 m. Bertil von Nieroht b. 1582 d. 1652
- 21 **Maria Bertilsdotter von Nieroht** b. 1612 d. 1682 m. Carl Henriksson Lindelöf b. 1605 d. 1668
- 22 **Carl Carlsson von Lindelöf** b. 1642 d. 1712 m. N.N. Laurisdotter Laurentz
- 23 **Anna Maria Carlsdotter von Lindelöf** b. 1670 d. 1 Feb 1747
m. Ericus Christierni Orenius b. ABT 1658 d. 2 Mar 1740
- 24 **Margareta Eriksdotter Orenia** b. 16 Jan 1710 d. 1804 m. Johan Urnovius b. 1706 d. 1783
- 25 **Christina Margareta Urnovia** m. 20 Dec 1781 Johan Flinck
- 26 **Johan (Flinck) Årenius** b. 12 Jan 1787 d. 6 Nov 1823
m. 15 Mar 1810 Ulrika Abrahamsdotter Sevon b. 9 Jun 1784
- 27 **Johan Gustaf Johansson Årenius** b. 5 Jun 1810
m. Johanna Carolina Röring b. 24 Jun 1802 d. ABT 1839
- 28 **Charlotta Constantia Renlund** b. 4 Jun 1830 d. 28 Jan 1905
m. 19 Mar 1854 Erik Eriksson Kåll b. 24 Jun 1829 d. 23 Jan 1905
- 29 **Johanna Karolina Eriksdotter Kåll** b. 9 Jan 1863 d. 8 Nov 1934
m. 24 Mar 1887 Karl-Johan Granholm b. 14 Mar 1866 d. 22 Jun 1920
- 30 **Erik Anton Granholm** b. 28 May 1906 d. 29 Jan 1959
m. 20 Aug 1933 Karin Hildegard Kasén b. 3 Jul 1914 d. 2004
- 31 **Lars Erik Granholm** b. 28 Jul 1934 m. Leena Elisabeth Kentala

Tiberius II Constantine

Flavius Tiberius Constantinus [Augustus](#) or **Tiberius II Constantine**, known in Greek as **Tiberios Konstantinos** (ca 520/ca 535 - August 14, 582) was a [Byzantine emperor](#) (574 - 582) of the [Justinian Dynasty](#).

Tiberius II Constantine, wearing consular robes



During his reign, Tiberius II Constantine gave away 7,200 pounds of gold each year for four years.

He was a friend of [Justin II](#), who appointed Tiberius [Comes](#) of the [Excubitors](#). He took control of the empire when Justin II went insane in 574, and to increase his popularity, he immediately began spending money that Justin

had reserved in his treasury. The Empress Sophia, Justin's wife, reproached Tiberius for having reduced the state to poverty, saying:

What I have been collecting through many years you are scattering prodigally in a short time

Tiberius replied:

I trust to the Lord that money will not be lacking in our treasury so long as the poor receive charity and captives are ransomed. For this is the great treasure, since the Lord says, 'Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal.' Therefore of these things which God has furnished us let us gather treasures in heaven, and God will deign to give us increase in this world.

[Justin II](#), Tiberius's predecessor, had been made infirm by disease; the faculties of his mind were impaired and he subsequently lost the use of his feet. Confined to his palace, he became a stranger to the complaints of the people and the vices of the government. Conscious of his infirmity, he honorably chose to seek a successor to the [Imperial](#) throne. On the advice of his wife [Sophia](#), he handed the [diadem](#) to one of his [Excubitors](#), Tiberius.

“You behold,” said the emperor, “the ensigns of supreme power. You are about to receive them, not from my hand, but from the hand of God. Honor them, and from them you will derive honor. Respect the empress your mother: you are now her son; before, you were her servant. Delight not in blood; abstain from revenge; avoid those actions by which I have incurred the public hatred; and consult the experience, rather than the example, of your predecessor. As a man, I have sinned; as a sinner, even in this life, I have been severely punished: but these servants, (and we pointed to his ministers,) who have abused my confidence, and inflamed my passions, will appear with me before the tribunal of Christ. I have been dazzled by the splendor of the diadem: be thou wise and modest; remember what you have been, remember what you are. You see around us your slaves, and your children: with the authority, assume the tenderness, of a parent. Love your people like yourself; cultivate the affections, maintain the discipline, of the army; protect the fortunes of the rich, relieve the necessities of the poor.”

While Justin was still alive, Tiberius' general [Justinian](#) fought and defeated the [Persians](#) in the [East](#). Tiberius sent reinforcements to Italy in order to fight Lombards. He saved Rome from Lombards and allied with [Childepertus](#) (LG: first cousin, 44 times removed), the King of the

Franks, in order to defeat them, but his army, under the command of Baduarius, was defeated by the enemy and the Lombards continued their conquests in Italy.

When Tiberius became full emperor upon Justin's death in 578, he extended his military activities into the remnants of the Western Empire, where he made peace with the [Visigoths](#) in [Spain](#) and defeated the [Berbers](#) in [North Africa](#). He may have been the Emperor [Lucius Tiberius](#) of Arthurian legend, sending envoys to former Roman provinces after a long period without Imperial presence. Meanwhile, the [Slavs](#) began to migrate into the [Balkans](#) in 579; unfortunately, Tiberius needed the army to defend against Persian invasions, and was unable to stop the Slavic migrations.

Sophia, Justin's wife, was persuaded that she should preserve her station and influence by marrying the new emperor Tiberius. But he refused her proposal of marriage because he was already married to Anastasia. Sophia sought revenge: a secret alliance was concluded between the dowager empress and the general Justinian. They conspired to overthrow the emperor: if the plot had been successful, Justinian would have become the new emperor. However the conspiracy failed and Sophia was reduced to a modest allowance. Justinian was forgiven by Tiberius II.

In 582, Tiberius fell ill, and Maurice was named his heir. Maurice became emperor when Tiberius died in August - poisoned, it was rumored. His last words were spoken to his successor, Maurice:

Let my sovereignty be delivered to thee with this girl. Be happy in the use of it, mindful always to love equity and justice.

Ino Anastasia

Ino, renamed **Aelia Anastasia** (died 593) was the Empress consort of [Tiberius II Constantine](#) (r.578-582) of the [Byzantine Empire](#), and [Augusta](#) from 578 until her death.

Early life and marriages

According to the account of [John of Ephesus](#), Ino came from Daphnudium, possibly the island of Daphnousia off the coast of [Bithynia](#) in the [Black Sea](#). She was first married to the *optio* Ioannes, a low-ranking [executive officer](#) of the [Byzantine army](#). They had a daughter who was betrothed to Tiberius. Her husband and daughter both died prior to the conclusion of the marriage contract, and Ino herself married Tiberius instead.

John of Ephesus mentions that Ino and Tiberius had three children. Daughters [Constantina](#) and Charito are known by name.

Caesar's wife

Tiberius served as *Comes Excubitorum* (Commander of the [Excubitors](#)) under [Justin II](#). Justin reportedly suffered from temporary fits of insanity and was unable to perform his duties as early as the fall of the important fortress of [Dara](#) to [Khosrau I](#) of the [Sassanid Empire](#) in November 573. According to [Gregory of Tours](#), sole power of the Empire at this point was assumed by his wife, [Sophia](#), a niece of Justinian's wife, [Theodora](#). [Evagrius Scholasticus](#) reports that Sophia managed to conclude a three-year truce with Khosrau on her own. But to wield effective power as regent she would require supporters, and she therefore picked Tiberius as her colleague.

According to the chronicle of [Theophanes the Confessor](#), Tiberius was officially appointed *Caesar* by Justin on 7 December 574. He was also [adopted](#) by Justin and thus became his appointed heir. At this point Ino emerged as *Caesarissa*, the second-ranking lady in the Empire.

The *Ecclesiastic History* of John of Ephesus and the chronicle of [Theophanes the Confessor](#) both record that Sophia considered planning to marry Tiberius herself. His current marriage was seen as an offense to her, and Ino and her daughters were not allowed to enter the [Great Palace of Constantinople](#). They were instead settled in the palace of Hormisdas, residence of [Justinian I](#) prior to his elevation to the throne. According to John of Ephesus, Tiberius joined them every evening and returned to the Great Palace every morning. Sophia also refused to let the ladies at court visit Ino and her daughters as a token of respect to them.

Eventually however, to escape Sophia's displeasure, Ino and her daughters left [Constantinople](#) for her native Daphnudium. According to John of Ephesus, Tiberius left Constantinople to visit Ino when she fell sick. Theophanes records the death of Anastasia in the year 593. She was buried in the [Church of the Holy Apostles](#), alongside her husband.

Constantina (empress)

Constantina (ca 560 – ca 605) was the Empress consort of [Maurice](#) of the [Byzantine Empire](#). Constantina was a daughter of [Tiberius II Constantine](#) and his wife [Ino Anastasia](#). The *Georgian Chronicle* identifies Constantina as a daughter of [Khosrau II](#). However the Chronicle was compiled in the 13th century and so the contradictory parentage is considered a mistake. She was, however, his mother in law.

Caesar's daughter

Her father Tiberius was [Comes Excubitorum](#) (Commander of the [Excubitors](#)) under [Justin II](#). Justin reportedly suffered from temporary fits of insanity and was unable to perform his duties as early as the fall of Dara to [Khosrau I](#) of the [Sassanid Empire](#) in November, 573. According to [Gregory of Tours](#), sole power of the Empire at this point was assumed by [Sophia](#). Sophia was a niece of [Theodora](#) and Empress consort of Justin II. [Evagrius Scholasticus](#) reports that Sophia managed to conclude a three-year truce with Khosrau by her own. But as a Regent she would require supporters and she picked Tiberius as her colleague in power.

Imperial daughter

In September, 578 Justin II appointed Tiberius as his co-emperor. On October 5, 578, Justin was dead and Tiberius became the sole Emperor. According to John of Ephesus, Sophia sent [Patriarch Eutychius of Constantinople](#) to Tiberius to convince him to divorce Ino. Offering both herself and her adult daughter Arabia as prospective brides for the new Emperor. Tiberius refused.

Tiberius apparently feared for the safety of his wife and daughters. John of Ephesus reports the three women secretly smuggled into Constantinople by boat, late at night. Ino was proclaimed Empress in a public ceremony and received the rank of Augusta. Sophia also retained her rank and continued to hold a section of the palace to herself. Constantina had now become one of two imperial daughters.

The reign of her father as Emperor was relatively short. In 582, Tiberius fell ill and the matter of succession became urgent. As before, Sophia was asked to choose a successor for the dying Emperor. Sophia chose Maurice, a general who had accomplished a number of victories over [Hormizd IV](#), son and successor of Khosrau I.

Empress

The marriage of Constantina and Maurice took place in Autumn, 582. The ceremony was performed by [Patriarch John IV of Constantinople](#) and is described in detail by [Theophylact Simocatta](#). Constantina was proclaimed an Augusta while both Sophia and Anastasia also kept the same title. John of Ephesus mentions all three Augustas residing in the Great Palace.

Anastasia was the first of the three ladies to die. Theophanes places her death in 593. Constantina seems to have enjoyed better relations with Sophia than her mother did. Theophanes records them to have jointly offered a precious [crown](#) as an Easter present to Maurice in 601. He accepted their gift but then ordered it hang over the altar of [Hagia Sophia](#) as his own tribute to

the church. Which according to Theophanes was taken an insult by both Augustas and caused a rift in the marriage.

The marriage was fertile and produced ten known children:

- [Miriam/Maria](#) (b. ca 582), married to [Khosrau II](#) and had issue.

Deposition

On 22 November 602, Maurice, Constantina and their children left Constantinople in a [warship](#). City-wide riots had started due to a [famine](#), the Green [chariot racing](#) club had turned against them and a mutinous army under [Phocas](#) had arrived outside the gates. Phocas was proclaimed an emperor on 23 November.

The warship faced a winter storm at sea and sought refuge at the Asian coast of the [Sea of Marmara](#), not far from [Nicomedia](#). Maurice suffered from [arthritis](#) and was incapacitated by severe pain after his flight at sea. Troops loyal to Phocas captured the deposed imperial family days later and brought them to [Chalcedon](#). On 27 November, all five sons were executed before the eyes of their father. Then Maurice himself was executed. Constantina survived as a widow.

In 603, Constantina and her three daughters were exiled to a monastery, known as "House of Leo". The monastery has been tentatively identified with the Monastery of St. Mamas, founded and run by their relative Theoctista, a sister of Maurice.

Theophanes records that Constantina maintained contact with [Germanus](#), and that both were conspiring against Phocas. Their messages were entrusted to Petronia, a [maidservant](#) under Constantina. Petronia proved disloyal and reported the conspiracy to Phocas. Constantina was arrested and placed in the custody of Theopemptus, [prefect](#) of Constantinople. Her [interrogation](#) included [torture](#) and she was forced to give the name of her fellow conspirators.^[24]

Constantina and all three of her daughters were executed at Chalcedon. Germanus and an unnamed daughter of his were also executed. The daughter had been the widow of Theodosius. Theophanes places the deaths in 605/606 but the exact date is in doubt.

Patria, attributed to [George Codinus](#), mentions Constantina was decapitated and her corpse thrown in the [Bosporus](#). However *De Ceremoniis* by [Constantine VII](#) mentions Maurice, Constantina and their children buried at the monastery of St. Mamas

Maurice (emperor)

Flavius Mauricius Tiberius Augustus (539 – November 27, 602), known in English as **Maurice**, was [Byzantine Emperor](#) from 582 to 602. His reign is a relatively accurately documented era of the [Late Antiquity](#); in particular by the [historian Theophylact Simocatta](#). Maurice stands out as one of the most important rulers of the early Byzantine era, whose reign was troubled by almost unending wars on all frontiers.

A [solidus](#) of Maurice's reign

Maurice was born in [Arabissus](#) in [Cappadocia](#) in 539, the son of a certain [Paul](#). He had one brother, [Peter](#), and two sisters, Theoctista and Gordia, later the wife of the general [Philippicus](#). According to a legend, he was of [Armenian](#) origin, but the issue cannot be determined in any way.



Persian War and accession to the throne

In late 577, despite his complete lack of military experience, he was named as [magister militum per Orientem](#), effectively commander-in-chief of the Byzantine army in the East, in the [ongoing war](#) against [Sassanid Persia](#), succeeding the general [Justinian](#). At about the same time, he was raised to the rank of [patricius](#).

He scored a crushing victory against the Persians in 581. A year later, he married [Constantina](#), the Emperor's daughter. On August 13, he succeeded his father-in-law. At that time, he ruled a bankrupt Empire, paying extremely high tribute to the [Avars](#), its Balkan provinces thoroughly devastated by the [Slavs](#) and at war with Persia.

Maurice's attempts to consolidate the Empire slowly but steadily met with success, last but not least thanks to the peace with Persia. His initial popularity apparently decreased during his reign, mostly because of his fiscal politics. In 588, his announcement to cut military wages by 25% led to serious mutiny of troops on the Persian front. He is said to have refused to pay a very little ransom in 599 or 600 to deliver 12,000 Byzantine soldiers taken prisoners by the Avars. It is said that the prisoners were killed and a military delegation, headed by an officer named Phocas was humiliated and rejected in Constantinople.

Maurice was murdered on November 27, 602. It is said that the deposed emperor was forced to watch his six sons executed before his eyes, before he was beheaded himself. Empress Constantina and her three daughters were spared and sent to a monastery. The Persian King Chosroes II used this coup and the murder of his Patron as an excuse for a renewed war against the Byzantine Empire.

Maurice's marriage was fertile and produced ten known children:

- [Miriam/Maria](#) (b. ca 582), married to [Khosrau II](#) and had issue.

Maria (daughter of Maurice)

Maria is the name of a supposed daughter of [Maurice, Byzantine Emperor](#) and wife of [Khosrau II](#). Her existence is recorded in the Chronicle of [Michael the Syrian](#).

Historicity

"Shirin. Christian - Queen - Myth of Love. A woman of late antiquity - Historical reality and literary effect "(2004) by [Wilhelm Baum](#) examines the sources concerning Maria and her relation to another consort of Khosrau II, [Shirin](#). The historical setting for a marital alliance between the [Justinian Dynasty](#) and the [Sassanids](#) would be 590. At the time Khosrau was an exiled prince who sought assistance from Maurice to claim the throne against [Bahrām Chobin](#).

Maria is notably absent from Byzantine sources. She appears instead in accounts by [Syriac chronicle](#), [Dionysius Telmaharensis](#) (as preserved in the [Chronicle of 1234](#)), [Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari](#), [Patriarch Eutychius of Alexandria](#), [Ferdowsi](#), the [Chronicle of Seert](#), [Michael the Syrian](#), [Bar-Hebraeus](#), [Mīr-Khvānd](#). The Chronicle of Seert and [Mari ibn Sulaiman](#) are unique in mentioning Maria was also called "Shirin". Equating the two figures. All feature her as a daughter of Maurice and wife of Khosrau II.

The Shahnameh features a tale of Maria dying poisoned by Shirin. Later tales featuring the two as rival queens occur in later texts. In several cases, their struggle is based on trying to elevate different heirs to the throne. Primary sources indicate that Siroe ([Kavadh II](#)) was the eldest son of Khosrau and not a son of Shirin. Various accounts have Maria as his mother. With Shirin supporting her own son, Merdanschah.

Khosrau II

Khosrau II (**Khosrow II**, **Chosroes II**, or **Xosrov II** in classical sources, sometimes called *Parvez*, "the Ever Victorious") was the twenty-second [Sassanid King of Persia](#), reigning from [590](#) to [628](#). He was the son of [Hormizd IV](#) (reigned [579](#)–[590](#)).

Khosrau II was inferior to his grandfather in terms of proper education and discipline. He was haughty, cruel, and given to luxury; he was neither a warrior-[general](#) nor an [administrator](#) and, despite his brilliant victories, did not personally command his armies in the field, relying instead on the [strategy](#) and [loyalty](#) of his [generals](#). Nevertheless [Tabari](#) describes him as:



Excelling most of the other Persian kings in bravery, wisdom and forethought, and none matching him in military might and triumph, hoarding of treasures and good fortunes, hence the epithet Parviz, meaning victorious.

According to legend, Khosrau had a [shabestan](#) in which over 3,000 [concubines](#) resided.

Gold coin with the image of Khosrau II

Muhammad 's letter to Khosrau II

Khosrau II is also remembered in [Islamic](#) tradition to be the Persian king to whom [Muhammad](#) had sent a messenger, [Abdullah ibn Hudhafah as-Sahmi](#), along with a letter in which Khosrau was asked to preach the religion of Islam. In [Tabari](#)'s original Arabic manuscript the letter to Khosrau II reads:

مېحرلانا مھرحرلا لھللا مھسب
نا دھش و لھوسر و لھلاب نھآ و یدھلا عھبتا نھ ىلھ مالھس . سرفھلا مھيظھ ىرسك ىلا لھللا لھوسر دھم نھ
سانلا ىلا لھللا لھوسر ىناف ، لھللا ءاعدب كھوعدا . لھوسر و دھبع دھم نھ و لھللا ىرھشال دھحو لھللا الھللا
سوجھلا مھثا نھ ىناف تھبب نھاف . مھسرت مھلساف . نھرفالھلا ىلھ لھوقلا قھحي و اھي نھاك نھ رھنال قھفاك
كھي لھ .

English translation:

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful

From Muhammad, Messenger of God, to Chosroes, Ruler of Persia. Peace be on him who follows the guidance, believes in God and His Messenger and bears witness that there is no one worthy of worship save God, the One, without associate, and that Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger. I invite you to the Call of God, as I am the Messenger of God to the whole of mankind, so that I may warn every living person and so that the truth may become clear and the judgement of God may overtake the disbelievers. I call upon you to accept Islam and thus make yourself secure. If you turn away, you will bear the sins of your [Zoroastrian](#) subjects.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heraclius_the_Elder

Heraclius the Elder

Heraclius the Elder (**Latin:** *Heraclius*,) - was a [Byzantine Exarch](#) of [Africa](#) and the father of [Byzantine Emperor Heraclius](#). He was of [Armenian](#) origin. In [608](#), Heraclius the Elder renounced his loyalty to the Emperor [Phocas](#), who had overthrown [Maurice](#) six years earlier. The rebels issued coins showing both Heraclii dressed as [consuls](#), though neither of them explicitly claimed the imperial title at this time.

Heraclius

Flavius Heraclius (known in English as **Heraclius**, or **Herakleios**) (c. 575 - February 11, 641) was a [Byzantine Emperor](#), who ruled the [East Roman Empire](#) for over thirty years, from October 5, 610 to February 11, 641. His rise to power began in 608, when he and his [father](#), the viceregal [Exarch of Africa](#), successfully led a revolt against the unpopular usurper [Phocas](#). Heraclius' reign was marked by several military campaigns, and he was remembered in future generations both for his battles against the [Sassanian](#) Persian king [Khosrau Parvez](#), and as the first of the Byzantine emperors to [engage the Muslims](#). He was also traditionally credited with establishing the [Thematic system](#), though modern scholarship marginalizes his role in this development.

Heraclius and Heraclius Constantine



Courtesy: Classical Numismatic Group, Inc.

Heraclius was born into an [Armenian](#) family from [Cappadocia](#) although beyond that, there is little specific information known about his ancestry. He was the son and namesake of Heraclius (generally referred to retrospectively as [Heraclius the Elder](#)), who had been a key general of Emperor [Maurice's](#) in the 590 AD war with [Bahram Chobin](#), usurper of the [Sassanid Empire](#). His mother was named Epiphania. After the war, Maurice appointed [Heraclius the Elder](#) to the position of [Exarch](#) of [Africa](#). Though the younger Heraclius' birthplace is unknown, he grew up in [Roman](#) Africa; according to one tradition, he engaged in [gladiatorial](#) combat with [lions](#) as a youth.

Revolt against Phocas and the accession of Heraclius

In 608 Heraclius the Elder renounced his loyalty to the Emperor [Phocas](#), who had overthrown Maurice six years earlier. The rebels issued coins showing both Heraclii dressed as [consuls](#), though neither of them explicitly claimed the imperial title at this time. The younger Heraclius' cousin Niketas launched an overland invasion of [Egypt](#); by 609, he had defeated Phocas' general Bonosus and secured the province. Meanwhile, the younger Heraclius sailed eastward with another force via [Sicily](#) and [Cyprus](#).

As he approached [Constantinople](#), he made contact with leading [aristocrats](#) in the city, and soon arranged a ceremony where he was crowned and acclaimed as emperor. When he reached the capital, the [Excubitors](#), an elite imperial guard unit led by Phocas' son-in-law Priscus, deserted to Heraclius, and he entered the city without serious resistance. Heraclius personally executed Phocas.

On October 5, 610, Heraclius was crowned for a second time, this time in the [Chapel of St. Stephen](#) within the Great Palace, and at the same time married Fabia, who took the name [Eudokia](#). After her death in 612, he married his niece [Martina](#) in 613; this second marriage was considered [incestuous](#) and was very unpopular.

Sassanid King [Khosrau II](#) submitting to Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, from a plaque on a 12th century French cross

War against Persia



When Heraclius took power the Empire was in a desperate situation. Phocas' initial revolt had stripped the [Danube](#) frontier of troops, leaving most of the [Balkans](#) at the mercy of the [Avars](#).

[Khosrau II](#) (Chosroes) (45th great grandfather) of the [Sassanid Empire](#) had been restored to his throne by Maurice and they had remained allies. He had used the death of his ally Maurice as an excuse to launch a war against the [Romans](#). Chosroes had at his court a man who claimed to be Maurice's son Theodosius, and Chosroes demanded that the Romans accept him as Emperor.

The Persians had slowly gained the upper hand in [Mesopotamia](#) over the course of Phocas' reign; when Heraclius' revolt resulted in [civil war](#), the Persians took advantage of the internal conflict to advance deep into [Syria](#).

Heraclius offered peace terms to the Persians upon his accession, but Chosroes refused to treat with him, viewing him as an usurper of Theodosius' throne. Heraclius' initial military moves against the Persians ended disastrously, and the Persians rapidly advanced westward.

In 613, the Persian army took [Damascus](#) with the help of the [Jews](#), took [Jerusalem](#) in 614, damaging the [Church of the Holy Sepulchre](#) and capturing the Holy [Cross](#) and [Egypt](#) in the process.

They made raids deep into [Anatolia](#) as far as [Chalcedon](#), a town lying almost opposite of Constantinople across the [Bosphorus](#). The Persians were also in communication with the Avars.

The situation was so grave that Heraclius reportedly considered moving the capital from Constantinople to [Carthage](#), but was dissuaded by [Patriarch Sergius I of Constantinople](#).

Eudokia (wife of Heraclius)

Fabia Eudokia (sometimes written Eudocia, c. 580 - 13 August, 612) was a Byzantine Empress from 610 to 612. She was the first empress consort of [Heraclius](#).

She was a daughter of Rogas. The name of her father was recorded in the chronicle of [Theophanes the Confessor](#). Rogas was a landowner in the [Exarchate of Africa](#).

Empress

Her birth name was Fabia. She was betrothed to [Heraclius](#) when the future emperor still resided in the Exarchate. The Exarch at the time was her father-in-law [Heraclius the Elder](#).

Heraclius had started a revolt against [Phocas](#) in 608. Under unknown circumstances both Fabia and her mother-in-law [Epiphania](#) seem to have been captured by Phocas by 610. They spent their captivity in the monastery "Nea Metanoia" (New Repentance) and were used as hostages to prevent Heraclius from besieging [Constantinople](#).

The two women were eventually released by members of the Green faction of Byzantine [chariot racing](#) events. They were delivered to Heraclius to the island of [Calonymus](#) (now Calomio), leaving him free to launch his successful assault. The [Excubitors](#) defected to his side and thus allowed him to enter the city without serious resistance.

On 5 October, 610, Heraclius was proclaimed Emperor. On the same day they were married. She took the name Eudokia at this point. She was granted the title of Augusta.

They had two children:

- [Eudoxia Epiphania](#), a daughter. Born on 7 July, 611. She was proclaimed Augusta on 4 October, 612.
- Heraclius Constantine, a son, who went on to be Emperor [Constantine III](#). Born on 3 May, 612. Crowned co-emperor on 22 January, 613.

Eudokia died on 13 August, 612. According to the *Chronographikon syntomon* of [Ecumenical Patriarch Nikephoros I of Constantinople](#), the cause of death was [epilepsy](#). According to Nikephoros, her funeral was accompanied with an incident revealing how popular she was with the general populace. A [maidservant spat](#) out of an upstairs window while the funeral procession was just below it. The coffin was still open and the [saliva](#) reached the robes of the corpse. The crowds took offense and the girl was promptly seized. Finishing her life in an [execution by burning](#).

Eudokia was buried in the [Church of the Holy Apostles](#). Heraclius went on to marry his niece [Martina](#).

Martina (empress)

Martina (died after 641) was the second Empress consort of [Heraclius](#) of the [Byzantine Empire](#).

Martina was a daughter of Maria and a certain Martinus. Her mother was a sister to [Heraclius](#).

Maria and Heraclius were children of [Heraclius the Elder](#) and his wife Epiphania. The name of their mother was recorded in the chronicle of [Theophanes the Confessor](#).

Empress

[Eudokia](#), first wife of Heraclius, died on 13 August 612. According to Theophanes, Martina married her maternal uncle not long after. Placing the marriage in 613 at the latest. However Nikephoros places the marriage during the wars with the [Eurasian Avars](#) which took place in the 620s.

The marriage was considered to fall within the [prohibited degree of kinship](#), according to the rules of [Chalcedonian Christianity](#) concerning [incest](#). This particular case of marriage between an uncle and a niece had been declared legal since the time of the [Codex Theodosianus](#). Thus the marriage was not approved by the people of [Constantinople](#) and the Church.

Despite his disapproval and attempts to convince Heraclius to repudiate Martina, [Patriarch Sergius I of Constantinople](#) performed the ceremony himself and crowned Martina in the Augustaum after she was proclaimed Augusta by Heraclius. Even the members of the imperial family voiced their objections, with Heraclius' brother (and Martina's uncle) Theodore continually criticising Heraclius because of this relationship.

The Emperor and the Empress were, however, clearly a close couple: Martina accompanied her husband in his most difficult campaigns against the [Sassanid Empire](#). She was also at his side at [Antioch](#) when the news was received of the serious defeat by the Arabs at the river [Yarmuk](#) in August 636.

They had at least ten children, of whom at least two were handicapped, which was seen as divine punishment for the [incestuous](#) marriage. Among them was Heraclius II, called [Heracleonas](#), who through his mother's influence received the title of Augustus on July 4, 638.

Regent

On his deathbed in 641, Heraclius left the empire to both his son from the first marriage, [Heraclius Constantine](#) (as Constantine III) and [Heraklonas](#) (as Heraclius II), granting them equal rank. Martina was to be honoured as empress and mother of both of them.

Heraclius died on 11 February 641 of an [edema](#). Nikephoros considered Heraclius' disease a divine punishment for his sinful marriage. Three days later Martina took the initiative in announcing the contents of Heraclius' [will](#) in a public ceremony. The authority for such a ceremony typically belonged to the succeeding Emperor, not to the Empress. Martina was attempting to establish her own authority over the two co-emperors.

The ceremony took place in the [Hippodrome of Constantinople](#). Present were members of the [Byzantine Senate](#), other dignitaries and the crowds of Constantinople. Absent were both Constantine and Heraklonas. Martina read the contents of the will and claimed the senior

authority in the Empire for herself. However the crowd instead acclaimed the names of the two Emperors and not her own. Thus objecting to her assumption of imperial authority. She was forced to return to the palace in defeat.

Relations of Martina and her stepson were always difficult. When Constantine III died suddenly of [tuberculosis](#) only four months later, the common belief was that the Empress poisoned him to leave Heraclonas as sole ruler. Also Martina began immediately to exile the prominent supporters of Constantine and with the help of [Patriarch Pyrrhus I of Constantinople](#), one of her primary advisors, revived the policy of [Monotheletism](#).

Her actions and the rumors of poisoning Constantine III caused the people and the Senate to turn against Martina and her son. The Armenian [Valentinus](#) with the troops from [Asia Minor](#), marched to [Chalcedon](#) and a frightened Heraclonas named [Constans II](#), son of late Constantine III, a co-emperor.

This, however, failed to ease the discontent and by the end of the month the Byzantine Senate deposed him. His nose was slit, Martina's tongue cut out and they were exiled to [Rhodes](#). Constans II became sole emperor.

Children

Martina and Heraclius had at least 10 children, though the names and order of these children are questions for debate:

- Constantine. Named a [Caesar](#) in 615. Died young.
- Fabius, who had a [paralyzed](#) neck (Scoliosis?). Died young.
- Theodosios, who was a [deaf-mute](#), married Nike, daughter of Persian general [Shahrbaraz](#).
- [Heraclonas](#), Emperor 638 – 641.
- David (Tiberios) (born on 7 November 630), proclaimed [Caesar](#) in 638. He was briefly proclaimed Augustus and co-emperor with Heraclonas and Constans in 641. Deposed, mutilated and exiled to [Rhodes](#).
- Marinus. A [Caesar](#). Died after being circumscised according to [John of Nikiu](#).
- Augoustina. Proclaimed an Augusta in 638.
- Anastasia and/or Martina. Proclaimed Augusta in 638.
- Febronia.

Heraklonas

Constantinus Heraclius, known in English as **Heraklonas**, **Heraclonas**, or **Heracleonas** (626–641), was the son of [Heraclius](#) and his niece [Martina](#), and was Byzantine Emperor briefly between February and September 641.

Heraklonas with his father, [Heraclius](#) and brother, [Constantine III](#)



He was baptised and officially reigned as Constantinus Heraclius, but the diminutive nickname Heraklonas, little Heraclius, became established in Byzantine texts and has become standard in historiography.

Heraklonas was probably born at [Lazica](#) while his father was on campaign against [Khosrau II](#) of the [Sassanid Empire](#). He was probably the

fourth son of Martina and Herakleios, but the first one born free of physical deformity and eligible for the throne.

Towards the end of Heraclius' reign he obtained through his mother's influence the title of [Augustus](#) on July 4, 638, and after his father's death was proclaimed joint [emperor](#) with his older half-brother [Constantine III](#) (Herakleios Constantine).

The premature death of Constantine III, in May 641, left Heraklonas sole ruler. But a suspicion that he and Martina had murdered Constantine led soon after to a revolt under the general [Valentinus](#), who forced Heraklonas to accept his young nephew [Constans II](#) as co-ruler. Martina intended to balance this setback with the coronation of her younger son the [Caesar](#) David (Tiberios) as emperor.

But this merely irritated the supporters of Constans II, and Valentinus spread rumors that Martina and Heraklonas intended to eliminate Constans and his supporters. The revolt which ensued toppled Heraklonas and his mother, who were subjected to [mutilation](#) and banishment. This was the first time a reigning emperor had been subjected to mutilation, which was a practice probably borrowed from the [Persians](#); ^[*citation needed*] in this case, Martina's tongue and Heraklonas' nose were cut out. Nothing further is known about Heraklonas after his removal and exile to [Rhodes](#). He is presumed to have died later that year. [Constans II](#), the son of [Constantine III](#), became sole emperor.

Constantine III (Byzantine emperor)

Heraclius Novus Constantinus, known in English as **Constantine III**, (May 3, 612 – April 20 or May 24/26, 641) was the eldest son of the [Byzantine emperor Heraclius](#) and his first wife Eudocia, and ruled as Emperor for four months in 641.

Roman coin depicting, on its face, Constantine with his father [Heraclius](#) and brother [Heraklonas](#)



Constantine was crowned co-emperor by his father on January 22, 613 and shortly after was betrothed to his cousin, [Gregoria](#), a daughter of his father's first cousin, [Nicetas](#). As the couple were second cousins, the marriage was technically [incestuous](#), but this consideration must have been outweighed by the advantages of the match to the family as a whole.

Furthermore, its illegality paled into insignificance beside Heraclius' marriage to his niece [Martina](#) in the same year.

Constantine and Gregoria married in 629 or perhaps early 630 and in that year their first child, [Constans II](#) was born. Their second child was another son, Theodosius. They also had a daughter named Manyan who later married the last Sassanid King of Persia, [Yazdgerd III](#) and had issue.

Constantine became senior emperor when his father died in 641. He reigned together with his younger half-brother [Heraklonas](#), the son of Martina. His supporters feared action against him on the part of Martina and Heraklonas, and the treasurer Philagrius advised him to write to the army, informing them that he was dying and asking for their assistance in protecting the rights of his children. He also sent a vast sum of money, more than two million [solidi](#) (gold coins), to [Valentinus](#), an adjutant of Philagrius, to distribute to the soldiers to persuade them to secure the succession for his sons after his death. Indeed, he died of [tuberculosis](#) after only four months, leaving Heraklonas sole emperor. A rumor that Martina had him poisoned led first to the imposition of [Constans II](#) as co-emperor and then to the deposition, mutilation, and banishment of Martina and her sons.

Family

By his wife [Gregoria](#), the daughter of Niketas, Constantine III had two sons and a daughter:

- [Constans II](#), who succeeded as emperor
- Theodosius
- Manyan, who married [Yazdgerd III](#), last Sassanid Emperor of Persia

Gregoria

Gregoria was the Empress consort of [Constantine III](#) of the [Byzantine Empire](#).

Gregoria was a daughter of [Niketas](#), a first cousin of [Heraclius](#). Her father had played a part in the revolt which elevated Heraclius to the throne. Niketas led an overland invasion of [Roman Egypt](#) in 608. He fought against the local representatives of [Phocas](#) and seems to have secured control of it by 610. Her paternal grandfather was Gregorius, brother to [Heraclius the Elder](#).

Heraclius of Edessa and Marcellinus led troops from Roman Egypt against [Geiseric](#) of the [Vandals](#) in 468. Their forces had successfully captured [Sardinia](#) and a number of cities in [Tripolitania](#). They were marching to [Carthage](#), the capital of the Vandals, when the main Roman force under [Basiliscus](#) was ambushed and defeated by Geiseric. One half of the Roman fleet was burned, sunk, or captured, and the other half followed the fugitive Basiliscus. The whole expedition had failed. Heraclius effected his retreat through the desert into Tripolitania, holding the position for two years until recalled; Marcellinus retired to [Sicily](#).

According to Theophanes, Heraclius of Edessa sided with Leo I against his [magister militum Aspar](#) in 471. The conflict ended with the deaths of both Aspar and his son [Ardabur](#) by order of Leo. In 474, Heraclius served as *magister militum per Thracias* (Master of the Soldiers of [Thrace](#)) when he was captured in battle by [Theodoric Strabo](#), a [Goth](#) chieftain formerly loyal to Aspar. He was executed by Theodoric despite the payment of a ransom for him by Zeno.

Heraclius of Edessa is mentioned as son of Florus by [Theophanes the Confessor](#). Theophanes identifies Florus as a consul but his name does not appear in consul lists. The explanation may be an honorary consulship.

Gregoria was betrothed to her second cousin [Constantine III](#), only known son of Heraclius and his first wife [Eudokia](#). Constantine was crowned co-emperor by his father on 22 January 613.

Gregoria and her husband had at least two sons. [Constans II](#) was born on 7 November 630. According to Theophanes, a second son was named Theodosius. He was executed by Constans in 659/660. A genealogical theory also adds a daughter to the list of children. The daughter is given as [Manyanh](#), a purported granddaughter of Heraclius and wife of [Yazdgerd III](#).

Heraclius died on 11 February 641. Constantine III became senior Emperor with his paternal half-brother [Heraklonas](#) as his co-ruler. Constantine died of [tuberculosis](#) between April and May of the same year. A revolt in favor of Constans resulted in the deposition of Heraklonas by September. Her role in the new regime under her son is not mentioned in Byzantine sources

Yazdgerd III

Yazdgerd III (also spelled *Yazdegerd* or *Yazdiger*, [Persian](#): "made by God") was the twenty-ninth and last king of the [Sassanid dynasty](#) of [Iran](#) and a grandson of [Khosrau II](#) (590–628). His father was Shahryar whose mother was Miriam, the daughter of the [Byzantine Emperor Maurice](#) (18266). Yazdgerd III ascended the throne on 16 June 632 after a series of internal conflicts.

Coin of Yazdgerd III, [Sakastan](#) mint, Dated [RY 11](#).



Yazdgerd III reigned as a youth and had never truly exercised authority. The [Muslim conquest of Persia](#) began in his first year of reign, and ended with the [Battle of al-Qādisiyyah](#). Yazdegerd sought an alliance with Emperor [Heraclius](#), who was an old rival of the [Persian Empire](#).

Following the battle of al-Qādisiyyah, the Arabs occupied [Ctesiphon](#), and the young King fled eastward into [Media](#) going from one district to another, until at last he was killed by a local miller for his purse at [Merv](#) in 651.

[Ferdowsi](#) a contemporary of [Mahmud of Ghazni](#) recounts the killing of Yazdegerd.

“*Mahui sends the miller to cut off his head on pain of losing his own, and having none of his race left alive. His chiefs hear this and cry out against him, and a [Mobed](#) of the name of Radui tells him that to kill a king or prophet will bring evil upon him and his son, and is supported in what he says by a holy man of the name of Hormuzd Kharad Shehran, and Mehronush. The miller most unwillingly goes in and stabs him with a dagger in the middle. Mahui's horsemen all go and see him and take off his clothing and ornaments, leaving him on the ground . All the nobles curse Mahui and wish him the same fate.*”

The rest of the nobles who fled settled in central Asia where they contributed greatly in spreading Persian culture and language in those regions. They also contributed to the establishment of the first native Iranian dynasty, the [Samanid](#) dynasty, which sought to retain some Sassanid traditions while still promoting [Islam](#).

The [Zoroastrian religious calendar](#), which is still in use today, uses the [regnal year](#) of Yazdgerd III as its base year. Its [calendar era](#) (year numbering system), which is accompanied by a Y.Z. suffix, thus indicates the number of years since the emperor's coronation in 632 AD.

Yazdgerd's son [Pirooz II](#) fled to [China](#). Yazdgerd's daughter [Shahrbanu](#) is believed to be the wife of [Husayn ibn Ali](#). Yazdgerd's other daughter Izdundad was married to [Bustanai ben Haninai](#), the Jewish [exilarch](#). Persian religious leader [Bahá'u'lláh](#)'s ancestry can be traced back to Yazdgerd III.

Constans II

Constans II, also called **Constantine the Bearded**, (November 7, 630–September 15, 668) was [Byzantine emperor](#) from 641 to 668. He also was the last emperor to become consul in 642, becoming the last [Roman consul](#) in history.

Constans and his son [Constantine](#)



Constans is a diminutive nickname given to the emperor, who had been baptized Herakleios and reigned officially as Constantine. The nickname established itself in Byzantine texts, and has become standard in modern historiography.

Biography

Constans was the son of [Constantine III](#) and [Gregoria](#). Due to the rumours that [Heraklonas](#) and [Martina](#) had poisoned Constantine III he was named co-emperor in 641. Later that same year his uncle was deposed and Constans II was left as sole emperor.

Constans owed his throne to a popular reaction against his uncle and to the protection of the soldiers led by the general [Valentinus](#). Although the precocious emperor addressed the senate with a speech blaming Heraklonas and Martina for eliminating his father, he reigned under a regency of senators led by [Patriarch Paul II of Constantinople](#). In 644 Valentinus attempted to seize power for himself but failed.

Byzantine Empire by 650 A.D under Constans II



Constans attempted to steer a middle line in the church dispute between Orthodoxy and Monothelism, by refusing to persecute either and prohibiting further discussion of the natures of [Jesus Christ](#) by decree in 648. Naturally, this live-and-let-live compromise satisfied few passionate participants in the dispute.

Meanwhile, the [Caliphate](#) advance continued unabated. In 647 they had entered into [Armenia](#) and [Cappadocia](#), and sacked [Caesarea Mazaca](#). In 648 the Arabs raided into [Phrygia](#) and in 649 launched their first maritime expedition against [Crete](#). A major Arab offensive into [Cilicia](#) and [Isauria](#) in 650–651 forced the emperor to enter into negotiations with [Caliph Uthman](#)'s governor of [Syria](#), [Muawiyah](#). The truce that followed allowed a short respite, and made it possible for Constans to hold on to the western portions of Armenia.

In 654, however, [Muawiyah](#) renewed his raids by sea, and plundered [Rhodes](#). Constans led a fleet to attack the [Muslims](#) at Phoinike (off [Lycia](#)) in 655 at the [Battle of the Masts](#), but he was defeated: 500 Byzantine ships were destroyed in the battle, and the emperor himself risked to be killed. Before the battle, chronicler [Theophanes the Confessor](#) says, the emperor dreamt to be at Thessalonika, this dream predicted his defeat against the Arabs because the word [Thessalonika](#) is similar to the sentence "thes allo niken", that means "gave victory to another (the enemy)". Caliph [Uthman](#) was preparing to attack [Constantinople](#), but did not carry out the plan when civil war between the future [Sunni](#) and [Shi'a](#) factions broke out among them in 656.

With the eastern frontier under less pressure, in 658 Constans defeated the [Slavs](#) in the [Balkans](#), temporarily reasserting some notion of Byzantine rule over them. In 659 he campaigned far to the east, taking advantage of a rebellion against the Caliphate in [Media](#). The same year he concluded peace with the Arabs.

Now Constans could turn to church matters once again. [Pope Martin I](#) had condemned both Monothelitism and Constans' attempt to halt debates over it (the [Type of Constans](#)) in the [Lateran Council of 649](#). Now the emperor ordered his Exarch of [Ravenna](#) to arrest the Pope. One Exarch excused himself from this task, but his successor carried it out in 653. The Pope was brought to Constantinople and condemned as a criminal, ultimately being exiled to [Cherson](#), where he died in 655.

Constans grew increasingly fearful that his younger brother, Theodosius, could oust him from the throne: he therefore obliged him first to take holy orders, and later had Theodosius killed in 660. Constans' sons Constantine, Heraclius, and Tiberius had been associated on the throne since the 650s. However, having attracted the hatred of citizens of Constantinople, Constans decided to leave the capital and to move to [Syracuse](#) in [Sicily](#).

From here, in 661, he launched an assault against the [Lombard Duchy of Benevento](#), which then occupied most of [Southern Italy](#). Taking advantage of the fact that Lombard king [Grimoald I of Benevento](#) was engaged against Frankish forces from [Neustria](#), Constans II disembarked at [Taranto](#) and besieged [Lucera](#) and [Benevento](#). However, the latter resisted and Constans withdrew to [Naples](#). During the travel from Benevento to Naples, Constans II was defeated by Mitolas, Count of Capua, near Pugna. Constans ordered Saburris, the commander of his army, to attack again the Lombards but he was defeated by the Beneventani at [Forino](#), between [Avellino](#) and [Salerno](#).

Family

By his wife [Fausta](#), a daughter of the patrician Valentinus, Constans II had three sons:

- [Constantine IV](#), who succeeded as emperor
- Heraclius, co-emperor from 659 to 681
- Tiberius, co-emperor from 659 to 681

Fausta (wife of Constans II)

Fausta (c. 630-after 668) was the Empress consort of [Constans II](#) of the [Byzantine Empire](#). Fausta was a daughter of [Valentinus](#), a general of [Armenian](#) origins, reputedly a descendant of the [Arsacids](#).

Valentinus enters historical record as an [adjutant](#) of Philagrius, the [sakellarios](#) (treasurer) of [Heraclius](#). Heraclius died on 11 February 641. His will left the throne to two of his sons, as co-rulers to each other. The first son was [Constantine III](#), his only known son by his first wife [Eudokia](#). The second son was [Heraklonas](#), eldest son of Heraclius by his niece and second wife [Martina](#). Martina was to remain Augusta and thus maintain influence at court.

Marriage

Constantine III died between April and May 641, after a reign of three to four months. Heraklonas was left the senior emperor by default and was placed under the regency of Martina. However partisans of Constantine in the army spread the rumor that their emperor had been poisoned.

Valentinus took control of the troops in [Anatolia](#) and before long started a revolt in the name of [Constans II](#), eldest surviving son of Constantine III. The boy was barely eleven years old but was proclaimed the rightful heir to his father by the rebels. Valentine led a march to [Chalcedon](#) and thus set camp almost directly opposite [Constantinople](#).

In September, 641, Valentinus entered the city. Heraklonas and Martina were deposed and subjected to [mutilation](#): the nose of Heraklonas and the tongue of Martina were cut, and both were exiled to [Rhodes](#). Constans was left the only Emperor, and was soon after betrothed to Fausta.

Empress

The first known son of Fausta and Constans was [Constantine IV](#). He was born c. 652, ten years following the marriage of his parents. He was proclaimed co-emperor in 654. Two younger sons are known, Heraclius and Tiberius, because of being proclaimed co-emperors in 659.

In 661, Constans II left Constantinople for [Syracuse](#) where he set his residence for the rest of his reign. Constantine IV, Heraclius and Tiberius remained in the capital. There is some uncertainty over the location of Fausta.

On September 15, 668, Constans II was assassinated in his [bath](#) by his [chamberlain](#). Fausta likely survived him. Constantine succeeded to the throne with his brothers as co-emperors. Constantine had Heraclius and Tiberius deposed in 681. Fausta could still be alive at the time..

Constantine IV

Constantine IV, (652–685); sometimes incorrectly called *Pogonatos*, "the Bearded", by confusion with his father^[1]; was [Byzantine emperor](#) from 668 to 685. He had been named a co-emperor with his father [Constans II](#) in 654, and became senior emperor when Constans was assassinated in 668. His mother was [Fausta](#), daughter of patrician Valentinus.

Constantine IV and his retinue, mosaic in basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe (Ravenna)



The first task before the new emperor was the suppression of the military revolt in [Sicily](#) which had led to his father's death. Within 7 months of his accession, Constantine IV had dealt with the insurgency with the support of [Pope Vitalian](#). But this success was overshadowed by troubles in the east.

As early as 668 the [Caliph Muawiyah I](#) sent an army under his son [Yazid](#) against the [Eastern Roman Empire](#). Yazid reached as far as [Chalcedon](#) and took the important Byzantine center [Amorion](#). Although the city was quickly recovered, the [Arabs](#) next attacked [Carthage](#) and Sicily in 669. In 670 the Arabs captured [Cyzicus](#) and set up a base from which to launch further attacks into the heart of the Empire. Their fleet captured [Smyrna](#) and other coastal cities in 672. Finally, in 672, the Arabs sent a large fleet to attack [Constantinople](#) by sea. While Constantine was diverted by this, the [Slavs](#) unsuccessfully attacked [Thessalonika](#).

Constantinople survived the Arab siege until 678, when the Byzantines employed [Greek fire](#) against the Arab fleet at the [Battle of Syllaenum](#) in [Pamphylia](#). This was one of the first times Greek fire was used in combat. The Arabs withdrew, and were almost simultaneously defeated on land in [Lycia](#) in [Anatolia](#).

In 680 the [Bulgars](#) under [Asparukh](#) crossed the [Danube](#) into nominally imperial territory and began to subject the local communities and Slavic tribes. Constantine IV led a combined land and sea operation against the invaders and besieged their fortified camp in [Dobruja](#). Suffering from bad health, the emperor had to leave the army, which allowed itself to panic and be defeated by the Bulgars. In 681, Constantine was forced to acknowledge the [Bulgar state](#) in [Moesia](#) and to pay protection money to avoid further inroads into Byzantine [Thrace](#).

His brothers Heraclius and Tiberius had been crowned with him as [Augusti](#) at the demand of the populace, but in 681 Constantine had them [mutilated](#) so they would be ineligible to rule. At the same time he associated on the throne his own young son [Justinian II](#). Constantine died of [dysentery](#) in September 685.

By his wife [Anastasia](#), Constantine IV had at least two sons:

- [Justinian II](#), who succeeded as emperor
- Heraclius

Anastasia (wife of Constantine IV)

Anastasia (c. 650 - after 711) was the Empress consort of [Constantine IV](#) of the [Byzantine Empire](#).

Anastasia enters historical record when her husband [Constantine IV](#) succeeds to the throne in 668. On September 15, 668, her father-in-law [Constans II](#) was assassinated in his [bath](#) by his [chamberlain](#). He resided for the last few years of his reign in [Syracuse](#), while Constantine and Theodora remained in [Constantinople](#).

Anastasia became the senior Empress consort when news of the assassination reached the court. The birth of her first son, [Justinian II](#), can be estimated to 668/669 due to the chronologies of [Theophanes the Confessor](#) and [Ecumenical Patriarch Nikephoros I of Constantinople](#). Her only other son mentioned is named as Heraclius in the [Liber Pontificalis](#). The entry on [Pope Benedict II](#), mentions the Pope receiving locks of hair from both Justinian and Heraclius. Presumably as a gesture of good will by their father.

Constantine IV died of [dysentery](#) in September, 685. Anastasia is known to have survived him by more than two decades.

Later life

Justinian succeeded to the throne and would go on to earn a reputation for excessive harshness. Justinian needed funds for his building projects and allowed Stephen the Persian, his [logothetes tou genikou](#) (responsible for the [taxation](#) of the state), to secure them by any means. Both Theophanes and Nikephoros claimed that Stephen inflicted [corporal punishment](#) or plain [torture](#) while trying to collect the needed funds.

Theophanes records an incident in 693/694, where Anastasia was subject to [flagellation](#) under the orders of Stephen. Clarifying that Justinian was absent at the time. The incident might indicate lasting hostility between the mother of the emperor and his [favourite](#).

The increased taxation and the methods used in collecting made Justinian increasingly unpopular with the people. He was deposed in a [coup d'état](#) under [Leontios](#) in 695. The whereabouts and status of Anastasia during the short reigns of Leontios (695 - 698) and [Tiberios III](#) (698 - 705) are unknown. Her son reclaimed the throne in 705 and would rule until 711.

Justinian died while facing a revolt under [strategos](#) Bardanes, renamed [Philippikos](#). Justinian was captured and swiftly executed outside the gates of Constantinople. Anastasia resurfaces trying to protect the life of her six-year-old grandson, Tiberios. She took the boy to sanctuary at [St. Mary's Church](#) in [Blachernae](#). However they pursued by Philippicus' henchmen. Anastasia was still pleading for his life while the boy was forcibly removed from the altar. He was executed despite her protests.

Justinian II

Justinian II ([Greek](#)·; *Ioustinianos II*; 669– 11 December 711), known as *Rinotmetos* or *Rhinotmetus* ("the Slit-nosed"), was the last [Byzantine emperor](#) of the [Heraclian Dynasty](#), reigning from 685 to 695 and again from 705 to 711. Justinian unified the office of consul with that of emperor thus making emperor the head of state not only de facto but also de jure, and effectively abolished the consulate. He was appointed Roman consul in 686.

Justinian, on the reverse of this coin struck during his second reign, is holding a patriarchal globe with PAX, "peace"



Justinian II was the first son of Emperor [Constantine IV](#) and [Anastasia](#). His father raised him to the throne as joint emperor in 681. In 685, at the age of sixteen, Justinian II succeeded his father as sole emperor. Justinian II is described as an ambitious and passionate ruler, who responded poorly to opposition to his will and lacked the finesse of his father.

First reign

Due to Constantine IV's victories, the situation in the Eastern provinces of the Empire was stable when Justinian became emperor. After a preliminary strike against the [Arabs](#) in [Armenia](#), Justinian managed to augment the sum paid by the [Umayyad Caliphs](#) as an annual tribute, and to regain control of part of [Cyprus](#). The incomes of the provinces of [Armenia](#) and Iberia were divided among the two empires. In 687, as part of his agreements with the Caliphate, Justinian removed from their native [Lebanon](#) 12,000 Christian [Maronites](#), who continually resisted the [Arabs](#). Additional resettlement efforts, aimed at the [Mardaites](#) and inhabitants of Cyprus allowed Justinian to reinforce naval forces depleted by earlier conflicts.

Justinian took advantage of the peace in the East to regain possession of the [Balkans](#), which were before then almost totally under the heel of [Slavic](#) tribes. In 687 Justinian transferred cavalry troops from [Anatolia](#) to [Thrace](#). With a great military campaign in 688–689, Justinian defeated the [Bulgars](#) of [Macedonia](#) and was finally able to enter [Thessalonica](#), the second most important Byzantine city in [Europe](#).

Justinian sought to protect the rights of peasant freeholders, who served as the main recruitment pool for the armed forces of the Empire, against attempts by the aristocracy to acquire their land—putting him in direct conflict with some of the largest landholders in the Empire.

If his land policies threatened the aristocracy, his tax policy was no more popular with the common people. Through his agents Stephen and Theodotos, the emperor raised the funds to gratify his sumptuous tastes and his mania for erecting costly buildings. This, ongoing religious discontent, conflicts with the aristocracy, and displeasure over his resettlement policy eventually drove his subjects into rebellion. In 695 the population rose under [Leontius](#), the *strategus* of Hellas, and proclaimed him Emperor. Justinian was deposed; his [nose was cut](#) off to prevent his again seeking the throne (an unblemished appearance being a requirement of Imperial rule), and he was exiled to [Cherson](#) in the [Crimea](#).

Exile

While in exile, Justinian began to plot and gather supporters for an attempt to retake the throne. [3] Justinian became a liability to Cherson and the authorities decided to return him to Constantinople in 702 or 703. He escaped from Cherson and received help from [Ibusirus Gliabanus](#) (Busir Glavan), the [khagan](#) of the [Khazars](#), who received him enthusiastically and gave him his sister as a bride. Justinian renamed her [Theodora](#), after the wife of [Justinian I](#). They were given a home in the town of [Phanagoria](#), at the entrance to the sea of Azov. Busir was offered a bribe by Tiberios to kill his brother-in-law, and dispatched two Khazar officials, [Papatzys](#) and [Balgitzin](#), to do the deed. Warned by his wife, Justinian strangled Papatzys and Balgatzin with his own hands. He sailed in a fishing-boat to Cherson, summoned his supporters, and they all sailed westwards across the Black Sea.

Justinian sailed to [Tervel of Bulgaria](#). Tervel agreed to provide all the military assistance necessary for Justinian to regain his throne in exchange for financial considerations, the award of a Caesar's crown, and the hand of Justinian's daughter, Anastasia, in marriage. In spring 705, with an army of 15,000 Bulgar horsemen Justinian appeared before the walls of [Constantinople](#). Unable to take the city by force, he and some companions entered through an unused [water conduit](#) under the walls of the city, roused their supporters, and seized control of the city in a midnight coup d'état. Justinian once more ascended the throne, breaking the tradition preventing the mutilated from Imperial rule, and then had his rivals Leontius and Tiberius executed along with many of their partisans, and deposed and blinded [Patriarch Kallinikos I of Constantinople](#).

Second reign

Justinian's tyrannical rule provoked another uprising against him. Cherson revolted and under the leadership of the exiled general [Bardanes](#), the city held out against a counter-attack and soon the forces sent to suppress the rebellion joined it. The rebels then seized the capital and proclaimed Bardanes as Emperor Philippicus; Justinian had been on his way to Armenia, and was unable to return to Constantinople in time to defend it. He was arrested and executed outside the city in December 711, his head being sent to Bardanes as a trophy. On hearing the news of his death, Justinian's mother took his six-year-old son and co-emperor, Tiberius, to sanctuary at [St. Mary's Church in Blachernae](#), but was pursued by Philippicus' henchmen, who dragged the child from the altar and, once outside the church, murdered him, thus eradicating the line of [Heraclius](#).

By his first wife [Eudokia](#), Justinian II had at least one daughter:

- Anastasia, who was betrothed to [Tervel of Bulgaria](#).

By his second wife, [Theodora of Khazaria](#), Justinian II had a son:

- Tiberios, co-emperor from 706 to 711.

Tiberios III

Tiberios III or **Tiberius III**, (died 705), was [Byzantine emperor](#) from 698 to 705.

Tiberius III, [Emperor](#) of the [Byzantine Empire](#)



Tiberius was a Germanic navy officer originally named **Apsimar**, who rose to the position of [droungarios](#) of the [Cibyrrhaeotic Theme](#). He participated in the failed campaign to [regain Carthage](#) in 698. As admiral [John the Patrician](#) retreated from [Carthage](#) to [Crete](#), the fleet rebelled, deposed their commander, and chose Apsimaros as his replacement. Apsimaros sailed on [Constantinople](#) and besieged it. His revolution attracted detachments from the field army and the imperial guard, and officers loyal to him opened the gates of the city and proclaimed him emperor. He ordered the nose of deposed Emperor [Leontius](#) cut off. Leontios had visited this same punishment on his predecessor [Justinian II](#).

As emperor, Tiberius III ignored [Africa](#), where Carthage was now definitively lost, but attacked the [Umayyad Caliphate](#) under [Abd al-Malik](#) in the east, winning minor victories while raiding into [Syria](#) in 701. Arab reprisals in 703 and 704 were repelled from [Cilicia](#). Meanwhile, in 704, [Justinian II](#) escaped from exile in [Cherson](#), fleeing to the court of the [khagan](#) of the [Khazars](#), [Busir Glavan](#). Tiberius paid a bounty to Busir to have Justinian killed, but Justinian, who had married the khagan's sister and been warned by her, made his way back to Constantinople with the help of [Tervel of Bulgaria](#) in 705. Managing to enter Constantinople with some of his supporters, Justinian easily regained control, and had Tiberius arrested and executed in the [Hippodrome](#) together with Leontios. A little later the same punishment was inflicted upon Tiberius' brother Heraclius, whom he had appointed [strategos](#) of the Anatolic [theme](#).

John Athalarichos

John Athalarichos ([Greek](#): also spelled as Atalarichos, Athalaric and At'alarik,) was an [illegitimate](#) son of the 7th century Byzantine Emperor [Heraclius](#). In 637, he was alleged to have taken part in a plot to overthrow Heraclius and seize the throne.

Plot

In the 7th century, [Armenian](#) nobles in [Constantinople](#) were very influential in the capital's political process. In 637, some Armenian figures felt their interests would be better served under a new Emperor. Their candidate to replace Heraclius was Atalarichos. Also involved were Varastirots', son of Smbat Xosrov Shum; [David Saharuni](#), Atalarichos' cousin; and Heraclius' nephew, the magister Theodorus. Varastirots' pushed for a bloodless coup, in which the Emperor would be forced into exile.

The scheme was never executed, as an informer in the conspirators told the imperial court that Atalarichos was planning a coup attempt. Once Heraclius confirmed the story, he ordered the arrest of everyone involved.^[3] His advisers recommended the plotters be executed, but Heraclius was quoted by the historian [Sebeos](#) as saying, "Since you did as you did with regard to me and did not want to dip your hand into my blood and the blood of my sons, I shall not reach for you and your sons. Go where I order you, and I will have mercy upon you."

While he did spare their lives, Heraclius ordered the [amputation of each plotter's nose and hands](#). In addition to being thus mutilated, Atalarichos was [exiled](#) to [Prinkipo](#), one of the [Princes' Islands](#).^[4] Theodorus received the same treatment, but was sent to Gaudomelete (possibly modern day [Gozo Island](#)) with additional instructions to cut off one leg

Leo III the Isaurian

Leo III the *Isaurian* or the *Syrian*, (c. 685–June 18 741) was [Byzantine emperor](#) from 717 until his death in 741. He put an end to a period of instability, successfully defended the empire against the invading [Umayyads](#), and forbade the veneration of icons (see [Iconoclasm](#)).

Leo III and his son [Constantine V](#)



Early life

Leo, whose original name was Konon, was born in Germanikeia ([Maraş](#)) in the Syrian province of [Commagene](#). Some, including the [Byzantine](#) chronicler [Theophanes](#), have claimed that Konon's family had been resettled in [Thrace](#), where he entered the service of Emperor

[Justinian II](#), when the latter was advancing on [Constantinople](#) with an army of 15,000 horsemen provided by [Tervel of Bulgaria](#) in 705.

After the victory of Justinian II, Leo was dispatched on a diplomatic mission to [Alania](#) and [Lazica](#) to organize an alliance against the [Umayyad Caliphate](#) under [Al-Walid I](#). Leo was appointed commander (*stratēgos*) of the [Anatolic theme](#) by Emperor [Anastasius II](#). On his deposition Leo joined with his colleague [Artabasdus](#), the *stratēgos* of the [Armeniac](#) theme, in conspiring to overthrow the new Emperor Theodosius III. Artabasdus was betrothed to [Anna](#),^[2] daughter of Leo as part of the agreement.

Siege of Constantinople

Leo entered Constantinople on March 25 717 and forced the abdication of Theodosios III, becoming emperor as Leo III. The new emperor was immediately forced to attend to the [Second Arab siege of Constantinople](#), which commenced in August of the same year. The Arabs were Umayyad forces sent by Caliph [Sulayman ibn Abd al-Malik](#) and serving under [Maslama](#). They had taken advantage of the civil discord in the Roman Empire to bring a force of 80,000 to 120,000 men and a massive fleet to the [Bosphorus](#).^[3]

Careful preparations and the stubborn resistance put up by Leo wore out the invaders. An important factor in the victory of the Romans was their use of [Greek fire](#).^[4] The Arab forces also fell victim to Bulgarian reinforcements arriving to aid the Romans. Leo was allied with the Bulgarians but the chronicler [Theophanes the Confessor](#) was uncertain if they were still serving under Tervel or his eventual successor [Kormesiy of Bulgaria](#). Unable to continue the siege in the face of the Bulgarian onslaught and lack of successes, the Arabs were forced to abandon their ambitions on Constantinople in August, 718. Sulayman himself had died the previous year and his successor [Umar II](#) would not attempt another siege. The siege had lasted 12 months.

Administration

Having thus preserved the Empire from extinction, Leo proceeded to consolidate its administration, which in the previous years of anarchy had become completely disorganized. In 718 he suppressed a rebellion in [Sicily](#) and in 719 did the same on behalf of the deposed Emperor [Anastasios II](#). Leo secured the Empire's frontiers by inviting [Slavic](#) settlers into the

depopulated districts and by restoring the [army](#) to efficiency; when the Ummayyad Caliphate renewed their invasions in 726 and 739, as part of the campaigns of [Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik](#), the Arab forces were decisively beaten, particularly at [Akroinon](#) in 740. His military efforts were supplemented by his alliances with the [Khazars](#) and the [Georgians](#).

Leo undertook a set of civil reforms including the abolition of the system of prepaying taxes which had weighed heavily upon the wealthier proprietors, the elevation of the [serfs](#) into a [class](#) of free [tenants](#) and the remodelling of [family](#), [maritime law](#) and [criminal law](#), notably substituting [mutilation](#) for the [death penalty](#) in many cases. The new measures, which were embodied in a new [code](#) called the *[Ecloga](#)* (*Selection*), published in 726, met with some opposition on the part of the nobles and higher clergy. The emperor also undertook some reorganization of the [theme](#) structure by creating new themata in the [Aegean](#) region.

The emperor died of [dropsy](#) in June 741.

Family

His wife [Maria](#), Leo III had four known children:

- [Anna](#), who married [Artabasdos](#).
- [Constantine V](#), who succeeded as emperor.
- Irene
- Kosmo

Maria, wife of Leo III

Maria was the Empress consort of [Leo III the Isaurian](#) of the [Byzantine Empire](#).

Empress

The throne of the [Byzantine Empire](#) was unstable in the early 710s. [Justinian II](#) had been deposed and executed in 711. His deposition was followed by the brief reigns of [Philippikos](#) (711-713), [Anastasios II](#) (713-715) and [Theodosios III](#) (715 - 717). All three were elevated to the throne after [coup d'états](#) by factions of the [Byzantine army](#).

A revolt by [Leo](#), [strategos](#) of the [Anatolikon Theme](#) and [Artabasdos](#), strategos of the Armeniac Theme, succeeded in deposing Theodosios. On 25 March 717, Leo was proclaimed emperor in [Hagia Sophia](#). Maria enters historical record at this point as his Empress consort.

In July, 718, Maria gave birth during an ongoing [Siege of Constantinople](#) by [Maslama](#), a general of the [Umayyad Caliphate](#). Her son was [Constantine V](#).

The siege was broken by August, 718 and the Umayyad forces retreated. On 25 August 718, Maria was granted the title of Augusta. On the same day her son was baptised by [Patriarch Germanus I of Constantinople](#). Constantine was proclaimed co-emperor in August, 720.

Leo remained Emperor to his death on 18 June 741. Whether Maria survived him is unknown.

Children

Maria and Leo III had four known children:

- [Anna](#) (c. 705 after 772), who married [Artabasdos](#).
- [Constantine V](#) (July, 718 - 14 September 775).
- Irene.
- Kosmo.

The names and place of burial of two other daughters were recorded in [De Ceremoniis](#) by [Constantine VII](#). However nothing else is known of them.

Constantine V

Constantine V (718–September 14, 775) was [Byzantine emperor](#) from 741 to 775.

Constantine V and his father [Leo III the Isaurian](#)



Constantine was born in [Constantinople](#), the son and successor of Emperor [Leo III](#) and [Maria](#). In August 720 he was associated on the throne by his father, who had him marry [Tzitzak](#), daughter of the [Khazar](#) khagan [Bihar](#). His new bride was baptized as Irene in 732. Constantine V succeeded his father as sole emperor on April 19, 741.

Campaigns against the Arabs and Bulgaria

Constantine was also an able general and administrator. He reorganized the [themes](#), the military districts of the empire, and created new field army divisions called [tagmata](#). This organization was intended to minimize the threat of conspiracies and to enhance the defensive capabilities of the Empire. With this reorganized army he embarked on campaigns on the three major frontiers.

In 746, profiting by the unstable conditions in the Umayyad Caliphate which was falling apart under [Marwan II](#), In 747 his fleet destroyed the Arab fleet off [Cyprus](#). In 752 Constantine led an invasion into the new [Abbasid](#) Caliphate under [As-Saffah](#). Constantine captured Theodosiopolis and Melitene and again resettled some of the population in the [Balkans](#).

These successes made it possible to pursue an aggressive policy in the Balkans. With the resettlement of Christian populations from the East into Thrace, Constantine V aimed to enhance the prosperity and defense of this area which caused concern to the Empire's northern neighbor, [Bulgaria](#), and the two states clashed in 755. [Kormisosh of Bulgaria](#) raided as far as the [Anastasian Wall](#), but was defeated in battle by Constantine V, who inaugurated a long series of nine successful campaigns against the Bulgarians in the next year, scoring a victory over Kormisosh's successor [Vinekh](#) at [Marcelae](#). However, three year later he was defeated in the [battle of the Rishki Pass](#) but the Bulgarians did not exploit their success. In 763, he sailed to Anchialus with 800 ships carrying 9,600 cavalry and some infantry. Constantine's victories, including that at [Anchialus](#) in 763 caused considerable instability in Bulgaria, where six monarchs lost their crowns on account of their failures.

By his first wife, [Tzitzak](#) ("Irene of Khazaria"), Constantine V had one son: [Leo IV](#), who succeeded as emperor.

Tzitzak

Tzitzak (Chichak, died c. 750), was a [Khazar princess](#), and later, the first wife of [Byzantine Emperor Constantine V](#). She was the daughter of the [Khazar Khagan Bihar](#).

Empress

In 732, the [Byzantine Empire](#) was under threat of invasion from the [Umayyad Caliphate](#). Seeking allies, [Leo III the Isaurian](#) sent an embassy to [Bihar](#), [Khagan](#) of the [Khazars](#). The alliance was sealed with the marriage of Tzitzak to [Constantine V](#), son and junior co-ruler of Leo.

Tzitzak was escorted to [Constantinople](#) for her marriage. Constantine was about fourteen years old. She may have been even younger as she would not give birth for eighteen years. Tzitzak became a [Christian](#) under the [baptismal](#) name [Irene](#). Tzitzak's wedding gown became famous for having started a new fashion craze in [Constantinople](#) for male robes called *[tzitzakion](#)*.

The chronicle of [Theophanes the Confessor](#) records Tzitzak learning to read [religious text](#). He comments her as pious and contrasts her with the "impiety" of her father-in-law and husband. Leo III and Constantine V were [Iconoclast](#) Emperors while Theophanes was an [Iconodule](#) monk. His praise was probably reflective of Irene herself sharing his views.

Whether her mother-in-law Maria was still senior Empress at the time of her marriage is uncertain. Leo III died on 18 June 741. Constantine V succeeded him with Irene as his Empress consort. However almost immediately civil war started as [Artabasdos](#), brother-in-law of Constantine, claimed the throne for himself. The civil war lasted to 2 November 743. The role of Irene in the war has not been commented by Theophanes.

On 25 January 750, Constantine and Tzitzak had a son, Leo, who succeeded his father as [Emperor Leo IV](#). He was better known as "Leo the Khazar". His birth happens to be the last mention of Irene in the historical record. By the following year, Constantine was already married to his second wife [Maria](#). Lynda Garland has suggested Tzitzak died in childbirth.

The word "Tzitzak" is most likely the [hellenized](#) version of the [Turkic](#) word "çiçek", meaning "flower."

Leo IV the Khazar

Leo IV the [Khazar](#), (January 25, 750 – September 8, 780), was [Byzantine Emperor](#) from 775 to 780.



Leo IV and his son [Constantine VI](#)

Leo was the son of Emperor [Constantine V](#) by his first wife, Irene of Khazaria ([Tzitzak](#)). His maternal grandfather was [Bihar](#), a [Khazar ruler](#).

Leo was crowned co-emperor by his father in 751, and was married to the [Athenian Irene](#) in 769. In 775 he succeeded his father as sole emperor.

In 776 he associated his young son, Constantine, with himself in the empire, and suppressed the first in a series of uprisings led by his half-brothers Christopher and Nikephoros which broke out as a result. The failed claimants to the throne were blinded, [tonsured](#), and exiled.

During his short reign, Leo fought against the [Abbasid Caliphate](#) under [Al-Mahdi](#). He dispatched forces into [Syria](#) under Michael Lachanodrakon in 776 and 778. Nevertheless, the Abbasid forces succeeded in raiding into [Asia Minor](#) in 776, 779, and 780.

Unlike his father and grandfather, Leo showed himself relatively tolerant towards [iconodules](#), and restored an iconophile [patriarch](#). Only at the very end of his reign, in 780, did he have a number of iconodule officials tortured and imprisoned. Following the precedent set by his father, he prepared an expedition against [Kardam of Bulgaria](#), but died before achieving anything of significance.

During his reign Leo was largely under the influence of his wife [Irene](#), and when he died suddenly in 780 she was left as the guardian of his son and successor, [Constantine VI](#).

By his wife [Irene](#), Leo IV had only one child:

- [Constantine VI](#), who succeeded as emperor.

Constantine VI

Constantine VI ([Greek](#): *Kōnstantinos VI*; 771–797) was [Byzantine Emperor](#) from 780 to 797.

Constantine VI and his father [Leo IV](#)



Constantine VI was the only child of Emperor [Leo IV](#) and [Irene](#). Constantine was crowned co-emperor by his father in 776, and succeeded as sole emperor at the age of nine under the regency of Irene in 780.

In 782 he was betrothed to [Rotrude](#), a daughter of the [Frankish](#) King [Charlemagne](#) by his third wife [Hildegard](#). Irene herself broke off the

engagement in 788. In 787 Constantine had signed the decrees of the [Second Council of Nicaea](#), but he appears to have had [iconoclast](#) sympathies. By then Constantine had turned 16 years old, but his mother did not relinquish executive authority to him.

After a conspiracy against Irene was suppressed in the spring of 790 she attempted to get official recognition as empress. This backfired and with military support Constantine finally came to actual power in 790, after the [Armeniacs](#) rebelled against Irene. Nevertheless, she was allowed to keep the title of Empress, which was confirmed in 792.

The weakness of Constantine caused dissatisfaction among his supporters. He showed unheroic behaviour after the defeats at the hands of [Kardam of Bulgaria](#) in 791 and 792. A movement developed in favor of his uncle, the [Caesar](#) Nikephoros. Constantine had his uncle's eyes put out and the tongues of his father's four other brothers cut off. His former Armenian supporters revolted after he had blinded their general Alexios Mosele. He crushed this revolt with extreme cruelty in 793.

He then divorced his wife [Maria of Amnia](#), who had failed to provide him with a male heir, and married his mistress [Theodote](#), an unpopular and possibly illegal act, although the [Patriarch](#) ignored it. By his actions Constantine had lost all support, both of the ruling orthodox and the iconoclast opposition.

In 797 Constantine was captured and blinded by the supporters of his mother, who had organized a conspiracy. According to most contemporary accounts, he died from his wounds a few days later, leaving Irene to be crowned as first Empress regnant of Constantinople. Pretenders to the throne claiming to be Constantine VI later appeared during the reign of [Michael II](#).

By his first wife [Maria of Amnia](#), Constantine VI had [Euphrosyne](#), who married Emperor [Michael II](#)

Euphrosyne (9th century)

Euphrosyne (c. 790 - after 836), a daughter of [Byzantine emperor Constantine VI](#), the last representative of the Isaurian dynasty, and [Maria of Amnia](#).

Life

Euphrosyne was one of two daughters born to Constantine VI and Maria of Amnia. In January, 795, Constantine divorced Maria. Maria, Euphrosyne and her sister Irene were sent to a convent in the island of [Prinkipo](#). Constantine proceeded to marry his mistress [Theodote](#).

Euphrosyne spend her life in the monastery until c. 823. The emperor [Michael II](#) had risen to the throne three years before but his dynastic claims were at best shaky. His first wife [Thekla](#) died early in the reign. Michael decided to strengthen his claim to the throne by marrying Euphrosyne.

Euphrosyne was thus taken from her convent and entered the court as the new Empress consort. The highly controversial marriage proved barren. Michael II died on 2 October 829. He was succeeded by [Theophilos](#), his son from his previous marriage.

As his stepmother, Euphrosyne was still able to take some decisions for the sixteen-year-old emperor. She proclaimed a [bride-show](#) for him and seems to have handpicked her daughter-in-law [Theodora](#). Soon after she retired to a monastery again. [Theophanes Continuatus](#), the continuation of the chronicle started by [Theophanes the Confessor](#), indicates that Theophilos obliged her to hold to her monastic vows. Ending the religious controversy concerning her presence in court.

Theodora would go on to restore the veneration of icons in the Empire. Whether Euphrosyne shared her [Iconodule](#) tendencies and had picked her for political reasons remains vague.

Euphrosyne appears twice more in the historical record. After rumours reached Constantinople that [Theophilos](#) had been killed in his campaign against [Al-Afshin](#) in Anatolia, those senators and senior officials opposed to the Emperor did not trouble to discover if the news was true or not before considering alternative candidates for the throne. Euphrosyne, aware of these political maneuvers, sent a messenger in search of her stepson, advising him to return without delay. According to later Arabic and Syriac sources the message read "The Romans who have come have reported that you are killed and they wish to appoint another king; come quickly." Theophilos returned.

St. Michael of Synkellos records Euphrosyne offering him food, drink and clothing during his imprisonment in 836. Her offer of help to an imprisoned Iconodule again raises the question of her own religious tendencies.

Anna, wife of Artabasdos

Anna (c. 705 - after 743) was the wife of [Artabasdos](#), one of two rival [Byzantine Emperors](#) in a civil war which lasted from June, 741 to November, 743. The other Emperor was her brother, [Constantine V](#).

Family

Anna was a daughter of [Leo III the Isaurian](#) and his wife [Maria](#). She was a sister of [Constantine V](#). They had two sisters named Irene and Kosmo. Their names and place of burial were recorded in [De Ceremoniis](#) by [Constantine VII](#). However nothing else is known of them.

Marriage

The throne of the [Byzantine Empire](#) was unstable in the early 710s. [Justinian II](#) had been deposed and executed in 711. His deposition was followed by the brief reigns of [Philippikos](#) (711-713), [Anastasios II](#) (713-715) and [Theodosios III](#) (715 - 717). All three were elevated to the throne after [coup d'états](#) by factions of the [Byzantine army](#).

Under this conditions two military commanders sought each other as allies. According to the chronicle of [Theophanes the Confessor](#), [Leo](#), [strategos](#) of the [Anatolikon Theme](#) and [Artabasdos](#), [strategos](#) of the Armeniac Theme, formed an alliance in 715. Their goal was the eventual deposition of Theodosios and elevation of Leo to the throne. The alliance was sealed with the betrothal of Anna to Artabasdos.

Their revolt was launched two years later and succeeded in both its stated goals. On 25 March 717, Leo was proclaimed emperor in [Hagia Sophia](#). Anna was at this point a member of the new imperial family. Her marriage to Artabasdos followed the successful elevation of her father. Her husband was soon appointed *kouropalatēs* ("master of the palace") and *komēs* of the [Opsikion](#) theme, while retaining control of his original command.

Empress

The religious policies of Leo III divided the [Chalcedonian Christianity](#) of his time to [Iconoclasts](#) and [Iconodules](#). With the Emperor leading the former and prosecuting the latter. [Leo III the Isaurian](#) died on 18 June 741.

He was succeeded by [Constantine V](#), his only known son. Constantine was also an Iconoclast and enjoyed support from their faction. On the other hand, Artabasdos gathered support from the Iconodules in preparation for a revolt.

In June 741/742, Constantine was crossing [Asia Minor](#) to campaign against the [Umayyad Caliphate](#) under [Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik](#) on the eastern frontier. The forces of Artabasdos attacked his brother-in-law during this course. Defeated, Constantine sought refuge in [Amorion](#), while the victor advanced on [Constantinople](#) and was accepted as emperor.

Artabasdos was crowned Emperor by [Patriarch Anastasius of Constantinople](#). Anna was declared an Augusta and their son Nikephoros a co-emperor. Artabasdos declared himself the "Protector of the Holy Icons" and sought to secure himself in the throne. His main support base consisted of

the Armeniac, Opsikion and the province of [Thrace](#). He was recognised as Emperor by Iconodule religious leaders, including [Pope Zachary](#).

The civil war lasted for about two years, ending with the defeat of Artabasdos. The first major battle took place near [Sardis](#), [Lydia](#) in May, 743. An army led by [Niketas](#), another son of Artabasdos, was defeated in August. Constantine headed for Constantinople and managed to capture the city three months later. Artabasdos was deposed on 2 November 743.

Retirement

Theophanes records that Constantine had Artabasdos, Nikephoros and Niketas first incarcerated and then subjected to [public humiliation](#) in the [Hippodrome of Constantinople](#). All three were then blinded and exiled to the monastery of Chora.

Anna and other seven of her children, mentioned but not named, reportedly followed them to their monastic retirement. Anna was the caretaker of her husband and her children to their deaths. All were eventually buried in Chora. At some point the relics of [Patriarch Germanus I of Constantinople](#) were transferred to Chora and the monastery became a shrine to iconodule martyrs.

Her year of death is unknown but she is not mentioned following the reign of her brother.

Children

Anna and Artabasdos had a reported number of nine children:

- [Niketas](#). [Strategos](#) of the [Armeniacs](#) under his father.
- Nikephoros. Co-emperor from 741 to 743.
- Seven other unnamed children.

Artabasdos

Artavasdos, Latinized as **Artabasdos** or **Artabasdu**s was [Byzantine Emperor](#) of [Armenian](#) descent from June 741 or 742 until November 743. His reign constitutes an usurpation against [Constantine V](#), who had retained control of several [themes](#) in [Asia Minor](#).

Rise to power

The Armenian Artabasdu was appointed governor (*stratēgos*) of the [Armeniac theme](#) by Emperor [Anastasius II](#) in c. 713. After Anastasius' fall, Artabasdu made an agreement with his colleague [Leo](#), the governor of the [Anatolic theme](#), to overthrow the new Emperor [Theodosius III](#). This agreement was sealed with the engagement of Leo's daughter [Anna](#) to Artabasdos, and the marriage took place after Leo III ascended the throne in March 717.

Artabasdos was awarded the rank of *kouropalates* ("master of the palace") and became commander (count) of the [Opsikion](#) theme, while retaining control of his original command. In June 741 or 742, after the accession of Leo's son [Constantine V](#) on the throne, Artabasdu resolved to seize the throne and attacked his brother-in-law while the latter was traversing [Asia Minor](#) to fight the [Arabs](#) on the eastern frontier. While Constantine fled to [Amorion](#), Artabasdu seized [Constantinople](#) amid popular support and was crowned emperor.

Reign and downfall

Artabasdos abandoned his predecessor's religious policy of [Iconoclasm](#) and restored Orthodoxy with some support, including that of [Pope Zacharias](#). Soon after his accession, Artabasdu crowned his wife Anna as Augusta and his eldest son Nicephorus as co-emperor, while putting his younger son Nicetas in charge of the Armeniac theme. But while Artabasdu could rely also on the support of the themes of [Thrace](#) and Opsikion, Constantine secured for himself the support of the Anatolic and [Thracesian](#) themes.

The inevitable clash came in May 743, when Artabasdu led the offensive against Constantine but was defeated. Later the same year Constantine defeated Nicetas, and on November 2, 743 Artabasdu's reign came to an end as Constantine V entered Constantinople and apprehended his rival. Artabasdu and his sons were [publicly blinded](#) and relegated to the [monastery of Chora](#) on the outskirts of Constantinople. The date of his death is unknown.

Family

By his wife Anna, the daughter of Emperor Leo III, Artabasdos had nine children, including:

- Nikephoros, who was co-emperor from 742 to 743.
- [Niketas](#), who was *strategos* of the [Armeniac theme](#) from 742 to 743.

Nikephoros I Logothetes

Nikephoros I or **Nicephorus I**, *Logothetes* or *Genikos* ([Greek](#): *Nikēphoros I*, "Bringer of Victory"), (died July 26, 811) was [Byzantine emperor](#) from 802 to 811, when he was killed in the disastrous [Battle of Pliska](#).

A patrician from [Seleucia Sidera](#), Nikephoros was appointed finance minister (*logothetēs tou genikou*) by the Empress [Irene](#). With the help of the [patricians](#) and [eunuchs](#) he contrived to dethrone and exile Irene, and to be chosen emperor in her stead on October 31, 802. He crowned his son [Staurakios](#) co-emperor in 803.

Nikephoros embarked on a general reorganization of the empire, creating new themes in the [Balkans](#) (where he initiated the re-Hellenization by resettling [Greeks](#) from [Anatolia](#)) and strengthening the frontiers. Needing large sums to increase his military forces, he set himself with great energy to increase the empire's revenue. By his rigorous tax imposts he alienated the favour of his subjects, and especially of the clergy, whom he otherwise sought to control firmly. Although he appointed an [iconodule](#), [Nikephoros](#) as [patriarch](#), Emperor Nikephoros was portrayed as a [villain](#) by ecclesiastical historians like [Theophanes the Confessor](#).

By withholding the tribute which Irene had agreed to pay to the caliph [Hārūn al-Rashīd](#), Nikephoros committed himself to a war against the [Arabs](#). Compelled by Bardanes' disloyalty to



take the field himself, he sustained a severe defeat at the [Battle of Krasos](#) in [Phrygia](#) (805), and the subsequent inroads (in 806 a [Muslim](#) army of 135,000 men invaded the empire) of the enemy into [Asia Minor](#) induced him to make peace on condition of paying 50,000 *nomismata* immediately and a yearly tribute of 30,000 *nomismata*. With a succession struggle enveloping the caliphate on the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd in 809, Nikephoros was free to deal with [Krum](#), Khan of Bulgaria, who was harassing his northern frontiers and had just conquered [Serdica](#) ([Sofia](#)).

Ruins of Pliska

In 811 Nikephoros invaded [Bulgaria](#), defeated Krum twice, and sacked the Bulgarian capital [Pliska](#). However, during Nikephoros' retreat, the Byzantine army was ambushed and destroyed in the mountain passes on [July 26](#) by [Krum](#). Nikephoros was killed in the battle, the second Roman emperor to suffer this fate since [Valens](#) in the [Battle of Adrianople](#) (August 9, 378). Krum is said to have [made a drinking-cup](#) of Nikephoros' skull.

By an unknown wife Nikephoros I had at least two children:

- [Staurakios](#), who succeeded as emperor.
- [Prokopia](#), who married [Michael I Rangabe](#), emperor 811-813.

Staurakios

Staurakios or **Stauracius**, (died January 11, 812) was [Byzantine emperor](#) from July 26 to October 2, 811.

Staurakios on a coin issued by his father Nikephoros I.



The son of Emperor [Nikephoros I](#), Staurakios had been crowned as co-emperor by his father in 803. The chronicler [Theophanes the Confessor](#) claims that Staurakios was guilty of [rape](#), a claim perhaps colored by his hostility to Nikephoros I. In 807 Staurakios married the [Athenian Theophano](#), a relative of the deposed

Empress [Irene](#).

Staurakios participated in his father's expedition against [Krum of Bulgaria](#) in 811, and barely escaped with his life from the disastrous [Battle of Pliska](#), in which his father was killed. However, Staurakios was paralyzed by a sword wound near his neck, and was saved by the imperial guard which retreated from the battlefield. Because of his uncertain condition he was hastily crowned at [Adrianople](#), the first time an emperor of the Eastern Empire had been crowned outside [Constantinople](#).

Due to his debilitating wound, Staurakios was unable to exercise actual authority. As his condition worsened, the court was split between the factions of his wife Theophano and his sister Prokopia, who hoped that her husband [Michael Rangabe](#) would be chosen as the emperor's heir. As it became clear that Staurakios intended to designate Theophano as his successor (or else to abolish the empire and declare a republic), the supporters of Michael forced the emperor to abdicate on October 2, 811. Staurakios retired to a [monastery](#) where he died from the effects of his wound on January 11, 812. Michael Rangabe became emperor, as [Michael I](#).

Theodora the Armenian

Theodora depicted as ruler on this coin, with her son [Michael](#) nominally emperor, and her daughter Thecla on the reverse.



Theodora (Greek: c. 815 - after 867) was a Byzantine Empress as the spouse of the [Byzantine emperor Theophilus](#), and Regent of the Byzantine Empire from 842 to 855. She is venerated as a [Saint](#) in the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#); her [Feast Day](#) is February 11.

Originally from [Paphlagonia](#), Theodora was of [Armenian](#) aristocratic descent. The names of her parents were preserved in [Theophanes Continuatus](#), the continuation of the chronicle started by [Theophanes the Confessor](#). They were Marinos, a [drungarios](#), and Theoktiste Phlorina. Genealogies attribute [Mamikonian](#) ancestry to Marinos; he is an alleged son of Artavazd Mamikonian, who was head of the House in the 770s.

Theodora was a sister of [Bardas](#) and [Petronas](#). Theophanes also records three sisters: Kalomaria, Sophia and Irene. Irene reportedly married Sergios, brother of [Patriarch Photios I of Constantinople](#).

In 829, [Theophilus](#) succeeded to the throne. He was sixteen-years-old and unmarried. The following year his stepmother, [Euphrosyne](#), proclaimed a [bride-show](#). Potential brides from every [theme](#) travelled from their homelands to [Constantinople](#), Theodora among them. The poet [Kassia](#) was said to have taken part.

The bride-show took place in May, 830, and Theodora was chosen to become empress, probably by her new mother-in-law. The marriage took place on 5 June 830, in [Hagia Sophia](#). Euphrosyne soon retired to a convent and Theodora remained the only Augusta.



Late 14th-early 15th century icon illustrating the "[Triumph of Orthodoxy](#)" in 843. Theodora is depicted in the upper register with her son Michael. (National Icon Collection 18, [British Museum](#))

The family of Theodora seems to have followed her to court. Her brothers became officials and her sisters married into the court aristocracy. During her own marriage she bore Theophilus five daughters and two sons, the younger of whom became the future [Michael III](#).

Despite the fact that Theophilus was an [iconoclast](#), Theodora held fast to the veneration of [icons](#) which she kept in her chambers in the imperial palace. One story holds that a servant witnessed her venerating her icons and reported her to the emperor. When her husband confronted her about the incident she stated that she had merely been "playing with dolls." Two of her icons are

kept at the monastery of [Vatopedi](#) on [Mount Athos](#) to this day and are referred to as "Theodora's Dolls". They are displayed annually on the [Sunday of Orthodoxy](#).

Children

The daughters of Theodora being instructed in the veneration of the icons by their grandmother Theoktiste.
Miniature from the [Madrid Skylitzes](#)



Theodora and Theophilus had seven children. Among them were:

- Thekla (born c. 831 - after 867). She was named Augusta and her image appears in coinage during the regency of her mother. Later exiled to a monastery by her brother Michael. She was recalled and was a mistress of Emperor [Basil I the Macedonian](#).
- [Michael III](#) (19 January 840 - 23 September/24 September 867), who succeeded as emperor.
- Constantine, co-emperor from c. 833 to c. 835.

Theophilus (emperor)

Theophilus or **Theophilus** (813 – 20 January 842) was [Byzantine emperor](#) of [Armenian](#) origin from [829](#) to [842](#). He was the second emperor of the [Phrygian dynasty](#).

Theophilus, in the Chronicle of [John Skylitzes](#)



Theophilus was the son of the Byzantine Emperor [Michael II](#) and his wife of Armenian descent [Thekla](#), and the godson of Emperor [Leo V the Armenian](#). Michael II crowned Theophilus co-emperor in 822, shortly after his own accession. Unlike his father, Theophilus received an extensive education, and showed interest in the arts. On October 2, 829, Theophilus succeeded his father as sole emperor.

At the time of his accession, Theophilus was obliged to wage wars against the [Arabs](#) on two fronts. [Sicily](#) was once again invaded by the Arabs, who took [Palermo](#) after a year-long siege in 831, established the [Emirate of Sicily](#) and gradually continued to expand across the island. The invasion of [Anatolia](#) by the [Abbasid Caliph Al-Ma'mun](#) in 830 was faced by the emperor himself, but the Byzantines were defeated and lost several fortresses. In 831 Theophilus retaliated by leading a large army into [Cilicia](#) and capturing [Tarsus](#). The emperor returned to [Constantinople](#) in triumph, but in the Autumn was defeated by the enemy in [Cappadocia](#). Another defeat in the same province in 833 forced Theophilus to sue for peace (Theophilus offered 100,000 gold [dinars](#) and the return of 7,000 prisoners), which he obtained the next year, after the death of Al-Ma'mun.

During the respite from the war against the Abbasids, Theophilus arranged for the abduction of the Byzantine captives settled north of the [Danube](#) by [Krum of Bulgaria](#). The rescue operation was carried out with success in c. 836, and the peace between [Bulgaria](#) and the [Byzantine Empire](#) was quickly restored. However, it proved impossible to maintain peace in the East. Theophilus had given asylum to a number of refugees from the east in 834, including Nasr (who was [Persian](#) ^[2]), baptized [Theophobos](#), who married the emperor's aunt Irene, and became one of his generals. With relations with the Abbasids deteriorating, Theophilus prepared for a new war.

In [837](#) Theophilus led a vast army of 70,000 men towards [Mesopotamia](#), and captured [Melitene](#) and [Samosata](#).^[3] The emperor also took Zapetra (Zibatra, Sozopetra), the birthplace of the Caliph [al-Mu'tasim](#), destroying it. Theophilus returned to Constantinople in triumph. Eager for revenge, [Al-Mu'tasim](#) assembled a vast army and launched a two prong invasion of [Anatolia](#) in [838](#). Theophilus decided to strike one division of the caliph's army before they could combine. On July 21, 838 at the [Battle of Anzen](#) in Dazimon, Theophilus personally led a Byzantine army of 25,000 men (possibly 40,000 men?) against the troops commanded by [Afshin](#).^{[4][5]} [Afshin](#) withstood the [Byzantine](#) attack after which he then counter attacked and won the battle. The Byzantine survivors fell back in disorder and did not interfere in the caliph's continuing campaign.

Caliph [Al-Mu'tasim](#) took [Ancyra](#). [Al-Afshin](#) joined him there. The full Abbasid army advanced against [Amorion](#), the cradle of the dynasty. Initially there was determined resistance. Then a Muslim captive escaped and informed the caliph where there was a section of the wall that had only a front facade. Al-Mu'tasim concentrated his bombardment on this section. The wall was

breached. Having heroically held for fifty-five days, the city now fell to al-Mu'tasim on September 23, 838.

And in [838](#), in order to impress the [Caliph](#) of [Baghdad](#), Theophilus had John the Grammarian distribute 36,000 [nomismata](#) to the citizens of Baghdad.^[6] Around 841, the [Republic of Venice](#) sent a fleet of 60 galleys (each carrying 200 men) to assist the Byzantines in driving the [Arabs](#) from [Crotone](#), but it failed.^[7]

During this campaign some of Al-Mu'tasim's top generals were plotting against the caliph. He uncovered this. Many of these leading commanders were arrested, some executed, before he arrived home. Al-Afshin seems not to have been involved in this, but he was detected in other intrigues and died in prison in the spring of 841. Caliph al-Mu'tasim fell sick in October, 841 and died on January 5, 842.

Theophilus never recovered from the blow; his health gradually failed, and he died on January 20, 842. His character has been the subject of considerable discussion, some regarding him as one of the ablest of the Byzantine emperors, others as an ordinary and not a particularly significant ruler. There is no doubt that he did his best to check corruption and oppression on the part of his officials, and administered justice with strict impartiality. His personal leadership into battle with his troops indicates he was not afraid to command and put his life alongside that of his soldiers.

By his marriage with [Theodora](#), Theophilus had seven children:

- Constantine, co-emperor from c. 833 until his death in c. 835.
- [Michael III](#), who succeeded as emperor.
- Maria, who married the [Caesar Alexios Mousale](#).
- Thekla, who was a mistress of Emperor [Basil I the Macedonian](#).

Michael III

Michael III (January 19, 840 – September 23–24, 867), [Byzantine Emperor](#) from 842 to 867. Michael III was the third and traditionally last member of the [Phrygian Dynasty](#). He was given the disparaging moniker *the Drunkard* by the hostile historians of the succeeding [Macedonian dynasty](#).

Michael was the youngest child of Emperor [Theophilos](#) and [Theodora](#). Already crowned co-ruler by his father in 840, Michael III had just turned two years old when he succeeded as sole emperor on January 20, 842.

During his minority, the empire was governed by his mother Theodora, her uncle Sergios, and the minister [Theoktistos](#). As the emperor was growing up, the courtiers around him fought for influence. Increasingly fond of his uncle [Bardas](#), Michael invested him as *kaisar* ([Caesar](#)) and allowed him to murder Theoktistos in November 855. Michael III overthrew the regency on March 15, 856, and relegated his mother and sisters to a monastery in 857.

Michael III



Bardas justified his usurpation of the regency by introducing various internal reforms; Michael III took an active part in the wars against the [Abbasids](#) and their vassals on the eastern frontier in 856–863, especially in 857 when he sent an army of 50,000 men against the [Emir](#) of [Melitene](#). In 859 he personally besieged [Samosata](#), but in 860 he had to abandon his expedition to repel a [Rus'](#) [attack](#) on [Constantinople](#). Michael was defeated by the [Caliph al-Mutawakkil](#) at Dazimon in 860, but in 863 his other uncle Petronas defeated and killed the *amir* of Melitene at the [battle of Lalakaon](#) and celebrated a triumph in the capital.

Michael III's marriage with [Eudokia Dekapolitissa](#) was childless, but the emperor did not want to risk a scandal by attempting to marry his mistress [Eudokia Ingerina](#), daughter of the [Varangian](#) (Danish Viking) imperial guard Inger. The solution he chose was to have Ingerina marry his favorite courtier and chamberlain [Basil the Macedonian](#). While Michael carried out his relationship with Ingerina, Basil was kept satisfied with the emperor's sister Thekla, whom her brother retrieved from a monastery. Basil gained increasing influence over Michael, and in April 866 he convinced the emperor that the Caesar Bardas was conspiring against him and was duly allowed to murder Bardas. This curious development may have been intended to legitimize the eventual succession to the throne of Eudokia Ingerina's son [Leo](#), who was widely believed to be Michael's son.

Michael III had no children by his wife [Eudokia Dekapolitissa](#), but was believed to have fathered one or two sons by his mistress [Eudokia Ingerina](#), who was married to [Basil I](#):

- [Leo VI](#), who succeeded as emperor in 886.
- [Stephen I](#), patriarch of Constantinople.

Eudokia Ingerina

Eudokia Ingerina or **Eudocia Ingerina** (c. 840–882) was the wife of the [Byzantine emperor Basil I](#), the mistress of his predecessor [Michael III](#), and the mother to both the Emperors [Leo VI](#) and [Alexander](#) and [Patriarch Stephen I of Constantinople](#). Eudokia was the daughter of Inger, a [Varangian](#) guard in the emperor's service. Her mother was a Martinakia and a distant relative to the imperial family.

Eudokia and her son Constantine, and Basil.



Because her family was [iconoclastic](#), the Empress Mother [Theodora](#) strongly disapproved of them. About 855 Eudokia became the mistress of Theodora's son, Michael III, who thus incurred the anger of his mother and the powerful minister Theoktistos. Unable to risk a major scandal by leaving his

wife, Michael married Eudokia to his friend Basil but continued his relationship with her. Basil was compensated with the emperor's sister Thekla as his own mistress.

Eudokia gave birth to a son, Leo, in September 866 and another, Stephen, in November 867. They were officially Basil's children, but this paternity was questioned, apparently even by Basil himself. The strange promotion of Basil to co-emperor in May 867 lends some support to the possibility that at least Leo was actually Michael III's illegitimate son. The parentage of Eudokia's younger children is not a subject of dispute, as Michael III was murdered in September 867.

A decade into Basil's reign, Eudokia became involved with another man, whom the emperor ordered to be [tensured](#) as monk. In 882, she selected [Theophano](#) as wife for her son Leo, and died shortly afterwards.

Children

Eudokia and Basil officially had six children:

- Symbarios, renamed Constantine (c. 865 - 3 September 879). Co-emperor to Basil from 6 January 868 to his death. According to [George Alexandrovič Ostrogorsky](#), Constantine was betrothed to [Ermengard of Provence](#), daughter of [Louis II, Holy Roman Emperor](#) and [Engelberga](#) in 869. The marital contract was broken in 871 when relations between Basil and Louis broke down.
- [Leo VI](#) (19 September 866 - 11 May 912), who succeeded as emperor and may actually have been the son of [Michael III](#).
- [Stephen I](#) (November 867 - 18 May 893), patriarch of Constantinople, who may also have been a son of Michael III.
- [Alexander](#) (c. 870 - 6 June 913), who succeeded as emperor in 912.
- Anna [Porphyrogenita](#) (d. 905/12 or after). A nun the convent of [St Euphemia](#), Petron.

Leo VI the Wise

Leo VI, surnamed **the Wise** or **the Philosopher** (**Greek**: *Leōn VI ho Sophos*, 19 September 866 – 11 May 912), was **Byzantine emperor** from 886 to 912. The second ruler of the **Macedonian dynasty** he was very well-read, leading to his surname. During his reign, the renaissance of letters begun by his predecessor **Basil I** continued, but the Empire also saw several military defeats in the Balkans against **Bulgaria** and against the Arabs in **Sicily** and the **Aegean**.

A mosaic in **Hagia Sophia** showing Leo VI paying homage to **Christ**



Leo was born to **Eudokia Ingerina**, the former mistress of Emperor **Michael III**, and **Caesar Basil**. In 867, Michael was assassinated by Basil, who succeeded him as Emperor **Basil I**. As the second eldest son of the Emperor, Leo was associated on the throne in 870 and became the direct heir on the death of his older half-brother Constantine in 879. However, he and his father hated each other and Basil almost had Leo blinded as a teenager. On August 29, 886, Basil died in a hunting accident, though he claimed on his deathbed that there

was an **assassination** attempt in which Leo was possibly involved.

Leo VI was not as successful in battle as Basil had been. In indulging his chief counselor



Stylianos Zaoutzes, Leo provoked a war with **Simeon I of Bulgaria** in 894, but was defeated. Bribing the **Magyars** to attack the **Bulgarians** from the north, Leo scored an indirect success in 895. However, deprived of his new allies, he lost the major **Battle of Boulgarophygon** in 896 and had to make the required commercial concessions and to pay annual tribute.

*Leo VI (right) and his father Basil I, from the 11th century manuscript by **John Skylitzes**.*

Succession

The future Constantine VII was the illegitimate son born before Leo's uncanonical fourth marriage to Zoe Karbonopsina. To strengthen his son's position as heir, Leo had him crowned as co-emperor on May 15, 908, when he was only two years old. Leo VI died on May 11, 912. He was succeeded by his younger brother **Alexander**, who had reigned as emperor alongside his father and brother since 879.

Zoe Zaoutzaina

Zoe Zaoutzaina (died May, 899) was the second wife of [Leo VI the Wise](#). She was the daughter of [Stylianos Zaoutzes](#), a high-ranking [bureaucrat](#) during the reign of her husband.

Royal mistress

The work [Theophanes Continuatus](#) was a continuation of the chronicle of [Theophanes the Confessor](#) by other writers, active during the reign of [Constantine VII](#). According to it Zoe was first married to Theodore Gouniatzizes, an otherwise obscure member of the court. She became mistress to the Emperor after the death of her husband. Theophanes records Theodore being poisoned, implicating Leo VI in his early demise. [Symeon Metaphrastes](#) records Leo falling in love with her in the third year of his reign, placing their meeting c. 889. At the time Leo was married to Theophano, daughter of Constantine Martiniakos. Their marriage had been arranged by his father [Basil I](#). They had a daughter but the marriage of Leo VI and Theophano seems to have been loveless.

Death

Zoe herself died in 899. According to [De Ceremoniis](#) by Constantine VII, she had given birth to at least two daughters. However Leo VI still had no son and his succession was not secure. Symeon records her being buried in the temple of her namesake Hagia Zoe. However De Ceremoniis mentions her buried in the [Church of the Holy Apostles](#) where Leo VI, Theophano and third wife [Eudokia Baïana](#) were also buried. Providing both references were accurate, her remains were moved from the original burial place to that of her husband.

Children

According to [De Ceremoniis](#) by Constantine VII, Leo VI and Zoe had at least two daughters. However different copies of the text give two different names for the second one:

- Anna. Considered to have died young. Buried with her father and mother at the Church of the Holy Apostles.
- Anna or Eudocia. Eudocia was the name of the only daughter of Leo VI and Theophano while Anna was the name of the first daughter of Leo VI and Zoe. In either case possibly named after an already deceased half-sister or sister.

A letter attributed to [Nicholas Mystikos](#) by [Christian Settipani](#) mentions negotiations to betroth the second daughter to [Louis the Blind](#). Whether negotiations were ever completed and whether the marriage ever occurred is not known. However Settipani and other genealogists consider [Charles Constantine of Vienne](#) to be the result of this marriage.

Stylios Zaoutzes

Stylios Zaoutzes was a high [Byzantine](#) official of Armenian origin. Rising to high rank under [Byzantine emperor Basil I](#), he then rose further to prominence under Basil's successor [Leo VI the Wise](#) (r. 886–912), who had an affair with Stylios' daughter [Zoe Zaoutaina](#). Stylios Zaoutzes was Leo's leading minister during the first half of his reign, and was awarded the unique title of *basileopator*. His standing and influence declined after 895, but in 898, he became Leo's father-in-law when the emperor married Zoe. He died in 899, in the same year as Zoe. Following an attempted coup by his relatives, the Zaoutzes clan was deprived of the considerable power it had amassed under Stylios' tutelage.

Zaoutzes was of [Armenian](#) descent, and was born in the *thema* of [Macedonia](#). It has been theorized by N. Adontz that Stylios might be the son of a contemporary *strategos* of Macedonia named Tzantzes, the name also of Stylios' son, but the connection is ultimately impossible to prove. According to [Steven Runciman](#), the surname *Zaoutzes* derives from the Armenian word *Zaoutch*, "negro", reflecting Stylios' particularly dark complexion. In the same vein, Stylios was known among Byzantines as "the [Ethiopian](#)". Whatever his exact ancestry, he shared ethnic and geographical origin with the Emperor [Basil I the Macedonian](#) (r. 867–886), a factor that may have played a role in his ascent to high office during the latter's reign.

In late 882, the young Leo, Basil's second son and heir after the death of his elder brother Constantine in 879, was wedded to [Theophano](#), a member of the Martinakes family. However, before or shortly after the marriage, he had taken up [Zoe Zaoutaina](#), the beautiful daughter of Stylios Zaoutzes, as his mistress. At that point, Zaoutzes held the post of *mikros hetaireiarches*, i.e. commander of the junior regiment of the emperor's mercenary bodyguard, the *hetaireia*. Leo's relations with his father Basil were always strained, and when Theophano informed him of this affair, Basil married Zoe off to one Theodore Gouzouniates and punished his son. Furthermore, in 883, Leo was denounced as plotting against Basil and was imprisoned; it was only through the intervention of patriarch [Photios](#) and Stylios Zaoutzes that he was not also blinded. This affair does not seem to have hurt Stylios' standing with Basil or his career, for by the end of Basil's reign he was *protospatharios* and *megas hetaireiarches* (senior commander of the *hetaireia*).

Louis the Blind

Louis the Blind (c. 880 – 28 June 928) was the [king of Provence](#) from 887, [king of Italy](#) from 900, and briefly [Holy Roman Emperor](#), as **Louis III**, between 901 and 905. He was the son of [Boso](#), the usurper king of Provence, and [Ermengard](#), a daughter of the [Emperor Louis II](#). Through his father, he was a [Bosonid](#), but through his mother, a [Carolingian](#).

He succeeded his father upon his death in January 887, though at that time, the kingdom of Provence was restricted to the environs of [Vienne](#). The Provençal barons elected Ermengard to act as his [regent](#), with the support of Louis's uncle, [Richard the Justiciar](#), [Duke of Burgundy](#). In May, Ermengard travelled with Louis to the court of her relative, the emperor [Charles the Fat](#), and received his recognition of the young Louis as king. Charles adopted Louis as his son and put both mother and son under his protection. In May 889, she travelled to Charles' successor, [Arnulf](#), to make submission anew.

In 900, Louis, as the grandson and heir of the Emperor Louis II, was invited into Italy by various lords, including [Adalbert II of Tuscany](#), who were suffering under the ravages of the [Magyars](#) and the incompetent rule of [Berengar I](#). Louis thus marched his army across the [Alps](#) and defeated Berengar, chasing him from [Pavia](#), the old [Lombard](#) capital, where, in the church of [San Michele](#), he was crowned with the [Iron Crown of Lombardy](#) on 12 October. He travelled onwards to [Rome](#), where, in 901, he was crowned Emperor by [Pope Benedict IV](#). The next year (902), however, Berengar defeated Louis's armies and forced him to flee to Provence and promise never to return.

In 905, Louis launched another attempt to invade Italy. He was again defeated by Berengar, with the aid of [Bavarian](#) troops, captured, and imprisoned in [Verona](#), where, on 21 July 905, he had his eyes put out (for breaking his oath) and was forced to relinquish his royal Italian and imperial crowns. Later, Berengar became Emperor. After this last attempt to restore Carolingian power over Italy, Louis continued to rule Provence for many more years, though [Hugh](#), [Count of Arles](#), was the dominant figure in the territory.

Louis returned to Vienne, his capital, and by 911, he had put most of the royal powers in the hands of Hugh. Hugh was made Margrave of Provence and moved the capital to [Arles](#). As regent, Hugh married Louis's sister Willa. Louis lived out his days until his death in obscurity.

Marriages and heirs

By a relationship, whether marriage or not, Louis fathered a son called [Charles-Constantine](#), who would become [Count of Vienne](#). Charles' mother is not named in any sources. There has been modern genealogical speculation that she might be Anna, daughter of the [Byzantine Emperor Leo VI](#) and his second wife [Zoe Zaoutzaina](#). In 914, Louis entered a second union, which would then be either his first or second marriage, by marrying Adelaide, daughter of [Rudolph I of Upper Burgundy](#).

Constantine VII

Constantine VII *Porphyrogennetos*, "the [Purple-born](#)" ([Greek](#): *Kōnstantinos VII Porphyrogennētos*), (September 2, 905 – November 9, 959) was the son of the [Byzantine emperor Leo VI](#) and his fourth wife [Zoe Karbonopsina](#). He was also the nephew of the Emperor [Alexander](#).

His regent was presently forced to make peace with [Tsar Simeon](#) of [Bulgaria](#), whom he reluctantly recognized as Bulgarian emperor. Because of this unpopular concession, Nicholas was driven out of the regency by Constantine's mother [Zoe](#).

Christ Crowning Constantine VII (945).



Zoe was no more successful with the Bulgarians, by whom her main supporter, the general [Leo Phokas](#), was defeated in 917, and in 919 she was replaced by the [admiral Romanos Lekapenos](#), who married his daughter [Helena Lekapene](#) to Constantine. Romanos used his position to advance to the ranks of *basileopatōr* in May 919, *kaisar* ([Caesar](#)) in September 920, and finally co-emperor in December of the same year. Thus, just short of reaching nominal majority, Constantine was again eclipsed by a senior emperor.

Romanos kept power for himself and maintained it until 944, when he was deposed by his sons Stephen and Constantine. Romanos spent the last years of his life in exile on the Island of [Prote](#) as a monk and died on June 15, 948.^[1] With the help of his wife, Constantine VII succeeded in removing his brothers-in-law and on January 27, 945, Constantine VII was once again sole emperor at the age of 39, after a life spent in the shadow. Several months later, Constantine VII crowned his own son [Romanos II](#) co-emperor. Having never exercised executive authority, Constantine remained primarily devoted to his scholarly pursuits

and relegated his authority to bureaucrats and generals, as well as his energetic wife Helena Lekapene.

In 949 Constantine launched a new fleet of 100 ships (20 [dromons](#), 64 *chelandia*, and 10 galleys) against the [Arab](#) corsairs hiding in [Crete](#), but like his father's attempt to retake the island in 911, this attempt also failed. On the Eastern frontier things went better, even if with alternate success: in 949 the Byzantines conquered [Germanicea](#), repeatedly defeated the enemy armies and in 952 crossed the upper [Euphrates](#). But in 953 the [Arab](#) *amir* [Sayf al-Daula](#) retook Germanicea and entered the imperial territory. The land in the east was eventually recovered by [Nikephoros Phokas](#), who conquered [Hadath](#), in northern [Syria](#), in 958, and by the [Armenian](#) general [John Tzimiskes](#), who one year later captured [Samosata](#), in northern [Mesopotamia](#). An Arab fleet was also destroyed by [Greek fire](#) in 957. Constantine's efforts to retake themes lost to the Arabs were the first such efforts to have any real success.

Constantine had intense diplomatic relationships with foreign courts, including the [caliph](#) of [Cordoba Abd ar-Rahman III](#) and [Otto I, King of Germany](#). In the autumn of 957 Constantine was visited by [Olga](#), princess of the [Kievan Rus'](#). The reasons for this voyage have never been clarified: in any case, she was baptised with the name Helena, and began to convert her people to [Christianity](#).

Constantine VII died at Constantinople in November 959 and was succeeded by his son [Romanos II](#). It was rumored that Constantine had been poisoned by his son or his daughter-in-law [Theophano](#).

Family



Gold solidus of Leo VI and Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, 908-912.

By his wife [Helena Lekapene](#), the daughter of Emperor [Romanos I](#), Constantine VII had several children, including:

- Leo, who died young.
- [Romanos II](#).
- Zoe. Sent to a convent.
- [Theodora](#), who married Emperor [John I Tzimiskes](#).
- Agatha. Sent to a convent.
- [Theophano](#), daughter in-law.
- Theophano. Sent to a convent.
- Anna. Sent to a convent.

Theodora, daughter of Constantine VII

Theodora, daughter of Constantine VII (born c. 946) was the second wife and first Empress consort of [John I Tzimiskes](#).

She was a daughter of [Constantine VII](#) and [Helena Lekapene](#). Her maternal grandparents were [Romanos I](#) and [Theodora](#).

The work [Theophanes Continuatus](#) was a continuation of the chronicle of [Theophanes the Confessor](#) by other writers, active during the reign of her father. The chronicle ends in 961 and records her fate following the death of Constantine VII on 9 November 959. Her brother [Romanos II](#) succeeded to the throne and his Empress [Theophano](#) convinced him to send all five of his sisters to the [convent](#) of Kanikleion.

Theodora and her sisters Zoe, Agatha, Theophano and Anna were initially held in Kanikleion. Later they were split with Theodora, Zoe and Theophano sent to the [monastery](#) of Antiochus while Agatha and Anna were sent to [Myrelaion](#), a [nunnery](#) built by their maternal grandfather.

While the sisters were following their monastic lives, changes were occurring in the imperial throne. Romanos II died on 15 March 963. His co-rulers and successors were his underage sons [Basil II](#) and [Constantine VIII](#). Theophano served as their Regent until marrying victorious general [Nikephoros II](#). Nikephoros rose to the throne as senior Emperor. However Theophano and her lover [John I Tzimiskes](#) organized his assassination on the night of 10 December 969 – 11 December 969.

John became senior Emperor in place of his victim. Theophano was exiled to the island of [Pringipos](#). However, unlike his predecessor, John lacked a connection to the legitimate [Macedonian dynasty](#) by either blood and marriage. His previous marriage to Maria Skleraina had solidified an alliance with general [Bardas Skleros](#). The loyalties of the rest of the [Byzantine Empire](#) were not as secure.

John rectified the situation by releasing Theodora from Myrelaion and arranging their marriage. According to [Leo the Deacon](#) the marriage occurred in November, 971. "The Cambridge Medieval History. Vol. IV, The Byzantine Empire" (1966) by [Joan M. Hussey](#), attributes to this marriage the birth of a daughter:

- Theophano [Kourkouas](#).

John I died on 10 January 976. Whether Theodora was still alive is not mentioned in Medieval sources.

John I Tzimiskes

John I Tzimiskes or **Tzimiscēs**, (925 - January 10, 976) was [Byzantine Emperor](#) from December 11, 969 to January 10, 976. A brilliant and intuitive general, John's short reign saw the expansion of the empire's borders and the strengthening of Byzantium itself.

Tzimiskes was born sometime in 925 to an unnamed member of the Kourkouas family by the sister of the future Emperor [Nikephoros II Phokas](#). Both the Kourkouai and the Phokadai were distinguished families of [Armenian](#) origin, and among the most prominent of the emerging military aristocracy of [Asia Minor](#). Several of their members had served as prominent army generals, most notably the great [John Kourkouas](#), who conquered [Melitene](#) and much of Armenia.

[Svyatoslav I](#)'s meeting with Emperor John.



After his coronation in December 969, John dispatched his brother-in-law [Bardas Skleros](#) to subdue a rebellion by [Bardas Phokas](#), who aspired to succeed his uncle Nikephoros II. To solidify his position, John married [Theodora](#), a daughter of Emperor [Constantine VII](#). John proceeded to justify his usurpation by the energy with which he repelled the foreign invaders of the empire. In a series of campaigns against the [Kievan](#) encroachment on the Lower [Danube](#) in (970–971) he drove the enemy out of [Thrace](#), crossed [Mt. Haemus](#) and [besieged the fortress of Dorystolon](#) ([Silistra](#)) on the Danube. In several hard-fought battles he defeated King [Svyatoslav I](#) of [Kievan Rus](#) so completely, that he left Tzimiskes master of eastern [Bulgaria](#) and [Dobruja](#). On his return to Constantinople, Tzimiskes celebrated

a triumph, divested the captive Bulgarian emperor [Boris II](#) of the imperial symbols, and proclaimed Bulgaria annexed. He further secured his northern frontier by transplanting to Thrace some colonies of [Paulicians](#) whom he suspected of sympathising with their [Muslim](#) neighbours in the east.

John was succeeded by his ward and nephew, [Basil II](#), who had been nominal co-emperor since 960.

Bardas Phokas the Elder

Bardas Phokas (c. 878-c. 968) was a notable [Byzantine](#) general in the first half of the 10th century, and father of [Byzantine emperor Nikephoros II Phokas](#) and the *kouropalates* [Leo Phokas the Younger](#).

Bardas was the scion of the Phokas family, one of the great houses of the [Anatolian](#) military aristocracy, his father was [Nikephoros Phokas the Elder](#), an eminent Byzantine general with a distinguished record of service in Italy.

In 941, he was governor of the [Theme](#) of [Armeniakon](#), in the area previously known as [Paphlagonia](#). In this year the [Rus'](#) navy under the leadership of [Igor I of Kiev](#) [attacked](#) the Empire. Driven off from [Constantinople](#), the Rus' landed in [Bithynia](#) and ravaged it. Bardas kept the attackers from doing too much damage with his local militia levies until the larger Byzantine army under [John Kourkouas](#) came and drove the Rus' out.

In 945 he was appointed supreme commander of the Byzantine armies of the East by Emperor [Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus](#). In this command he did not make much progress against the Arab forces, being repeatedly defeated by [Sayf al-Daula](#), [emir of Aleppo](#). In 953, he was severely wounded and replaced by his son Nikephoros.

When Nikephoros came to the throne he made his father [Caesar](#), only a step below the imperial title. He died about 968 at the age of 90.

Romanos II

Romanos II or **Romanus II** (938–15 March 963) was a [Byzantine emperor](#). He succeeded his father [Constantine VII](#) in 959 at the age of twenty-one, and died suddenly in 963.

Death of Romanos II



Romanos II was a son of Emperor Constantine VII and [Helena Lekapene](#), the daughter of Emperor [Romanos I](#) and his wife [Theodora](#). Named after his maternal grandfather, Romanos was married, as a child, to Bertha, the illegitimate daughter of [Hugh of Arles](#), [King of Italy](#), who changed her name to Eudokia after her marriage. On April 6, 945, after the fall of the Lekapenoi, Constantine VII

crown his son Romanos co-emperor. With Hugh out of power in Italy and dead by 947, and Bertha herself dying in 949, Romanos secured the promise from his father that he would be allowed to select his own bride. Romanos' choice fell on an innkeeper's daughter named Anastaso, whom he married in 956 and renamed [Theophano](#).

In November 959 Romanos II succeeded his father on the throne, among rumors that he or his wife had contributed to the death of Constantine VII by poisoning him. Romanos purged his father's courtiers of his enemies and replaced them with his friends and those of his wife. Among the persons removed from court were the Empress Mother, Helena, and her daughters, all of them being sent to a nunnery. Nevertheless, many of Romanos' appointees were able men, including his chief adviser, the eunuch Joseph Bringas.

The sovereign could leave military matters in the hands of his generals, in particular the brothers Leo and [Nikephoros Phokas](#). In 960 Nikephoros Phokas was sent with a fleet of 1,000 *dromons*, 2,000 *chelandia*, and 308 transports (entire fleet was manned by 27,000 [oarsmen](#) and [marines](#)) carrying 50,000 men to recover [Crete](#) from the Muslims. After a difficult campaign and the 9-month siege of [Chandax](#), Nikephoros successfully re-established Byzantine control over the entire island in 961. Nikephoros conquered [Cilicia](#) and even [Aleppo](#) in 962, sacking the palace of the Emir and taking possession of 390,000 [silver dinars](#), 2,000 [camels](#), and 1,400 [mules](#).

Romanos II took ill and died on March 15, 963. His Empress Dowager, now Regent to the two co-emperors, was quick to marry the general [Nikephoros Phokas](#), and acquire another general, [John Tzimiskes](#), as her lover, having them both elevated to the imperial throne. The rights of her sons were, however, safeguarded and when Tzimiskes died, [Basil II](#) became senior emperor.

Romanos II probably never consummated his first marriage to Bertha of Italy. By his second wife [Theophano](#), he had at least three children:

1. [Basil II](#)
2. [Constantine VIII](#)
3. Anna, who married [Vladimir I of Kiev](#).

Basil II

Basil II, later surnamed **the Bulgar-slayer** (958 – December 15, 1025), known in his time as **Basil the [Porphyrogenitus](#)** and **Basil the Young** to distinguish him from his ancestor [Basil I the Macedonian](#), was a [Byzantine emperor](#) from the [Macedonian dynasty](#) who reigned from 10 January 976 to 15 December 1025.



[Emperor of the \[Byzantine Empire\]\(#\)](#)

The first part of his long reign was dominated by civil war against powerful generals from the [Anatolian](#) aristocracy. Following their submission, Basil oversaw the stabilization and expansion of the [Byzantine Empire](#)'s eastern frontier, and above all, the final and complete subjugation of [Bulgaria](#), the Empire's foremost European foe, after a prolonged struggle. He acknowledged regal title and also promoted [Stjepan Držislav of Croatia](#) to a [Patriarch](#) and an [Exarch](#) of *Dalmatia and Croatia*, after Držislav helped him against [Tsar Samuil of Bulgaria](#). At his death, the Empire stretched from Southern Italy to the Caucasus and from the Danube to the borders of Palestine, its greatest territorial extent since the [Muslim conquests](#), four centuries earlier.

Basil was the son of Emperor [Romanos II](#) by [Theophano](#), whose family was of Laconian [Greek](#) origin originating in the [Peloponnesian](#) region of [Lakonia](#)^[8], possibly from the city of [Sparta](#). Basil's mother [Theophano](#) married one of Romanos' leading generals, who took the throne as the Emperor [Nikephoros II Phokas](#) several months later in 963. Nikephoros was murdered in 969 by his nephew [John I Tzimiskes](#), who then became emperor and reigned for seven years. Finally, when John died on January 10, 976, Basil II took the throne as senior emperor.

Asian rebellions and alliance with Rus'

Basil was a brave soldier and a superb horseman; he was to prove himself a strong ruler and an able general. He did not at first display the full extent of his energy. In the early years of his reign, the administration remained in the hands of the [eunuch Basil Lekapenos](#) (an illegitimate son of Emperor [Romanos I](#)), president of the senate, a wily and gifted man, who hoped that the young emperors would be his puppets. Basil waited and watched without interfering, and devoted himself to learning the details of administrative business and instructing himself in military science.

Even though Nikephoros II Phokas and John I Tzimiskes were brilliant military commanders, both had proven to be lax administrators. Towards the end of his reign John had belatedly planned to curb the power of the great landowners, and his death, coming soon after his speaking out against them, led to rumours that he had been poisoned by Basil Lekapenos, who had acquired vast estates illegally and feared an investigation and punishment.

Campaigns against the Arabs

Having put an end to the internal strife, Basil II then turned his attention to the empire's other enemies. The Byzantine civil wars had weakened the empire's position in the east and the gains of Nikephoros II Phokas and John I Tzimiskes came close to being lost to the [Fatimids](#).

Following two heavy defeats of the *doux* of Antioch, [Michael Bourtzes](#), in 992 and 994, [Aleppo](#) was being besieged and Antioch was threatened by the enemy. In 995 Basil II, with an army of 40,000 men (with 80,000 mules)^[12], launched a campaign against the Fatimids, relieving Aleppo, taking over the [Orontes](#) valley, and raiding further south, sacking all of the cities from [Emesa](#) to [Tripoli](#).

Although he did not have sufficient forces to drive into [Palestine](#) and reclaim [Jerusalem](#), his victories did restore much of [Syria](#) to the empire. No emperor since [Heraclius](#) had been able to hold these lands for any length of time, and they remained Byzantine for the next 75 years.

Notwithstanding the above, it was mainly Basil's conspicuous act of cruelty which remained engraved in the historical memory of Greeks and Bulgarians alike, up to and including the 20th Century descendants of both peoples.

Later years

Basil II returned in triumph to Constantinople, then promptly went east and attacked the Georgian ruler in [Tayk](#), and later secured the annexation of the sub-kingdoms of [Armenia](#) (and a promise to have its capital and surrounding regions to be willed to Byzantium following the death of its king [Hovhannes-Smbat](#)).^[20] Basil created in those highlands a strongly fortified frontier, which, if his successors had been capable, should have proved an effective barrier against the invasions of the [Seljuk Turks](#).

In the meantime, other Byzantine forces restored much of [Southern Italy](#), lost over the previous 150 years, to the empire's control. When Basil finally died on December 15, 1025, he was planning a military expedition to recover the island of [Sicily](#).

Basil was to be buried in the last sarcophagus available in the rotunda of [Constantine I](#) in the Church of the Holy Apostles. However, he later asked his brother and successor [Constantine VIII](#) to be buried in the Church of St. John the Theologian (i.e. the Evangelist), at the [Hebdomon](#) Palace complex, outside the walls of Constantinople. The epitaph on the tomb celebrated Basil's campaigns and victories. During the pillage of 1204, Basil's grave was ravaged by the invading Crusaders of the [Fourth Crusade](#).

Constantine VIII

Constantine VIII, (960–11 November 1028) was reigning [Byzantine emperor](#) from December 15, 1025 until his death. He was the son of the Emperor [Romanos II](#) and [Theophano](#), and the younger brother of the eminent [Basil II](#), who died childless and thus left the rule of the [Byzantine Empire](#) in his hands. As a youth, Constantine VIII had been engaged to a daughter of Emperor [Boris II of Bulgaria](#), but in the end he married a Byzantine aristocrat named [Helena](#). By her he had three daughters: Eudokia, who became a nun, [Zoe](#), future empress, and [Theodora](#).

[Basil II](#) and Constantine VIII, holding cross. [Nomisma histamenon](#).



Constantine VIII had been crowned with his brother by their father from 962; he was only a toddler then. However, for some 63 out of the 68 years of his life he was eclipsed by other emperors, including [Nikephoros II Phokas](#), [John I Tzimiskes](#), and Basil II. Even when his elder brother became senior emperor, Constantine was perfectly content to enjoy all the privileges of imperial status without concerning himself with state affairs. On occasion Constantine participated in his brother's campaigns against rebel nobles. In 989, he acted as mediator between Basil II and [Bardas Skleros](#). Otherwise he spent his life in the search of pleasure and entertainment, including spectator sports at the [Hippodrome of Constantinople](#), or amusing himself with

riding and hunting.

When Basil II died on December 15, 1025, Constantine finally became sole emperor, although he ruled for less than three years before his own death on November 11, 1028.

Physically Constantine was tall and graceful, where Basil had been short and stocky. He was a superb horseman. By the time he became emperor, he had chronic gout and could hardly walk. His reign was a disaster because he lacked courage and political savvy. He reacted to every challenge with impulsive cruelty, persecuting uppity nobles and allegedly ordering the execution or mutilation of hundreds of innocent men. Constantine carried on as he always had: hunting, feasting, and enjoying life – and avoided state business as much as possible. He was poor at appointing officials. Within months, the land laws of Basil II were dropped under pressure from the [Anatolian](#) aristocracy, although Constantine struck at the nobility when threatened by conspiracy.

Like his brother, Constantine died without a male heir. The empire thus passed to his daughter [Zoe](#), whom he had married to [Romanos Argyros](#).

Zoe Porphyrogenita

Zoe (in [Greek](#): meaning "Life"), (c. 978–June 1050) was Empress of the [Byzantine Empire](#) with co-rulers November 15, 1028–1050.

Empress Zoe as depicted in a mosaic from the [Hagia Sophia](#)



Zoe was one of the few Byzantine empresses who was [Porphyrogenita](#), or "born into the purple" (that is, as the child of a reigning emperor). She was the daughter of [Constantine VIII](#) and [Helena, daughter of Alypius](#). Her father had become co-emperor in 962, and sole emperor in 1025.

Before dying, Constantine had married Zoe to his chosen heir [Romanos III](#) Argyros, the prefect of [Constantinople](#), on November 12, 1028. By this time, Zoe had reached 50 and had failed to produce any heir. Romanos III succeeded to the throne together with Zoe three days after they married.

On April 11, 1034, Romanos III was found dead in his bath, and there was speculation that Zoe and Michael had had him strangled or [drowned](#). Zoe married Michael later the same day, and he reigned as [Michael IV](#) until his death in 1041. Although Michael proved to be a more uxorious husband than Romanos, Zoe remained excluded from politics by the monopoly on government enjoyed by Michael's brother [John the Eunuch](#).

Shortly before the death of Michael IV in December 1041, the couple adopted as their son [Michael V](#), the son of Michael IV's sister. After several months of rule, the new emperor exiled his adoptive mother to a convent. The population of the city, loyal to Zoe, quickly forced him to recall the empress and her younger sister [Theodora](#) in April 1042. The sisters deposed Michael V, blinded him, and exiled him to a monastery, where he died later the same year. For two months, Zoe shared power with Theodora, until she could find yet another husband, her third, and the last she was permitted according to the rules of the [Orthodox Church](#). Her choice was [Constantine IX Monomachos](#), who outlived her by four years. Zoe died in 1050.

Zoe was fifty when she first married. Despite her age, she married twice more. Ironically, the most capable of her husbands was the one who was least well prepared to be emperor, Michael IV. It is said she was stunningly beautiful, and [Michael Psellos](#) in his *Chronographia* commented that, like a well baked chicken, "every part of her was firm and in good condition." She was aware of her charms and meant to keep and use them for as long as possible. With typical Byzantine ingenuity, she had many rooms in her chambers converted into laboratories for the preparation of secret ointments, and she was able to keep her face free of wrinkles until she was sixty.

Constantine IX Monomachos

Monomacho's crown circa 1042. Budapest.



Constantine IX Monomachos c. 1000–January 11, 1055, reigned as [Byzantine emperor](#) from June 11, 1042 to January 11, 1055. He had been chosen by [Zoe](#) as a husband and co-emperor in 1042, although he had been exiled for conspiring against her previous husband, Emperor [Michael IV the Paphlagonian](#). They ruled together until Zoe died in 1050.

Constantine Monomachos was the son of Theodosios Monomachos, an important bureaucrat under [Basil II](#) and [Constantine VIII](#). At some point Theodosios had been suspected of conspiracy and his son's career suffered accordingly. Constantine's position improved after he married, as his second wife, a niece of Emperor [Romanos III Argyros](#). Catching the eye of the Empress Zoe, Constantine was exiled to the island of [Lesbos](#) by her second husband, Michael IV. He was retrieved from exile in 1042, when he was appointed judge in Greece, but before he undertook his appointment,

Constantine was summoned to [Constantinople](#) as Zoe's choice for husband. The pair were married on June 11, 1042, without the participation of [Patriarch Alexius I of Constantinople](#), who refused to officiate over a third marriage (for both spouses). On the following day Constantine was formally proclaimed emperor together with Zoe and her sister Theodora.



A mosaic in [Hagia Sophia](#) showing Constantine IX Monomachos.

Romanos III Argyros

Romanos III Argyros (or **Romanus III Argyrus**) (968 – 11 April 1034) was [Byzantine emperor](#) from 15 November 1028 until his death.

Romanos Argyros was the son of an unnamed member of the [Argyros family](#) and a great-grandson of Emperor [Romanos I](#). His sister Maria had married [Giovanni Orseolo](#), a Venetian lord in Dalmatia. He also had a brother, [Basil Argyros](#). Under [Basil II](#) Romanos served as judge, and under [Constantine VIII](#) he became [urban prefect](#) of [Constantinople](#). Romanos attracted the attention of Constantine VIII, who forced him to divorce his wife (sending her into a [monastery](#)) and to marry the emperor's daughter [Zoe](#). The marriage took place on November 12, 1028, and three days later Constantine VIII died, leaving Romanos III as emperor.

The new emperor showed great eagerness to make his mark as a ruler, but was mostly unfortunate in his enterprises. He spent large sums upon new buildings and in endowing the [monks](#), and in his endeavour to relieve the pressure of taxation disorganized the finances of the state. Idealizing [Marcus Aurelius](#), Romanos aspired to be a new "[philosopher king](#)", and similarly desired to imitate the military prowess of [Trajan](#).

Romanos III Argyros—severely ill—dies inside the palace in 1034. In the picture, Romanos in a bath where he dies, from the Chronicle of [John Skylitzes](#).



In 1030 he resolved to retaliate upon the incursions of the [Muslims](#) on the eastern frontier by leading a large army in person against [Aleppo](#), but by allowing himself to be surprised on the march sustained a serious defeat at Azaz, near [Antioch](#). Though this disaster was reduced by the capture and successful defence of [Edessa](#) by [George Maniakes](#) in 1032 and by the sound defeat of a [Saracen](#) fleet in the [Adriatic](#), Romanos never recovered his early popularity.

As a member of the aristocracy, Romanos III abandoned his predecessors' curtailment of the privileges of the nobility and reduced their taxes, at the same time allowing peasant freeholders to fall into a condition of serfdom. At home Romanos III faced several conspiracies, mostly centered around his sister-in-law [Theodora](#), as in 1029 and 1030. Although he survived these attempts on the throne, his early death in 1034 was supposed to have been due to poison administered by his wife, though it has also been alleged that he was drowned in a bath on his wife's orders.

By his first wife Helena, Romanos III Argyros had a daughter, who was engaged to [Henry III, Holy Roman Emperor](#). He had no children by his second wife Zoe.

Theodora the Macedonian

Theodora (984 – early September, [1056](#)) was a [Byzantine Empress](#). She was co-empress from [1042](#) and from January 11, 1055 to after August 31, 1056 actively ruled the [Eastern Roman Empire](#) or, the [Roman Empire](#) of the [Middle Ages](#) that often is described as the [Byzantine Empire](#).

She was born into the [Macedonian dynasty](#) that ruled the empire for almost two hundred years, and would become its last monarch.

Byzantine coin showing [Jesus Christ](#) and Empress Theodora on the right.



She was the daughter of [Constantine VIII](#) and [Helena, daughter of Alypius](#). Possessed of a strong and austere character, Theodora refused the hand of the heir-presumptive, [Romanos Argyros](#), who then was married to her sister, [Zoe](#), instead in 1028.

Although living in retirement Theodora excited Zoe's jealousy and, on a pretext of a conspiracy with [Presian of Bulgaria](#), she was confined in a [monastery](#).

In April 19, 1042, the popular movement which caused the dethronement of [Michael V](#) also led to Theodora's installment as the active co-empress with her sister. After two months of active participation in government alongside her sister, she allowed herself, virtually, to be superseded by Zoe's new husband, [Constantine IX](#) Monomachos, on June 11, 1042. Nevertheless, Theodora was considered as an empress alongside her sister and brother-in-law throughout their reign. Her sister predeceased her.

Upon the death of Constantine IX on January 11, 1055 and in spite of her seventy years of age, Theodora vigorously reasserted her dormant rights to rule and frustrated an attempt to supersede her on behalf of the general, Nikephoros Proteuon, governor of Bulgaria.

Theodora became gravely ill on August 31, 1056 and died a few days later, in early September. Having no children and being the last member of her dynasty, she had chosen one of her favorites, the former military minister, [Michael VI](#) Bringas, as her successor on the recommendation of Leo.

Irene Doukaina

Irene Doukaina or **Ducaena**(c. 1066 – February 19, 1123 or 1133) was the wife of the [Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos](#), and the mother of the emperor [John II Komnenos](#) and of the historian [Anna Komnene](#).

Succession of Alexios and Irene

Irene was born in 1066 to [Andronikos Doukas](#) and [Maria of Bulgaria](#), granddaughter of [Ivan Vladislav of Bulgaria](#). Andronikos was a nephew of Emperor [Constantine X](#) and a cousin of [Michael VII](#).

Irene married Alexios in 1078, when she was still eleven years old. For this reason the [Doukas](#) family supported Alexios in 1081, when a struggle for the throne erupted after the abdication of [Nikephoros III Botaneiates](#). Alexios' mother, [Anna Dalassene](#), a lifelong enemy of the Doukas family, pressured her son to divorce the young Irene and marry [Maria of Alania](#), the former wife of both Michael VII and Nikephoros III. Irene was in fact barred from the coronation ceremony, but the Doukas family convinced the [Patriarch of Constantinople](#), [Kosmas I](#), to crown her as well, which he did one week later. Anna Dalassene consented to this but forced Kosmas to resign immediately afterwards; he was succeeded by [Eustratios Garidas](#).

Alexios' mother Anna continued to live in the imperial palace and to meddle in her son's affairs until her death 20 years later; Maria of Alania may have also lived in the palace, and there were rumours that Alexios carried on an affair with her. Anna Komnene vociferously denied this, although she herself was not born until December 1, 1083, two years later.

Character

Anna may have been whitewashing her family history; she has nothing but praise for both of her parents. She describes her mother in great detail:

"She stood upright like some young sapling, erect and evergreen, all her limbs and the other parts of her body absolutely symmetrical and in harmony one with another. With her lovely appearance and charming voice she never ceased to fascinate all who saw and heard her. Her face shone with the soft light of the moon; it was not the completely round face of an [Assyrian](#) woman, nor long, like the face of a [Scyth](#), but just slightly oval in shape. There were rose blossoms on her cheeks, visible a long way off. Her light-blue eyes were both gay and stern: their charm and beauty attracted, but the fear they caused so dazzled the bystander that he could neither look nor turn away...Generally she accompanied her words with graceful gestures, her hands bare to the wrists, and you would say it was ivory turned by some craftsman into the form of fingers and hand. The pupils of her eyes, with the brilliant blue of deep waves, recalled a calm, still sea, while the white surrounding them shone by contrast, so that the whole eye acquired a peculiar lustre and a charm which was inexpressible."

It "would not have been so very inappropriate," Anna writes, to say that Irene was "[Athena](#) made manifest to the human race, or that she had descended suddenly from the sky in some heavenly glory and unapproachable splendour."

Irene was shy and preferred not to appear in public, although she was forceful and severe when acting officially as empress (*basileia*). She preferred to perform her household duties, and enjoyed reading [hagiographic](#) literature and making charitable donations to monks and beggars.

Although Alexios may have had Maria as a mistress early in his reign, during the later part of his reign he and Irene were genuinely in love (at least according to their daughter Anna). Irene often accompanied him on his expeditions, including the expedition against Prince [Bohemund I of Antioch](#) in 1107 and to the [Chersonese](#) in 1112. On these campaigns she acted as a nurse for her husband when he was afflicted with [gout](#) in his feet. According to Anna she also acted as a sort of guard, as there were constant conspiracies against Alexios. Alexios' insistence that Irene accompany him on campaigns may suggest that he did not fully trust her enough to leave her in the capital. When she did remain behind in Constantinople, she acted as regent, together with [Nikephoros Bryennios](#), Anna's husband, as a counselor.

Death of Alexios

Irene frequently suggested that Alexios name Nikephoros and Anna as his heirs, over their own younger son [John](#). According to [Niketas Choniates](#), who depicts her more as a nagging shrew than a loving wife, she "...threw her full influence on the side of her daughter Anna and lost no opportunity to calumniate their son John... mocking him as rash, pleasure-loving, and weak in character." Alexios, preferring to create a stable dynasty through his own son, either ignored her, pretended to be busy with other matters, or, at last, lost his temper and chastized her for suggesting such things.

Irene nursed Alexios on his deathbed on 1118, while at the same time still scheming to have Nikephoros and Anna succeed him. Alexios had already promised the throne to John, and when John took his father's signet ring Irene accused him of treachery and theft. When Alexios finally died, she felt genuine grief, and wore the mourning clothes of her daughter Eudokia, whose own husband had died previously.

Irene died on February 19, in either 1123 or 1133, most likely the latter. With Alexios I Komnenos she had nine children:

- [Anna Komnene](#) (1083–1153)
- Maria Komnene
- [John II Komnenos](#) (1087–1143)
- Andronikos Komnenos
- [Isaac Komnenos](#)
- Eudokia Komnene
- [Theodora Komnene](#), who married Constantine Angelos. Among their children were [John Doukas](#) (who took his grandmother's surname) and [Andronikos Angelos](#), father of the emperors [Alexios III Angelos](#) and [Isaac II Angelos](#).

John II Komnenos

John II Komnenos (or **Comnenus**) (September 13, 1087 – April 8, 1143) was [Byzantine emperor](#) from 1118 to 1143. Also known as *Kaloïōannēs* ("John the Beautiful"), he was the eldest son of emperor [Alexios I Komnenos](#) and [Irene Doukaina](#). The second emperor of the [Komnenian restoration](#) of the Byzantine Empire, John was a pious and dedicated emperor who was determined to undo the damage his empire had suffered at the [battle of Manzikert](#), half a century earlier.

Mosaic of John II at the [Hagia Sophia](#)



In the course of his twenty-five year reign, John made alliances with the [Holy Roman Empire](#) in the west, decisively defeated the [Pechenegs](#) in the [Balkans](#), and personally led numerous campaigns against the [Turks](#) in [Asia Minor](#). John's campaigns fundamentally changed the balance of power in the east, forcing the Turks onto the defensive and restoring to the Byzantines many towns, fortresses and cities right across the peninsula. In the southeast, John extended Byzantine control from the [Maeander](#) in the west all the way to [Cilicia](#) and [Tarsus](#) in the east. In an effort to demonstrate the Byzantine emperor's role as the leader of the [Christian](#) world, John marched into the [Holy Land](#) at the head of the combined forces of Byzantium and the [Crusader states](#); yet despite the great vigour with which he pressed the campaign, John's hopes were disappointed by the treachery of his Crusader allies, who deliberately failed to fight against the [Muslim](#)

enemy at the crucial moment. Also under John, the empire's population recovered to about 10 million people.

The [Latin](#) historian [William of Tyre](#) described John as short and unusually ugly, with eyes, hair and complexion so dark he was known as 'the [Moor](#)'. Yet despite his physical appearance, John was known as *Kaloïōannēs*, "John the Handsome" or "John the Beautiful". The epithet referred not to his body but to his soul.

John planned a new expedition to the East, including a pilgrimage to Jerusalem on which he planned to take his army with him. King [Fulk of Jerusalem](#), fearing an invasion, begged the emperor to only bring an army of 10,000 men with him.^[9] This resulted in John II deciding not to go. However, on [Mount Taurus](#) in [Cilicia](#), on April 8, 1143, he was accidentally infected by a poisoned arrow while out hunting. The poison set in, and shortly afterwards he died. John's final action as emperor was to choose his youngest son [Manuel Komnenos](#) to be his successor. John cited two main reasons for choosing Manuel over his older surviving son Isaac Komnenos: these were Isaac's irascibility, and the courage that Manuel had shown on campaign at [Neocaesareia](#). Another theory alleges that the reason for this choice was the [AIMA prophecy](#) which foretold that John's successor should be one whose name began with an "M". John's eldest son, the co-emperor [Alexios](#), had died in the summer of 1142.

Manuel I Komnenos

Manuel I Komnenos (or **Comnenus**) (November 28, 1118 – September 24, 1180) was a [Byzantine Emperor](#) of the 12th century who reigned over a crucial turning point in the history of [Byzantium](#) and the [Mediterranean](#).

Death of John II Komnenos, and crowning of Manuel I Komnenos (from the Manuscript of [William of Tyre's Historia](#) and [Old French Continuation](#), painted in [Acre, Israel](#), 13th century, [Bibliothèque nationale de France](#)).



Eager to restore his [empire](#) to its past glories as the superpower of the Mediterranean world, Manuel pursued an energetic and ambitious foreign policy. In the process he made alliances with the [Pope](#) and the resurgent west, invaded [Italy](#), successfully handled the passage of the dangerous [Second Crusade](#) through his empire, and established a Byzantine protectorate over the [Crusader states](#) of [Outremer](#).

Facing [Muslim](#) advances in the [Holy Land](#), he made common cause with the [Kingdom of Jerusalem](#) and participated in a combined invasion of [Fatimid Egypt](#).

Manuel reshaped the political maps of the [Balkans](#) and the east Mediterranean, placing the kingdoms of [Hungary](#) and Outremer under Byzantine [hegemony](#) and campaigning aggressively against his neighbours both in the west and in the east.

Manuel Komnenos was the fourth son of [John II Komnenos](#) and [Piroska of Hungary](#), so it seemed very unlikely that he would succeed his father. His maternal grandfather was [St. Ladislaus](#). Having distinguished himself in his father's war against the Seljuk Turks, in 1143 Manuel was chosen as his successor by John, in preference to his elder surviving brother [Isaac](#). After John died on 8 April 1143, his son, Manuel, was acclaimed emperor by the armies.

Frederick Barbarossa submits to the authority of Pope Alexander III after his defeat at the Battle of Legnano ([fresco](#) in the Palazzo Pubblico in [Siena](#), by [Spinello Aretino](#)).



After 1158 and under the new conditions, the aims of the Byzantine policy changed. Now Manuel decided to oppose the tendency of the [Hohenstaufen](#) dynasty to annex Italy, which Frederick believed should acknowledge his power. When the war between Frederick and the north Italian cities started, Manuel actively supported the [Lombard League](#) with money subsidies. The walls of [Milan](#), demolished by the Germans, were restored by the aid of the Byzantine Emperor. Frederick's defeat at the [Battle of Legnano](#), on May 29, 1176 seemed rather to improve Manuel's position in Italy.

Alexios II Komnenos

Alexios II Komnenos or **Alexius II Comnenus** (10 September 1169 – 24 September 1183, [Constantinople](#)), [Byzantine emperor](#) (1180–1183), was the son of Emperor [Manuel I Komnenos](#) and [Maria](#), daughter of [Raymond, prince of Antioch](#). He was the long-awaited male heir, and was named Alexios as a fulfilment of the [AIMA prophecy](#).

The Empire in 1180 A.D when Alexios II became Emperor

On Manuel's death in 1180, Maria, who became a nun under the name Xene ("foreigner"), took



the position of regent (according to some historians). She excluded her young son from power, entrusting it instead to Alexios the [prōtosebastos](#) (a cousin of Alexios II), who was popularly believed to be her lover. Friends of the young Alexios II now tried to form a party

against the empress mother and the prōtosebastos; Alexios II's half-sister Maria, wife of Caesar John ([Renier of Montferrat](#)), stirred up riots in the streets of the capital.

Their party was defeated (May 2, 1182), but [Andronikos Komnenos](#), a first cousin of Emperor Manuel, took advantage of these disorders to aim at the crown, entered Constantinople, where he was received with almost divine honours, and overthrew the government. His arrival was celebrated by a [massacre of 80,000 Latins](#) in Constantinople, especially the [Venetian](#) merchants, which he made no attempt to stop. He allowed Alexios II to be crowned, but was responsible for the death of most of the young emperor's actual or potential defenders, including his mother, his half-sister and the Caesar, and refused to allow him the smallest voice in public affairs.

The betrothal in 1180 of Alexios II to [Agnes of France](#), daughter of [Louis VII of France](#) and his third wife [Adèle of Champagne](#) and at the time a child of nine, had not apparently been followed by their marriage. Andronikos was now formally proclaimed as co-emperor, and not long afterwards, on the pretext that divided rule was injurious to the Empire, he caused Alexios II to be strangled with a bow-string (October 1183). During Alexios II's reign, the Byzantine Empire was invaded by King [Bela III](#) losing [Syrmia](#) and [Bosnia](#) to the [Kingdom of Hungary](#) in AD 1181, later even [Dalmatia](#) was lost to the Venetians. [Kilij Arslan II](#) invaded the empire in AD 1182, defeating the Byzantines at the [Siege of Cotyaeum](#) resulting in the Byzantine Empire losing [Cotyaeum](#) and [Sozopolis](#).

Alexios is a character in the historical novel *Agnes of France* (1980) by [Greek](#) writer [Kostas Kyriazis](#). The novel describes the events of the reigns of Manuel I, Alexios II and Andronikos I through the eyes of Agnes.

Alexios Komnenos (co-emperor)

Alexios Komnenos, [latinised](#) as **Alexius Comnenus** was the eldest son of the [Byzantine emperor John II Komnenos](#) and his wife [Eirene of Hungary](#). He was born in February 1106 at Balabista in [Macedonia](#), was made co-emperor with his father at 16 or 17 years of age and died on the 2nd August 1142 at [Attalia](#), [Pamphylia](#). He was an elder brother of the emperor [Manuel I Komnenos](#), and had a twin sister, Maria Komnene (plus other siblings).

Mosaic of Alexios Komnenos in [Hagia Sophia](#). He is depicted as a beardless youth, probably at the time of his coronation at 16 or 17 years of age.



Alexios was made co-emperor by his father in 1122, but died in 1142. This was the year before his father's death as the result of a hunting accident. The reign of John II is less well chronicled than those of his father, [Alexios I](#), or successor, Manuel I, and coverage of the life of his son Alexios is very sparse.

A [panegyric](#) poem by Theodore Prodromos was addressed to John and his son on the occasion of the coronation of Alexios. It hailed both rulers as "kings born of kings and emperors, reformers of old customs and privileges, with whom the august throne and sceptre-bearing are a paternal acquisition, a matter of inheritance."

His final illness is described: "...of the severest kind and of short duration, took the form of a rushing fever attacking the head as though it were an acropolis." The location of Alexios' death, at Attalia, suggests that he was on campaign with his father, who had established this city as a base from

which to pacify the inland areas around Lake Pousgousē (probably the modern [Beyşehir Gölü](#)). Alexios' younger brother Andronikos was charged with escorting the body back to Constantinople, however, while discharging this duty, he too was taken ill and died.

Family

John II and his eldest son Alexios, crowned by Christ



The identity of his wife is uncertain. It is possible he was married twice, the first wife being Dobrodjeja Mstislavna of Kiev, a daughter of [Mstislav I of Kiev](#), and the second being Katay of Georgia, a daughter of [David IV of Georgia](#). While both women are known to have married members of the [Komnenoi](#) family, several theories have been suggested as to the identities of their husband or husbands.

His daughter Maria Komnene married the [pansebastos Alexios Axuch](#). He was the son of [John Axuch](#), the [megas domestikos](#) (commander-in-chief of the Byzantine army), who was a close friend of John II. Alexios Axuch served as Duke of [Cilicia](#) and [protostrator](#). However, he eventually fell out of favor with [Manuel I Komnenos](#) in 1167. [John Kinnamos](#) and [Niketas Choniates](#) report that the accusations against him included practice of [witchcraft](#). He and an unnamed "[Latin](#)" [wizard](#) were accused of causing the pregnancy of [Maria of Antioch](#), the Empress consort, to result in a [miscarriage](#). They supposedly managed to do so by providing [drugs](#) to [Maria](#). Alexios ended his life as a monk. Maria Komnene, "wife of Alexios the [protostrator](#)" was mentioned in a seal. According to the

Dictionnaire historique et Généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople (1983) by Mihail-Dimitri Sturdza, this Maria was suffering from [insanity](#) by the end of her life.

They were the parents of [John Komnenos "the Fat"](#), a short-lived rival emperor to [Alexios III Angelos](#). [Theodora Axuchina](#), wife of [Alexios I of Trebizond](#), is considered a possible daughter of John the Fat.

Isaac Komnenos (son of John II)

Isaac Komnenos or **Comnenus** (c. 1113 – after 1154), was the third son of [Byzantine Emperor John II Komnenos](#) by [Piroska of Hungary](#).

Life

Shortly before his death in 1143, John II Komnenos designated his fourth son [Manuel](#) as his heir, although the third son, Isaac, was still alive. At the time Isaac was conducting the body of his eldest brother, the co-emperor [Alexios Komnenos](#), back to [Constantinople](#).

Family

By his first wife, Theodora, Isaac had five children:

- Alexios Komnenos.
- Irene Komnene, who married an unnamed Doukas Kamateros and became the mother of [Isaac Komnenos of Cyprus](#).
- John Komnenos.
- Anna Komnene, who married Constantine Makrodoukas.
- [Maria Komnene](#), who married King [Stephen IV of Hungary](#).

By his second wife, Irene Synadene, Isaac had two daughters:

- [Theodora Komnene](#), who married King [Baldwin III of Jerusalem](#).
- [Eudokia Komnene](#), who married [William VIII of Montpellier](#).

Theodora Komnene Angelina

Theodora Komnene (born 15 January 1096), was a [Byzantine](#) noblewoman, being the fourth daughter of Emperor [Alexios I Komnenos](#) and [Irene Doukaina](#). She married Konstantinos Angelos, Admiral of [Sicily](#) by whom she had seven children. Byzantine emperors [Alexios III Angelos](#) and [Isaac II Angelos](#) were her grandsons, thereby making her an ancestress of the Angelos dynasty.

Theodora was born in [Constantinople](#) on 15 January 1096, the fourth of the five daughters of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos and Irene Doukaina. She had a total of eight siblings; among these were Emperor [John II Komnenos](#), and historian [Anna Komnene](#). Her paternal grandparents were Ioannis Komnenos and [Anna Dalassena](#), and her maternal grandparents were [Andronikos Doukas](#) and [Maria of Bulgaria](#).

Marriage and issue

Theodora married Konstantinos Angelos (c.1085- after July 1166) sometime before 1120. He was the son of Manolis Angelos, and a military commander of Emperor [Manuel I](#) and would later in 1145 become the commander of the Imperial fleet in Sicily. Together Konstantinos and Theodora had seven recorded children, although there were possibly eight children born to the couple:

- [John Doukas](#) (c.1126- 1200), Governor of Epirus, married firstly a lady whose name is unknown by whom he had two sons; married secondly Zoe Doukaina by whom he had three sons.
- Alexios Komnenos Angelos, married and fathered one son.
- Andronikos Dukas Angelos (died after 1185), married Euphrosyne Kastamonitissa, by whom he had nine children including emperors [Alexios III Angelos](#) and [Isaac II Angelos](#).
- Isaac Angelos, military Governor of Cilicia
- Maria Angelina, married Konstantinos Kamytzes, by whom she had one daughter.
- Eudokia Angelina, married Basileios Tsykandeles
- Zoe Angelina, married Andronikos Synadenos

Theodora Komnene died on an unknown date. Among her numerous descendants was [Irene Angelina](#), wife of [Philip of Swabia](#); thus Theodora is an ancestress of every royal house in Europe.

Alexios III Angelos

Alexios III Angelos (c. 1153–1211) was [Byzantine emperor](#) from 1195 to 1203.

Alexios III Angelos was the second son of Andronikos Angelos and Euphrosyne Kastamonitissa. Andronicus was himself a son of Theodora Komnene, the youngest daughter of Emperor [Alexios I Komnenos](#) and [Irene Doukaina](#). Thus Alexios Angelos was a member of the extended imperial family. Together with his father and brothers, Alexios had conspired against Emperor [Andronikos I Komnenos](#) (c. 1183), and thus he spent several years in exile in Muslim courts, including that of [Saladin](#).

Alexios III from *Promptuarii Iconum Insigniorum*



His younger brother [Isaac](#) was threatened with execution under orders of their first-cousin once-removed Andronikos I Komnenos on September 11, 1185. Isaac made a desperate attack on the imperial agents and killed their leader [Stephen Hagiochristophorites](#). He then took refuge in the church of [Hagia Sophia](#) and from there appealed to the populace. His actions provoked a riot, which resulted in the deposition of Andronikos I and the proclamation of Isaac as emperor. Alexios was now closer to the imperial throne than ever before.

To compensate for this crime and to solidify his position as emperor, Alexios had to scatter money so lavishly as to empty his treasury, and to allow such licence to the officers of the army as to leave the Empire practically defenceless. He thus consummated the financial ruin of the state. In 1195, Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI forced Alexios III to pay him a tribute of 1,000 pounds of gold (originally 5,000 pounds of gold). The able and forceful empress Euphrosyne tried in vain to sustain his credit and his court.

Soon Alexios was threatened by a new and yet more formidable danger. In 1202, soldiers assembled at [Venice](#) launched the [Fourth Crusade](#). [Alexios IV Angelos](#), the son of the deposed Isaac II, had recently escaped from [Constantinople](#) and now appealed to the crusaders, promising to end the [schism](#) of [East](#) and [West](#), to pay for their transport, and to provide military support to the crusaders if they helped him to depose his uncle and sit on his father's throne.

The crusaders, whose objective had been [Egypt](#), were persuaded to set their course for Constantinople before which they appeared in June 1203, proclaiming Alexios as emperor and inviting the populace of the capital to depose his uncle. Alexios III took no efficient measures to resist, and his attempts to bribe the crusaders failed. His son-in-law, [Theodore Laskaris](#), who was the only one to attempt anything significant, was defeated at [Scutari](#), and the siege of Constantinople began. Unfortunately for Constantinople, Alexios III's misgovernment had left the Byzantine navy with only 20 worm-eaten hulks by the time the Crusaders arrived.

In July, the crusaders, led by the aged [Doge Enrico Dandolo](#), scaled the walls and took control of a major section. In the ensuing fighting, the crusaders set the city on fire, ultimately leaving 20,000 people homeless. Alexios III finally took action, and led 17 divisions from the [St. Romanus Gate](#), vastly outnumbering the crusaders. But his courage failed, and the Byzantine army returned to the city without a fight. His courtiers demanded action, and Alexios promised to fight. Instead, that night (July 17/18), Alexios III hid in the palace, and finally, with one of his daughters, Eirene, and such treasures (1,000 pounds of gold) as he could collect, got into a boat

and escaped to [Debeltos](#) in [Thrace](#), leaving his wife and his other daughters behind. Isaac II, drawn from his prison and robed once more in the imperial purple, received his son in state.

Alexios attempted to organize a resistance to the new regime from [Adrianople](#) and then [Mosynopolis](#), where he was joined by the later usurper [Alexios V Doukas Mourtzouphlos](#) in April 1204, after the definitive fall of Constantinople to the crusaders and the establishment of the [Latin Empire](#).

At first Alexios III received Alexios V well, even allowing him to marry his daughter [Eudokia Angelina](#). Later Alexios V was blinded and deserted by his father-in-law, who fled from the crusaders into [Thessaly](#). Here Alexios III eventually surrendered, with Euphrosyne, to Marquis [Boniface of Montferrat](#), who was establishing himself as ruler of the [Kingdom of Thessalonica](#).

Trying to escape Boniface's "protection", Alexios III attempted to seek shelter with [Michael I Komnenos Doukas](#), the ruler of [Epirus](#), in 1205. Captured by Boniface, Alexios and his retinue were sent to [Montferrat](#), before being brought back to [Thessalonica](#) in c. 1209. At that point the deposed emperor was ransomed by Michael I of Epirus, who sent him to [Asia Minor](#), where Alexios' son-in-law [Theodore I Laskaris](#) of the [Empire of Nicaea](#) was holding his own against the Latins.

Here Alexios III conspired against his son-in-law after the latter refused to recognize Alexios' authority, and received the support of [Kay Khusrau I](#), the [sultan](#) of [Rûm](#). In the battle of [Antioch](#) on the [Maeander](#) in 1211, the sultan was defeated and killed, and Alexios III was captured by Theodore Laskaris. Alexios III was then confined to a [monastery](#) at [Nicaea](#), where he died later in 1211.

By his marriage to [Euphrosyne Doukaina Kamatera](#) Alexios had three daughters:

- Eirene Angelina, who married (1) Andronikos Kontostephanos, and (2) [Alexios Palaiologos](#), by whom she was the grandmother of Emperor [Michael VIII Palaiologos](#).
- [Anna Angelina](#), who married (1) the *sebastokrator* Isaac Komnenos, great-nephew of emperor [Manuel I Komnenos](#), and (2) [Theodore Laskaris](#), emperor of Nicaea.
- [Eudokia Angelina](#), who married (1) King [Stefan I Prvovenčani](#) of [Serbia](#), then (2) Emperor [Alexios V Doukas](#), and (3) [Leo Sgouros](#), ruler of [Corinth](#).

Michael VIII Palaiologos

Michael VIII Palaiologos or **Palaeologus** (1223 – 11 December 1282) reigned as Byzantine emperor 1259–1282. Michael VIII was the founder of the [Palaiologan](#) dynasty that would rule the [Byzantine Empire](#) until the [Fall of Constantinople](#) in 1453. He recovered Constantinople from the [Latin Empire](#) in 1261 and transformed the [Empire of Nicaea](#) into a restored [Byzantine Empire](#).



Michael VIII Palaiologos was the son of the [megas domestikos](#) Andronikos Doukas Komnenos Palaiologos by Theodora Angelina Palaiologina, the granddaughter of Emperor [Alexios III Angelos](#) and [Euphrosyne Doukaina Kamaterina](#). Even with our imperfect knowledge of Byzantine genealogy, no less than eleven emperors may be traced among his ancestors. He was one of the noblest men among the Byzantine aristocracy.

On 25 July 1261, Michael VIII's general [Alexios Strategopoulos](#) captured Constantinople from its last Latin Emperor, [Baldwin II](#). Michael VIII entered the city on 15 August and had himself crowned together with his infant son [Andronikos II Palaiologos](#). When Michael VIII entered the city, its population was 35,000 people, but he succeeded in increasing it to 70,000 people by the end of his reign. In December John IV, who had been left

behind at Nicaea, was blinded and relegated to a monastery.

In recovering Constantinople and investing in the defence of his European provinces, Michael VIII began to denude the [Anatolian](#) frontier of its troops and was forced to lower their pay or cancel their tax exemptions. This policy led to the gradual collapse of the frontier, which was infiltrated by Turkish bands even before the death of Michael VIII in Pachomios village, Thrace in December 1282. The Palaiologan dynasty he established ruled the Byzantine Empire for almost two centuries, longer than any other in Roman history. Also, during his reign there was a temporary naval revival in which the Byzantine navy consisted of 80 ships.

In 1253, Michael VIII Palaiologos married [Theodora Doukaina Vatatzina](#), a grandniece of [John III Doukas Vatatzes](#), [Emperor of Nicaea](#). Orphaned in childhood, she was raised by her great-uncle John III, who was said to have "loved her like a daughter", and who arranged for her marriage to Michael. Their children were:

- [Andronikos II Palaiologos](#) (1259–1332)
- Constantine Palaiologos (1261–1306)
- [Irene Palaiologina](#), who married emperor [Ivan Asen III of Bulgaria](#)
- Anna Palaiologina, who married Demetrios Angelos
- [Eudokia Palaiologina](#), who married Emperor [John II of Trebizond](#)
- Theodora Palaiologina, who married King [David VI Narin](#) of [Georgia](#) and [Imereti](#)

Andronikos II Palaiologos

Emperor Andronikos II on a wall fresco in a monastery in [Serres](#).



Andronikos II Palaiologos (25 March 1259, [Nicaea](#) – 13 February 1332, [Constantinople](#)) — also **Andronicus II Palaeologus** — reigned as [Byzantine emperor](#) from 1282 to 1328. He was the eldest surviving son of [Michael VIII Palaiologos](#) and [Theodora Doukaina Vatatzina](#), grandniece of [John III Doukas Vatatzes](#). On 8 November 1273, Andronikos II married [Anne of Hungary \(1260–1281\)](#), daughter of the king [Stephen V of Hungary](#).

Andronikos II Palaiologos was acclaimed co-emperor in 1261, after his father Michael VIII recovered [Constantinople](#) from the [Latin Empire](#), but he was crowned only in 1272. Andronikos II Palaiologos sought to resolve some of the problems facing the [Byzantine Empire](#) through diplomacy. After the death of his first wife Anne of Hungary, he married [Yolanda \(renamed Irene\) of Montferrat](#), putting an end to the Montferrat claim to the [Kingdom](#)

[of Thessalonica](#). Andronikos II also attempted to marry off his son and co-emperor [Michael IX Palaiologos](#) to the Latin Empress [Catherine I of Courtenay](#), thus seeking to eliminate Western agitation for a restoration of the [Latin Empire](#). Another marriage alliance attempted to resolve the potential conflict with [Serbia](#) in [Macedonia](#), as Andronikos II married off his five-year old daughter [Simonis](#) to King [Stefan Milutin](#) in 1298.

The Empire's problems were exploited by [Theodore Svetoslav of Bulgaria](#), who defeated Michael IX and conquered much of northeastern Thrace in c. 1305–1307. The conflict ended with yet another dynastic marriage, between Michael IX's daughter Theodora and the Bulgarian emperor. The dissolute behavior of Michael IX's son [Andronikos III Palaiologos](#) led to a rift in the family, and after Michael IX's death in 1320, Andronikos II disowned his grandson, prompting a [civil war](#) that raged, with interruptions, until 1328. The conflict precipitated Bulgarian involvement, and [Michael Asen III of Bulgaria](#) attempted to capture Andronikos II under the guise of sending him military support. In 1328 Andronikos III entered Constantinople in triumph and Andronikos II was forced to abdicate. He died as a monk in 1332.

In 1274 Andronikos II married as his first wife [Anna of Hungary](#), a daughter of King [Stephen V of Hungary](#) and [Elizabeth the Cuman](#), with whom he had two sons:

- [Michael IX Palaiologos](#)
- Constantine Palaiologos, *[despotes](#)*

Michael IX Palaiologos (17282)

*[Andronikos II Palaiologos](#) and Michael IX Palaiologos (silver *basilikon*).*



Michael IX Palaiologos or **Palaeologus** (April 17, 1277 – October 12, 1320, [Thessalonica](#), [Greece](#)), reigned as Byzantine co-emperor with full imperial style 1294/1295–1320. Michael IX was the eldest son of [Andronikos II Palaiologos](#) and [Anna of Hungary](#), a daughter of King [Stephen V of Hungary](#).

Michael IX Palaiologos was acclaimed co-emperor in 1281 and was crowned in 1294 or 1295. In 1300, he was sent at the head of Alanian mercenaries against the Turks in [Asia Minor](#), and in 1304–1305 he was charged with dealing with the rebellious [Catalan Company](#). After the murder of the Catalan commander [Roger de Flor](#), Michael IX led the

Byzantine troops (augmented by Turks and 5–8,000 Alanians) against the Catalans, but was defeated and wounded.

Michael IX was also ultimately unsuccessful against [Theodore Svetoslav of Bulgaria](#) in 1307, concluding peace in 1307 and marrying his daughter to the Bulgarian emperor. In 1311, Michael IX was defeated by Osman I. Michael IX eventually retired to [Thessalonica](#), where he died in 1320.

A brave and energetic soldier willing to make personal sacrifices to pay or encourage his troops, Michael IX was generally unable to overcome his enemies and is the only Palaiologan emperor to predecease his father. Michael IX's premature death at age 43 was attributed in part to grief over the accidental murder of his younger son Manuel Palaiologos by retainers of his older son and co-emperor [Andronikos III Palaiologos](#).

Michael IX Palaiologos married [Rita of Armenia](#) (renamed Maria, later nun Xene), daughter of King [Leo III of Armenia](#) and [Queen Keran of Armenia](#) on 16 January 1294. By this marriage, Michael IX had several children, including:

- [Andronikos III Palaiologos](#)
- Manuel Palaiologos, *despotēs*
- Anna Palaiologina, who married [Thomas I Komnenos Doukas](#) and then [Nicholas Orsini](#).
- Theodora Palaiologina, who married [Theodore Svetoslav of Bulgaria](#) and then [Michael Asen III of Bulgaria](#).

Andronikos III Palaiologos

Andronikos III Palaiologos, Latinized as **Andronicus III Palaeologus** (March 25, 1297, [Constantinople](#) – June 15, 1341, [Constantinople](#)) reigned as [Byzantine emperor](#) 1328–1341, after being rival emperor since 1321. Andronikos III was the son of [Michael IX Palaiologos](#) and Princess [Rita of Armenia](#) (renamed Maria). His maternal grandparents were King [Levon II of Armenia](#) and [Queen Keran of Armenia](#).

Life

In 1320, Andronikos accidentally murdered his brother Manuel, whereupon their father died of grief. The murder, and the general dissolute behaviour of Andronikos and his coterie, mostly the young scions of the Empire's great aristocratic clans, resulted in a deep rift in the relations between him and his grandfather, [Andronikos II Palaiologos](#). The elder Andronikos disowned his grandson, whereupon Andronikos III fled the capital and rallied his supporters around him in [Thrace](#). From there he waged an intermittent [civil war](#) against his grandfather, which first secured him recognition of his post as co-emperor, and ultimately led to the deposition of Andronikos II in 1328.

The subsequent years witnessed the gradual extinction of Byzantine rule in [Asia Minor](#), as [Orhan](#) of the [Ottoman Turks](#), who had already defeated Andronikos III at [Pelekanos](#) in 1329, took [Nicaea](#) in 1331 and [Nicomedia](#) in 1337. After that, only [Philadelphiea](#) and a handful of ports remained under Byzantine control in Asia Minor. Earlier Andronikos III had effected the recovery of [Phocaea](#) and the islands of [Lesbos](#) and [Chios](#) from [Benedetto Zaccaria](#) in 1329, but this did little to stem the Ottoman advance in Asia Minor.

Andronikos III died aged 44 in 1341. Within a few months, the right to exercise the regency over his infant son, [John V Palaiologos](#), and the position of Andronikos' all-powerful chief minister and friend John Kantakouzenos led to the outbreak of a destructive [seven-year civil war](#).

Andronikos III married [Anna of Savoy](#). She was a daughter of Count [Amadeus V, Count of Savoy](#) and his second wife Maria of Brabant. They had several children, including:

- [John V Palaiologos](#)
- Michael Palaiologos, *despotes*
- Maria (renamed Eirene), who married Emperor [Michael Asen IV of Bulgaria](#)
- Eirene Palaiologos (renamed Maria), who married [Francesco I of Lesbos](#)

John V Palaiologos

John V Palaiologos (or **Palaeologus**) (18 June 1332 – February 16, 1391) was the son of Emperor [Andronikos III Palaiologos](#) and [Anna of Savoy](#). His maternal grandparents were Count [Amadeus V of Savoy](#) and his second wife Maria of Brabant. He succeeded his father as [Byzantine Emperor](#) in 1341, at age nine.



[John VI Kantakouzenos](#), his father's friend, served as his [regent](#) and co-emperor (1347–1354), after having fought a [civil war](#) (1341–1347) against the regency for young John V headed by his mother Anna of Savoy, the Patriarch [John XIV Kalekas](#) and the [megas doux Alexios Apokaukos](#). Forced to fight John Kantakouzenos, who had usurped the throne during his minority, John V became sole emperor in 1354. In 1343, Anna of Savoy pawned the [Byzantine crown jewels](#) for 30,000 Venetian ducats. Between 1346 and 1349 the [Black Plague](#) devastated Constantinople.

In his reign the [Ottomans](#), led by [Suleyman Paşa](#) the son of the Ottoman sultan, took [Adrianople](#) and [Philippopolis](#), and exacted tribute from the emperor. After the Ottoman Turks gained control of [Gallipoli](#) and threatened [Constantinople](#), John V appealed to the West for help, proposing to end the [schism](#) between the [Byzantine](#) and [Latin](#) churches by submitting to the supremacy of the [Roman Church](#). Impoverished by war, he was detained as a debtor when he visited [Venice](#) (1369). In 1371 he recognized the suzerainty of the Ottoman sultan [Murad I](#), who later helped him to regain the throne (1379) after he was [deposed](#) by his son [Andronikos IV Palaiologos](#) in 1376.

Towards the end of his reign, in 1390, John ordered the strengthening of the [Constantinople Golden Gate](#), utilizing marble from the decayed churches in and around the city. Upon the completion of this construction, [Bayezid I](#), threatening war and the blinding of his son Manuel (whom he held in captivity), demanded that John raze these new works. John V filled the Sultan's order, but is said to have suffered from this humiliation and, according to historians, died on February 16, 1391.

He married [Helena Kantakouzene](#), daughter of [John VI Kantakouzenos](#) and [Irene Asanina](#). They were parents of several children including:

1. [Andronikos IV Palaiologos](#), Byzantine emperor 1376–1379
2. [Manuel II Palaiologos](#), Byzantine emperor 1391–1425
3. [Theodore I Palaiologos](#), [despotēs](#) in the Morea

Andronikos IV Palaiologos



Andronikos IV Palaiologos (or **Andronicus IV Palaeologus**) (April 2, 1348 – June 28, 1385) was [Byzantine emperor](#) from 1376 to 1379.

Andronikos IV Palaiologos was the eldest son of Emperor [John V Palaiologos](#) by his wife [Helena Kantakouzene](#). His maternal grandparents were [John VI Kantakouzenos](#) and [Irene Asanina](#).

Although he was associated as co-emperor by his father since the early 1350s, Andronikos IV rebelled when the [Ottoman](#) sultan [Murad I](#) forced John V into [vassalage](#) in 1373. Andronikos IV had allied with his lover [Savcı Bey](#), Murad's son who was rebelling against his own father, but both rebellions failed. Murad I blinded his son and demanded that John V have Andronikos IV blinded as well, but John V blinded Andronikos in only one eye.^[1]

In July 1376 the [Genoese](#) helped Andronikos to escape from prison, whence he went straight to sultan [Murad I](#), and agreed to return [Gallipoli](#) in return for his support. Gallipoli had been retaken by the Byzantines ten years before, with the assistance of [Amadeus VI, Count of Savoy](#). The sultan duly provided a mixed force of cavalry and infantry and with these Andronikos was able to take control of [Constantinople](#). Here he was able to capture and imprison both John V and his son [Manuel](#).

By his wife [Keratsa of Bulgaria](#) (nun Makaria), a daughter of Emperor [Ivan Alexander of Bulgaria](#) and his second wife Sarah-Theodora, Andronikos IV had several children, including:

1. [John VII Palaiologos](#), emperor in 1390

John VII Palaiologos

John VII Palaiologos (or **Palaeologus**) (1370 – 22 September 1408) was [Byzantine Emperor](#) for five months in 1390.

John VII Palaiologos was the son of Emperor [Andronikos IV Palaiologos](#) and [Keratsa of Bulgaria](#), a daughter of Emperor [Ivan Alexander of Bulgaria](#) and Theodora of [Wallachia](#). He should not be confused with his cousin John VIII Palaiologos, the son of his uncle Manuel II, who succeeded his father.

When his father Andronikos IV usurped the throne from his father [John V Palaiologos](#) in 1376, John VII was associated as co-emperor. Both father and son were overthrown and partly blinded in 1379, but Andronikos IV kept his imperial status and was granted Selymbria ([Silivri](#)) as his domain by John V. When Andronikos IV died in 1385, John VII perhaps succeeded to his father's position.

On April 14, 1390 John VII Palaiologos ousted to his grandfather John V and maintained himself on the throne for five months, until John V was restored by his son [Manuel](#) with the help of the [Republic of Venice](#). John VII sought refuge with [Bayezid I](#) of the [Ottoman Empire](#) on September 17, 1390. Bayezid confirmed John VII in his father's domain of Selymbria, and relations improved with Manuel II, who may have recognized John VII as his intended heir.

In 1399, after Bayezid I had been besieging [Constantinople](#) for some five years, Manuel II left to ask for military aid in [Western Europe](#) and left John VII as [Regent](#) to defend the capital. John VII discharged his duties well, hoping for a miracle, which occurred when Bayezid was defeated by [Timur](#) at the [Battle of Ankara](#) (July 20, 1402).

The defeat was followed by a [civil war in the Ottoman Empire](#), as rival Ottoman princes sought peace and friendship with the Byzantine Empire. Taking advantage of this time of Ottoman weakness, John VII entered into a treaty that secured the return of much of the Turkish-occupied coast on the European side of the [Sea of Marmara](#), with a special concession of the city of [Thessalonica](#) on the [Aegean Sea](#). Thessalonica had been governed by Manuel II before its conquest by the Turks in 1387. On Manuel II's return John VII dutifully returned power to him and was allowed to retire to Thessalonica, which had been recently ceded back to Byzantium. There he governed as a semi-independent ruler for the rest of his life (1403–1408), using the title "Emperor of All Thessaly". John VII was allowed to keep the title of emperor (*Basileus*), and he associated his own young son, [Andronikos V](#) (born about 1400), with him at an uncertain date, but Andronikos V predeceased his father in 1407.

By his wife [Irene Gattilusio](#), John VII Palaiologos had at least one son:

1. [Andronikos V Palaiologos](#), Byzantine emperor (co-emperor)

Manuel II Palaiologos

Manuel II Palaiologos or **Palaeologus** (27 June 1350 – 21 July 1425) was [Byzantine emperor](#) from 1391 to 1425.



Manuel II Palaiologos was the second son of Emperor [John V Palaiologos](#) (1341–1376, 1379–1390, 1390–1391) and his wife [Helena Kantakouzene](#). His maternal grandparents were Emperor [John VI Kantakouzenos](#) (1347–1354) and [Irene Asanina](#).

Created *despotēs* by his father, the future Manuel II traveled west to seek support for the [Byzantine Empire](#) in 1365 and in 1370, serving as governor in [Thessalonica](#) from 1369. The failed attempt at usurpation by his older brother [Andronikos IV Palaiologos](#) in 1373 led to Manuel being proclaimed heir and co-emperor of his father. In 1376–1379 and again in 1390 they were [supplanted](#) by Andronikos IV and then his son [John VII](#), but Manuel personally defeated his nephew with help from the [Republic of Venice](#) in 1390. Although John V had been restored, Manuel was forced to go as an honorary hostage to the court of the [Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I](#) at Prousa ([Bursa](#)). During his stay, Manuel was forced to participate in the Ottoman campaign that reduced [Philadelpheia](#), the last Byzantine enclave in [Anatolia](#).

Hearing of his father's death in February 1391, Manuel II Palaiologos fled the Ottoman court and secured the capital against any potential claim by his nephew John VII. Although relations with John VII improved, Sultan Bayezid I besieged [Constantinople](#) from 1394 to 1402. After some five years of siege, Manuel II entrusted the city to his nephew and embarked (along with a suite of 40 people) on a long trip abroad to seek assistance against the [Ottoman Empire](#) from the courts of western Europe, including those of [Henry IV of England](#) (making him the only Byzantine emperor ever to visit England – he was welcomed from December 1400 to January 1401 at [Eltham Palace](#), and a [joust](#) took place in his honour), [Charles VI of France](#), the [Holy Roman Empire](#), Queen [Margaret I of Denmark](#) and from [Aragon](#). In 1399, French King Charles VI sent Marshal [Boucicaut](#) with 6 ships carrying 1,200 men from [Aigues-Mortes](#) to [Constantinople](#), later 300 men under Seigneur Jean de Chateaufort remained to defend the city against Bayezid.

Meanwhile an anti-Ottoman crusade led by the [Hungarian](#) King [Sigismund of Luxemburg](#) failed at the [Battle of Nicopolis](#) on 25 September 1396, but the Ottomans were themselves crushingly defeated by [Timur](#) at the [Battle of Ankara](#) in 1402. Manuel II had sent 10 ships to help the Crusade of Nicopolis. As the sons of Bayezid I struggled with each other over the succession in the [Ottoman Interregnum](#), John VII was able to secure the return of the European coast of the [Sea of Marmara](#) and of Thessalonica to the Byzantine Empire. When Manuel II returned home in 1403, his nephew duly surrendered control of Constantinople and received as a reward the governorship of newly-recovered Thessalonica. Manuel also regained from Ottomans [Nesebar](#) (1403–1453), [Varna](#) (1403–1415), and the Marmara coast from [Scutari](#) to [Nicomedia](#) between 1403–1421.

Manuel II Palaiologos used this period of respite to bolster the defences of the [Despotate of Morea](#), where the Byzantine Empire was actually expanding at the expense of the remnants of the [Latin Empire](#). Here Manuel supervised the building of the [Hexamilion](#) (six-mile wall) across the [Isthmus of Corinth](#), intended to defend the [Peloponnese](#) from the Ottomans.

Half [stavraton](#) coin by Manuel. On the reverse, Manuel's bust.



Manuel II stood on friendly terms with the victor in the Ottoman civil war, [Mehmed I](#) (1402–1421), but his attempts to meddle in the next contested succession led to a new [assault on Constantinople](#) by [Murad II](#) (1421–1451) in 1422. During the last years of his life, Manuel II relinquished most official duties to his son and heir [John VIII Palaiologos](#), and in 1424 they were forced to sign an unfavourable peace treaty

with the Ottoman Turks, whereby the Byzantine Empire had to pay tribute to the sultan. Manuel II died on 21 July 1425.

Manuel II was the author of numerous works of varied character, including letters, poems, a Saint's Life, treatises on [theology](#) and [rhetoric](#), and an epitaph for his brother [Theodore I Palaiologos](#) and a mirror of prince for his son and heir Ioannes. This mirror of prince has special value, because it is the last sample of this literary genre bequeathed to us by Byzantines.

Family

By his wife [Helena Dragas](#), the daughter of the [Serbian](#) prince [Constantine Dragas](#), Manuel II Palaiologos had several children, including:

1. [John VIII](#), Byzantine emperor 1425–1448
2. [Theodore II](#), *despotēs* in [Morea](#)
3. [Andronikos](#), *despotēs* in Thessalonica
4. [Constantine XI](#), Byzantine emperor 1448–1453
5. [Demetrios](#), *despotēs* in Morea
6. [Thomas](#), *despotēs* in Morea

Thomas Palaiologos

Thomas Palaiologos c.1471.



Thomas Palaiologos (or **Palaeologus**) (1409 – 12 May 1465) was [Despot in Morea](#) from 1428 until the [Ottoman](#) conquest in 1460. After the desertion of his older brother to the Turks in 1460, Thomas Palaiologos became the legitimate claimant to the [Byzantine throne](#). He was the great-grandfather of [Ivan the Terrible](#).

Thomas [Palaiologos](#) was the youngest surviving son of the [Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos](#) and his wife [Helena Dragas](#). His maternal grandfather was [Constantine Dragas](#). His brothers included the Byzantine emperors [John VIII Palaiologos](#) and [Constantine XI Palaiologos](#), as well as [Theodore II Palaiologos](#) and [Demetrios Palaiologos](#), Despots of the Morea, and [Andronikos Palaiologos](#), Despot of [Thessalonica](#). As youngest son, Thomas was never expected to reign, but his children became the only surviving heirs of the defunct [Palaiologan dynasty](#).

Like other imperial sons, Thomas Palaiologos was made a Despot (*despotēs*), and from 1428 joined his brothers Theodore and Constantine in the Morea. After the retirement of Theodore in 1443, he governed together with Constantine, until the latter became emperor (Constantine XI) in 1448. Thomas remained Despot of the Morea, but was forced to share the rule with his older brother Demetrios from 1449. The Byzantine holdings in Morea had expanded considerably at the expense of the [Latin Principality of Achaea](#). After the last war in 1430 virtually the entire peninsula was under Byzantine rule, and Thomas married [Catherine Zaccaria](#), the daughter of the last Prince of

Achaea [Centurione II Zaccaria](#), succeeding to his father-in-law's possessions in 1432.

After this period of success, the fortunes of Byzantine Morea declined, as the collegiate government by several brothers caused increasing friction. This became especially acute after the arrival of Demetrios, who took a pro-Ottoman stance as opposed to Thomas' pro-western orientation. From 1447 the Despots had become vassals of the Ottoman Sultan. At the onset of the [siege of Constantinople](#) by [Mehmed II](#) of the [Ottoman Empire](#), an Ottoman army was sent with orders to raid in the Morea, preventing help from being sent to The City. After the conquest of Constantinople by Mehmed II on May 29, 1453, to maintain the [status quo](#), the Sultan ordered the two brothers to continue as joint rulers in Morea.

This order had been accepted for the first two years because of the Kantakouzenos family's [revolt](#) which started in 1453 during the fall of Constantinople by [Demetrius I Kantakouzenos](#)' grandchild [Manuel](#). Only in the next year did the forces of the Palaiologos brothers destroy the rebel forces.

In these circumstances, and without Constantine XI to maintain peace in the family, Thomas sought western support against both the Ottomans and his competitive pro-Ottoman brother

Demetrios. He allied with [Genoa](#) and the [Pope](#), and defeated Demetrios, who fled seeking help from the Ottomans in 1460. The Ottoman army duly attacked Morea and quickly breached the [Hexamilion wall](#) across the [Isthmus of Corinth](#), which was too long to be effectively manned and defended by Thomas' forces. Thomas escaped with his family to [Italy](#), where he had already been recognized as the legitimate heir to the [Byzantine Empire](#) at [Rome](#).

The commanders of the garrisons of the fortified cities in [Morea](#), deserted by their rulers, chose individually whether to fight or surrender, depending on their own will and circumstances. In [1460](#) in the final battle of the [Roman Empire](#) in its [Byzantine](#) incarnation, [Graitzas Palaiologos](#), the military commander of the city of [Salmenikos](#), defeated Mehmed II, who after a month of siege returned home without conquering that "unimportant city". In the following year Graitzas received an offer to become general of the [Republic of Venice](#), which he accepted, thus leaving Salmenikos to the Ottomans.

Imperial heirs

After the fall of Morea, Thomas lived in Rome, recognized throughout [Christian Europe](#) as the rightful Emperor of the East. To create greater support for his situation Thomas changed his religion to Catholicism in his last years of life. After his death in 1465, the position of rightful Byzantine emperor fell to his older son [Andreas Palaiologos](#), born in [Mistra](#) around 1453.

The **Despotate of the Morea** was a province of the [Byzantine Empire](#) which existed between the mid-14th and mid-15th centuries. Its territory varied in size during its 100 years of existence but eventually grew to take in almost all the southern [Greek](#) peninsula, the [Peloponnesos](#), which was called [Morea](#) in the medieval period. It was usually ruled by a close relative of the current [Byzantine emperor](#), who was given the title of *despotes* (in this context it should not be confused with [despotism](#)).

By his marriage with Catherine (Caterina) Zaccaria of Achaea, Thomas Palaiologos had at least four children:

1. [Helena Palaiologina](#), who married Despot [Lazar II of Serbia](#).
2. [Andrew \(Andreas\) Palaiologos](#), who succeeded as claimant to the Byzantine throne
3. [Manuel Palaiologos](#).
4. [Zoe Palaiologina](#) (renamed Sophia), who married Grand Prince [Ivan III of Russia](#)

John VIII Palaiologos

John VIII Palaiologos or **Palaeologus** (18 December 1392 – 31 October 1448), was the penultimate reigning [Byzantine Emperor](#), ruling from 1425 to 1448.

John VIII Palaiologos, by [Benozzo Gozzoli](#)



John VIII Palaiologos was the eldest son of [Manuel II Palaiologos](#) and [Helena Dragas](#), the daughter of the [Serbian](#) prince [Constantine Dragas](#). He was associated as co-emperor with his father before 1416 and became sole emperor in 1425.

In June 1422, John VIII Palaiologos supervised the defense of Constantinople during a siege by [Murad II](#), but had to accept the loss of [Thessalonica](#) which his brother [Andronikos](#) had given to [Venice](#) in 1423. To secure protection against the Ottomans, he visited [Pope Eugene IV](#) and consented to the union of the [Greek](#) and [Roman](#) churches. The Union was ratified at the [Council of Florence](#) in 1439 which John attended with 700 followers including [Patriarch Joseph II of Constantinople](#) and [George Gemistos Plethon](#), a [Neoplatonist](#) philosopher influential among the academics of [Italy](#). The Union failed due to opposition in [Constantinople](#), but through his prudent conduct towards the [Ottoman Empire](#) he succeeded in holding possession of the city.

John VIII Palaiologos named his brother [Constantine XI](#), who had served as regent in Constantinople in 1437–1439, as his successor. Despite the machinations of his younger brother [Demetrios Palaiologos](#) his mother Helena was able to secure Constantine XI's succession in 1448. John VIII died at Constantinople in 1448.

John VIII as [Pontius Pilatus](#) in [Piero della Francesca's Flagellation](#).



[of France](#) and [Bonne of Bohemia](#).

He was married three times. The first marriage to [Anna of Moscow](#), daughter of Grand Prince [Basil I of Moscow](#) (1389–1425) and [Sophia of Lithuania](#), in 1414. She died in August 1417 of plague.

The second marriage, arranged by his father Manuel II and Pope Martin V, was to [Sophia of Montferrat](#) in 1421. She was a daughter of [Theodore II, Marquess of Montferrat](#) and his second wife Joanna of Bar. Joanna was a daughter of [Robert I, Duke of Bar](#) and [Marie Valois](#). Her maternal grandparents were [John II](#)

Constantine XI Palaiologos (19115)

Constantine XI Palaiologos, [latinized](#) as **Palaeologus** (February 8, 1404 – May 29, 1453) was the last reigning [Byzantine Emperor](#) (and, as such, the last [Roman Emperor](#)) from [1449](#) to his death as member of the [Palaiologos dynasty](#). After his death in battle during the [fall of Constantinople](#), he became a legendary figure in Greek folklore as the "[Marble Emperor](#)" who would awaken and recover the Empire and [Constantinople](#) from the Turks. His death marked the final end of the [Roman Empire](#), which had continued in the [East](#) for just under one thousand years after the fall of the [Western Roman Empire](#).

Constantine XI Palaiologos



Constantine was born in [Constantinople](#) as the eighth of ten children to [Manuel II Palaiologos](#) and [Serbian Helena Dragas](#), the daughter of the [Serbian](#) prince [Constantine Dragas](#). He spent most of his childhood in Constantinople under the supervision of his parents. During the absence of his [older brother](#) in [Italy](#), Constantine was regent in Constantinople from [1437–1440](#).

In the summer of 1444, he launched an invasion of the Latin [Duchy of Athens](#) from the Morea, swiftly conquering Thebes and Athens and forcing its [Florentine](#) duke to pay him tribute. The Duchy was ruled by [Nerio II Acciaioli](#), a [vassal](#) of the Ottoman Sultan.

The Turks, frustrated from the attempt of the Greeks to expand from the Morea into central Greece started raising an invading army. Two years later, in the autumn 1446, Sultan [Murad II](#) who had come out of his retirement led an army of 50–60,000 soldiers into Greece to put an end to the pretensions of the Constantine. His purpose was not to conquer Morea but to teach Greeks and their Despotas a punitive lesson. Constantine and his brother Thomas braced for the attack at the Hexamilion, which the Ottoman army reached on November 27, 1446. While the wall could hold against medieval attacks, Sultan Murad used [bombards](#) to supplement the usual [siege engines](#) and scaling ladders, leaving the Hexamilion in ruins by December 10. Constantine and Thomas barely escaped, and Morea was invaded. This put an end to Constantine's attempt to expand his Despotate.

Constantine XI married twice: the first time on July 1, 1428 to [Maddalena Tocco](#), niece of [Carlo I Tocco](#) of [Epirus](#), who died in November [1429](#); the second time to [Caterina Gattilusio](#), daughter of [Dorino of Lesbos](#), who also died, during childbirth, in [1442](#). He had no children by either marriage.

Sultan Murad died in 1451, succeeded by his 19 year old son [Mehmed II](#). Soon afterwards, Mehmed II began agitating for the conquest of Constantinople. Responded to this, Constantine threatened to release Prince Orhan, a pretender to the Ottoman throne, unless Mehmed met some of his demands. By this, Mehmed considered Constantine to have broken the truce and the following winter of 1451–52, Mehmed built [Rumelihisari](#), a fortress on a hill at the European side of the Bosphorus, just north of the city cutting the communication with the [Black Sea](#) to the east. This came in addition to the building of [Anadoluhisari](#), the fortress opposite of Rumelihisari

on the Asian side, and gave the Ottomans absolute control over the sea traffic of the [Bosporus Strait](#). For Constantine that was a clear prelude for a siege and immediately started organizing the defence.

The siege of the city began in the winter of 1452. Constantine faced the siege defending his 60,000 people city with 7,000 men, confronting an Ottoman army numbering many times that, backed by a state-of-art siege equipment provided by a very competent Hungarian gun founder [Orban](#).

Fall of Constantinople and death

Before the beginning of the [siege](#), [Mehmed II](#) made an offer to Constantine XI. In exchange for the surrender of Constantinople, the emperor's life would be spared and he would continue to rule in [Mistra](#), to which, as preserved by G.Sphrantzes, Constantine's reply was:

"To surrender the city to you is beyond my authority or anyone else's who lives in it, for all of us, after taking the mutual decision, shall die out of free will without sparing our lives".

He led the defence of the city and took an active part in the fighting alongside his troops in the [land walls](#). At the same time, he used his diplomatic skills to maintain the necessary unity between the Genovese and Venetian, and the Greek troops.



He died on 29 May 1453, the day the city fell. His last recorded words were: "The city is fallen and I am still alive", and then he tore off his imperial ornaments as to let nothing to distinguish him from of any other soldier and led his remaining soldiers into a [last charge](#) where he was killed.

Although it is alleged by some like [Sphrantzes](#), who doubted the truth of the story that the only way the Emperor was later identified was by his purple boots and that his body was decapitated and his head sent across Asia Minor to legitimize the victory, others claim that the Turks were never able to identify his body, and that he was very likely buried in a mass grave alongside his soldiers.

Modern statue of Constantine XI Palaiologos in [Athens](#).