

THE RENAISSANCE OF BYZANTIUM DURING THE MACEDONIAN DYNASTY 867-1056

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Abstract: The Macedonian dynasty (867-1056) opened a new stage in the history of Byzantium, which will lead the Byzantine Empire to its medieval peak. Thus, for 150 years the Byzantine Empire had a period in which it experienced important achievements on all levels. Between 867-1025 the Empire was led by some remarkable leaders, who distinguished themselves exceptionally. The representatives of this dynasty were the most brilliant leaders that Byzantium now had. They were people with an energetic and strong personalities, without mercy and scruples, with an authoritarian and strong will, trying to be feared rather than to win the sympathy and love of those they led. The grandeur of the Empire was the focus of their rule, proving that they were great military leaders, as they spent most of their reign among soldiers, in which they identified the source of the monarchy's power.

Keywords: Byzantine Empire, Christianity, Church, emperors, council, heretics, culture, civilization.

The history of the Macedonian dynasty has two periods, which are not equal in importance, or duration. Thus, the first period that was the brightest extends during 867 and 1025, the year of the death of Emperor Basil II. The second period is shorter and extends between 1025-1056, the year in which Empress Theodora died, who was the last member of this dynasty. Unfortunately, between these years the Byzantine Empire went through a period of anarchy with frequent palace blows, which will lead to many unrest between the years 1056-1081.²

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- ² A. A. VASILIEV, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, traducere și note de Ionuț-Alexandru Tudorie, Vasile-Adrian Carabă, Sebastian-Laurențiu Nazăru, studiu introductiv de Ionuț-Alexandru Tudorie, Iași, 2010, 309.

The Macedonian dynasty (867-1056) opened a new stage in the history of Byzantium, which will lead the Byzantine Empire to its medieval peak.³ Thus, for 150 years the Byzantine Empire had a period in which it experienced important achievements on all levels.

Between the years 867-1025 he had at his head several men who stood out quite apart, and from this position of remarkable leaders they distinguished themselves exceptionally. Basil I (867-886) is the one who laid the foundations of this dynasty, followed by Leo VI the Wise/Philosopher (886-912), Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913-959), Roman I Lekapenos (919 -944), Roman II (959-963), Nichifor II Phocas (963-969) and John I Tzimiskes (963-973), who were glorious usurpers but managed to rule under the name legitimate parents. This dynasty will be dominated by the personality of Emperor Basil II who ruled the Byzantine Empire for almost half a century between 976-1025. After the death of Emperor Basil II, his brother Constantine VIII Porphyrogenitus (1025-1028) will succeed the Byzantine Empire. In November 1028, Constantine VIII married his daughter Zoe to Roman III Argyros, prefect of Constantinople, and in December⁴ after his death, he will take over the leadership of the Byzantine Empire (1028-1034). Zoe and Theodora, the daughters of Constantine VIII, will secure five emperors through marriage and adoption.⁵

The representatives of this dynasty were the most brilliant rulers that Byzantium now had. They were people with an energetic and hard personality, without mercy and scruples with an authoritarian and strong will, trying to be feared rather than to win the sympathy and love of those they led.

The grandeur of the Empire was the focus of their reign, proving that they were great military leaders, as they spent much of their reign among soldiers, in which they identified the source of the monarchy's power.

Administratively, they proved energy, tenacity and ability at the same time being inflexible, because when they were determined to ensure the public good, it did not make them hesitate for a moment in the decision they wanted to make.

Also, the economic field was their main target, aiming to increase the national wealth as much as possible. For this they gave up unnecessary expenses, such as the brilliant splendor of the palace, the pointless pomp of processions or ceremo-

³ Michael KAPLAN, *Bizanț*, trad. Ion Doru Brana, București, 2010, 25.

⁴ Timoty. E. GREGORY, *O istorie a Bizanțului*, Trad. Cornelia Dumitru, Iași, 2013, 252.

⁵ KAPLAN, *Bizanț*, 25.

nies, did not interest them only as long as they were the subject of the policy they promoted and maintained the prestige of the emperor and the Empire.

In order to better maintain their authority, they only attracted favorites when they were exceptional personalities, such as that parakimomene (great chamberlain) Basil (Vasile), the bastard son of Roman Lekapenos, who five times over more than forty years between 944-988 was the soul of government. To ensure their authority even better, the advisers these emperors had were mediocre people they used and permanently dominated. Thus, on the long run, they wanted to make the Byzantine Empire the force of the Eastern world, the champion of Hellenism, but also of Orthodoxy.

Combining with great skill the power of the army they had, but also through the ability and suppleness of diplomacy and especially through the dynamism of its government, they fulfilled their dream, and this period was a very special rebirth, being therefore one of the most important and great throughout the long Byzantine history.

Thus, for more than a century and a half, Byzantium was the beneficiary of a leadership that had a unity of views, but also a firmness, which it did not have for a long time. These leaders of the Byzantine Empire had generals of remarkable value, among whom it is worth mentioning Focas, Curcuas, Skleros, but also the ministers of the stature of the parakimomen Basil (Vasile). Under these circumstances, the Macedonian dynasty managed to provide an incomparable splendor and prodigious expansion to the monarchy.

To be able to crown these successes as well as possible, they started the offensive on all borders. Thus, diplomacy worked in a perfect symphony with the army, which brought together important vassals around the monarchy, and the influence of Byzantine in the East took shape in the West. The powerful government managed to stand out through a centralized, skillful and learned administration, but also through a completely exceptional legislative work.

The emperors also realized that in order to achieve the unity of the Byzantine Empire it would be necessary to promote the common imprint of Hellenism through the common profession of Orthodoxy (in the sense of the right faith, the preservation of Christian purity, given that Byzantium was dominated of a lot of heresies from the beginning of its existence until the end of it) and in this sense it will be able to reduce the ethnic diversity that the Empire had. These remarkable achievements were the ones that gave splendor to the one hundred and fifty years of time in which the Macedonian dynasty ruled the Byzantine Empire.

In addition to these achievements, let us not forget that the Macedonian dynasty, with all its efforts, failed to stop, as effectively as possible, the dangers that threatened the prosperity of the Empire and in this sense could not solve the agrarian problem, but more chosen to appease the feudal aristocracy, which was ready to revolt constantly. Unfortunately, during this dynasty, the Great Schism of July 16/24, 1054, took place between the Eastern and the Western Church.⁶

We must not forget that the Macedonian dynasty failed to leave a strong Empire that would withstand the subsequent attacks of the Turks and Normans, leaving open the way for a long anarchy through which Byzantium would pass between 1056–1081. In conclusion, summarizing all the achievements and shortcomings of the Macedonian dynasty, we cannot overlook the fact that it gave a special splendor to Byzantium,⁷ making it the greatest power in the Christian and Mediterranean world.⁸

The founder of the Macedonian dynasty is Emperor Basil I (867-886). He was born in Thrace or Macedonia, possibly to an Armenian family who settled in the area. According to some opinions, Vasile was of Armenian origin and was named Macedonian because he came from the Macedonian theme. Basil I of Macedon came to Constantinople and due to his physical strength; he gained a status at court. After defeating several Bulgarians, he was brought to the attention of Emperor Michael III (842-867), later known as the Drunkard, since he was more interested in drunks than in leading the Empire.

When his mistress Eudochia Ingerina became pregnant, Emperor Michael III decided to marry her to the chamberlain and his glass friend Basil (Vasile) I the Macedonian, after which he adopted him. He replaced Caesar Bardas, after whom he killed him with his own hand in 865. From 866 Basil I of Macedon will be co-emperor and will be crowned with the imperial diadem in St. Sophia Cathedral in Constantinople.⁹ After Basil I of Macedon was crowned co-emperor, the following year he ordered Michael III to be killed on September 23¹⁰ while sleeping. Thus, from the year 867 Basil (Vasile) I at the age of fifty-five, will re-

⁶ Nicolae CHIFĂR, *Istoria creștinismului*, I, Sibiu, 2007, 355.

⁷ Charles DIEHL, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, trad. Carmen Roșulescu, Craiova, 1999, 90-96.

⁸ KAPLAN, *Bizanț*, 26.

⁹ VASILIEV, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 310.

¹⁰ KAPLAN, *Bizanț*, 25.

main the only emperor. With the death of Michael III, the Drunkard ended the Amorite dynasty, which ruled the Byzantine Empire between 820–867.

Obviously, after he became emperor, the first concern of Basil I was to ensure his legitimacy. He had two sons, Constantine from his first marriage, who was older, and Leon, from his marriage to Eudochia Ingerina. For years, rumors circulated about Leon that he was in fact the son of Emperor Michael III. Emperor Basil I acted quickly to gain recognition of his own dynasty, and in this sense, he crowned Constantine emperor in 869, and Leon in 870.

At the beginning of his reign, Basil I faced considerable opposition from the army, which during the Amorite dynasty achieved several successes. To remove this opposition, Emperor Basil I sought supporters everywhere, and recruited some from those who continued to oppose the Patriarchate of Photius (858-867). In this sense, Emperor Basil I deposed Photius in 867 and reinstated Ignatius (867-877) in the patriarchal throne, who was deposed by Emperor Michael III in 858. This move was first of all a political one, and Photius will be hired as guardian of the emperor's children.

Compared to his predecessors, Emperor Basil I had other interests towards the West and therefore he wanted a reconciliation with the papacy and thus, to end the schism. He did not recognize Photius' synod / anti-papal council in 867 and asked Pope Adrian II (867-872) to send delegates to another synod / council.

Thus, between 869-870, a synod / council was held in Constantinople, attended by delegates of Pope Adrian II (867-872). Patriarch Photius was excommunicated once again, and the synod / council also discussed the clarification of the status of the Bulgarian Church, after Boris converted to Christianity in 864. The problem arose when Prince Boris I Michael learned that the Byzantines were planning to keep the Bulgarian Church under the strict control of the Patriarch of Constantinople. Prince Boris I Michael (852-889) tried to make a better arrangement through an alliance with Rome, but the papacy was no more courteous than the Byzantines. Thus, that the Bulgarians requested in a synod / council to discuss the administration / jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Church. Patriarch Ignatius maintained the lines established by Photius and defended Byzantine interests in the Balkans. Despite all the protests of the delegates of Pope Adrian II, the issue was decided in favor of Byzantium, and the Bulgarian Church remained in the sphere of Constantinople. Although the Bulgarian bishops were also ordained / consecrated in Constantinople, Prince Boris I Michael imposed his point of view using the differences between Rome and Constantinople, showing that

the interests of the Bulgarian Church and his country had to be considered. Thus, the Bulgarian Church received the rank of Archeparchy and more autonomy.¹¹

In 877, after the death of Ignatius, the emperor Basil restored Photius (877-886) to the patriarchal throne, but his rehabilitation had to be done in a synod / council, which was held from November 879, until March 880. Pope John VIII (872-882) will approve this enthronement and recognition of Photius in exchange for papal jurisdiction over the Church in Bulgaria. Patriarch Photius omitted this condition of Pope John VIII from the Greek translation of the papal letter, and he obtained recognition anyway.¹²

Therefore, the synod / council of 879-880 will formally resolve the dispute between the two Churches, thus ending the Photian schism, with the complete victory of Photius. Thus, the Byzantine Church will continue to fulfill the role as protector of Slavic Christians in the Balkans.¹³

As far as foreign policy, the main problem of Basil I of Macedon was the struggle with the Muslims.¹⁴ He will thus be able to remove the Muslim danger that was beginning to threaten Byzantium. It was now possible to restore Byzantine influence in the West by conquering the city of Bari in southern Italy in 867, compensating for the loss of Syracuse.

Having succeeded in consolidating its position in the West, Byzantium will now head East where it has succeeded in destroying the Abbasid frontier. In 872, the small military state of the Paulist dualists will be conquered when their capital Tephrike was destroyed. From that moment on, the movement ceased to be a military threat. The Paulicians along with the Muslims resisted the Byzantine Empire. This policy will be continued by the descendants of Emperor Basil I of Macedon.

Constantine, the first son of Emperor Basil I of Macedonia died in 879, and to ensure the succession of his second son Leo VI the Wise/Philosopher (886-912), he had to make arrangements. Emperor Basil I of Macedon died in a hunting accident in 886, and Leo VI the Wise/Philosopher took the throne without any difficulty at the age of nineteen. As I mentioned before, there were some rumors

¹¹ CHIFĂR, *Istoria creștinismului*, I, 307.

¹² WARREN TREADGOLD, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului*, trad. Mirella Acsente, București, 2003, 156-158.

¹³ GREGORY, *O istorie a Bizanțului*, 223-227.

¹⁴ VASILIEV, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 312.

that he was not the natural son of Basil I of Macedon, but of Michael III/Drunkard (842-867).

After the accession to the throne, Leo VI the Wise / Philosopher deposed Patriarch Photius and replaced him with Stephen I (886-893), who was his younger brother and was only sixteen years old. The Armenian Stylianos Zautes, who was the father of his mistress Zoe (later she would become the wife of Leo VI) became the most important adviser to Emperor Leo VI, and a new imperial title of Basileopator was created for him.

Leo VI is known in the Byzantine tradition as Leo the Wise or the Philosopher, due to his remarkable culture, but also for his writings on various topics and in many styles. He wrote political works, theological treatises, speeches, liturgical poems and often gave high-quality sermons in the churches of Constantinople.

In the legislative field, Leo followed the example of Basil I and thus, he formed a commission that would codify all Byzantine laws. These were grouped into six volumes, which had sixty books, under the name of Hexabiblos or Basilika / Basilicas, which were promulgated in 888.¹⁵ They were in Greek and contained all the laws of the Corpus of Justinian, being systematically ordered, thus succeeding in providing a foundation on which Byzantine law was later built. Therefore, Leo VI initiated this tradition through a series of new Novel laws (Novele) that responded to contemporary problems. Both the Basilica and the Novels dealt with civil law and church law (canon law). Under the name of Leo VI was published the Book of the Eparch which contains rules for trade and corporations in Constantinople. Also, under the name of Leo VI was published the book The Kletorologion of Philotheos which organizes the hierarchy of the officials, their ranks and titles at the imperial court.¹⁶

As far as the foreign affairs, Leo VI continued the policy of Basil I, but now the Bulgarians posed the greatest threat to the Byzantine Empire. They were led by Simeon the Great (893-927), who was sent to Constantinople to be educated for an ecclesiastical career. He was called in 893 to Bulgaria and became a tsar (a term derived from the Roman-Byzantine word caesar/kaisar).

Due to his innate abilities as a military strategist and leader, he was one of the younger sons of Tsar Boris I Michael (853-888), but also because during his time in Constantinople, Simeon managed to get to know and understand the

¹⁵ TREADGOLD, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului*, 159.

¹⁶ GREGORY, *O istorie a Bizanțului*, 233.

Byzantines, he will now become a dangerous enemy to them, seeking to take over Constantinople and establish a Roman-Bulgarian empire.¹⁷ Thus, in 896, Simeon defeated the Byzantines, and they were forced to pay an important tribute to Bulgaria.¹⁸

During the war with the Bulgarians, the Hungarians will make their presence known for the first time in Byzantine history, and at the end of the reign of Leo VI the Russians will be near Constantinople. Armenia, which was the ally of the Byzantine Empire against the incessant Arab invasions, did not receive the help they expected from Byzantium. In addition, the issue of the fourth marriage of Emperor Leo VI led to increased internal unrest. All these internal and external problems made the war with Islam more complex and difficult for the Byzantine Empire, so that during the reign of Leo VI, campaigns against the Arabs were generally ineffective and completely failed.¹⁹

During this period, Emperor Leo VI seems to have given the themes more mobility by increasing the cavalry in most of them. Thus, in 900, he began an offensive, and his army invaded Tarsus and captured the emir. Also, the Byzantine army began to advance slightly in the western part of Armenia, managing to annex the strips of the border territory, thus approaching the more valuable Arab possessions. Consequently, the Arabs will retaliate with naval attacks and thus take by surprise and devastate in 903 Thessaloniki, which was the second city in the Byzantine Empire.

Emperor Leo VI was widowed for the third time in 901 and had no son to succeed him. In order not to conflict with the Byzantine Church, which forbade the fourth marriage, Emperor Leo VI took as his mistress Zoe Carbonopsina (with black eyes like embers), who was part of an important family in Constantinople. In 905 she gave birth to the future emperor Constantine VII / Porphyrogenitus (born in purple) (912-959), and now Leo VI considered that he should marry her. Patriarch Nicolae Misticul (901-907; 912-925) opposed this marriage and was deposed.

Emperor Leo VI appealed to Pope Segius III (904-911), from whom he obtained a dispensation, since the Roman Church allowed the remaining widows to

¹⁷ KAPLAN, *Bizanț*, 28.

¹⁸ GREGORY, *O istorie a Bizanțului*, 233.

¹⁹ VASILIEV, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 313-314.

remarry whenever they wished.²⁰ In 908 the young Constantine VII was crowned co-emperor.

Emperor Leo VI died in 912 and was succeeded by his brother Alexander (912-913), who had to share the throne with his nephew Constantine VII, who was only six years old. Alexander expelled Zoe, the widow of Leo VI, from the palace, deposed Patriarch Euthymius (907-912) and brought back former patriarch Nicholas the Mystic (912-925).

Alexander also refused to pay the Bulgarians the tribute established by the treaty of 896, and so Simeon the Tsar of Bulgaria (893-927) began a war against the Byzantine Empire. On his deathbed, Alexander appointed Patriarch Nicholas the Mystic as a main regent for his young nephew, and then died shortly afterwards in 913.

Thus, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, who was eight years old and whom his father crowned in 908 co-emperor, will take over the leadership of the Byzantine Empire controlled by a regent council. In the summer of 913, Tsar Simeon of Bulgaria arrived with the army in front of the walls of Constantinople. Patriarch Nicholas the Mystic was not ready to fight the Bulgarians, and in this situation, he made peace. The Byzantines will pay tribute again, and Patriarch Nicholas the Mystic engaged Constantine VII to the daughter of the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon, who will be crowned emperor (obviously the Byzantines understood that he was the emperor of Bulgaria and not the entire empire). These last two conditions were so humiliating for the Byzantine Empire that they led to a coup d'état, which removed Patriarch Nicholas the Mystic from the regency and replaced him with Zoe, the mother of Emperor Constantine VII.

Zoe annulled the engagement of her son Constantine VII with Simeon's daughter and renounced his imperial title. In this situation, Tsar Simeon began to attack Byzantine territory, and Zoe refused to make any concessions. The Byzantines attacked Bulgaria but were defeated by Simeon. The army commanders, led by Leon and Bardas Focas, will conspire against Empress Zoe and thus the commander of the Imperial Fleet, Roman Lecapenos, will take power. He will marry his daughter Elena to Constantine VII, and lock Zoe in the convent. In 919, Zoe arranged for Emperor Constantine VII to marry Elena, daughter of Roman Lecapenos. At the age of about fifty, he will be crowned co-emperor in 920, and from this moment Roman I Lecapenos (920-944) will be the one who will

²⁰ TREADGOLD, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului*, 159-160.

lead the Byzantine Empire. During the long reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913-959) and Roman I Lecapenos, the Byzantine Empire could not fight effectively with the Arabs until the end of the third decade of the tenth century, as all military troops were engaged in the war against the Bulgarians.²¹

After Constantine VII's marriage to Helen, it is obvious that Tsar Simeon of Bulgaria became angry because his plans were thwarted, since he was no longer the father-in-law of Constantine VII. Thus, in 921 Simeon of Bulgaria invaded the borders of the Byzantine Empire, reaching Constantinople. Roman I Lecapenos forcibly granted him the title of emperor of the Bulgarians and denied him the claim to hold power in the empire. This was followed by three years of undecided fighting, and Tsar Simeon would conclude an armistice with the Byzantines, by which they undertook to pay tribute again.

According to some, Tsar Simeon planned new attacks on the Byzantines, but in 927 he died leaving Bulgaria withered. He was succeeded by his son Peter (927-969), who tried to establish good relations with the Byzantine Empire. He married Maria Lecapena, the niece of Roman I Lecapenos, and Byzantium recognized the Bulgarian Patriarchate with residence in Silistra, which was established recently. The Bulgarian Church will function as an autocephalous patriarchate until 971 until Emperor John I Tziskes (969-976) conquers the eastern part of Bulgaria, and from then on passes it under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In 1015, Emperor Basil II Bulgarocton (976-1025) conquered Ohrid, and the Bulgarians completely lost their political independence, thus becoming a Byzantine province until 1186.²²

After the death of the patriarch Nicholas the Mystic (912-925), Roman I Lecapenos will order that his son Stephen II) aged only sixteen be consecrated as patriarch of Constantinople (925-927). By this measure Roman I Lecapenos will control the Church for most of his reign.²³

The alliance with the Bulgarians allowed Roman I Lecapenos to turn his attention to the eastern borders of the Byzantine Empire. General Ioan Curcuas will attack the emirate of Melitene, which he conquered in 934 and expelled all Muslims who refused to convert to Christianity. Due to his victories, Ioan Cur-

²¹ VASILIEV, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 315.

²² CHIFĂR, *Istoria creștinismului*, I, 308-309.

²³ GREGORY, *O istorie a Bizanțului*, 236.

cuas was named “the second Trajan or Belizarie” and the conqueror of “several thousand cities”.²⁴

In 936, a large Arab tribe in Mesopotamia sided with the Byzantines, and its members became Christians, who would supply the Byzantine army with twelve thousand horsemen. They will contribute to the conquest and colonization of five new themes, which will thus expand the territory of the Byzantine Empire far east of Melitene.²⁵

In 941, Constantinople will be besieged by Igor I (912-945), son of Oleg (879-912), the first prince of Kiev. General Ioan Curcuas was called back from the Eastern Front and defeated Igor in a land battle, and the Russian fleet was destroyed this time with Greek fire. Igor will conclude a treaty with the Byzantines, and their missionaries set off for Kiev, succeeding in baptizing Princess Olga in 959.²⁶

After this victory against the Russians, Ioan Curcuas will return to the Eastern Front and will continue his conquests, thus managing to extend the borders of the Byzantine Empire to northern Syria. In these successes he was also aided by the active naval policy he pursued. After John Curcuas besieged Edessa in 944, he asked its inhabitants to hand over the miraculous icon of the Savior Mandylion, one of the most important relics of Christians. According to a sixth-century legend, King Abgar of Edessa (Syria) fell ill and asked the Savior Jesus Christ to come to him and heal him. The Savior Jesus Christ put a towel on his face, and His face remained imprinted on it, after which it was taken to King Abgar, and when he touched the towel, he was healed. He remained in Edessa after the Arab conquest, and in 944 John Curcuas, after conquering the city, carried him in triumph throughout Asia Minor to Constantinople, where he was placed in a place of honor in the imperial palace.

The reign of Roman I Lecapenos was one of great importance for the eastern policy of the Byzantine Empire. Thus, after a period of three hundred years of defensive policy, during the time of Roman I Lecapenos and John Curcuas, the Byzantine Empire will begin an offensive policy that will be successful. Now the

²⁴ VASILIEV, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 315.

²⁵ TREADGOLD, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului*, 161-162.

²⁶ KAPLAN, *Bizanț*, 28.

frontier of the Empire will expand, and in the last twelve years of the reign of Roman I Lecapenos, the Arabs will only cross the frontier twice.²⁷

Despite all these triumphs of the Byzantine army, the Roman emperor I Lecapenos could not enjoy them because in 931, Christopher, his eldest son, died. Under these conditions, Roman I Lecapenos realized that his younger sons were not fit to rule the Byzantine Empire and decided to return to the legitimate emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, who was crowned co-emperor in 908. The youngest sons of Roman I Lecapenos tried to prevent this situation, and so at the end of 944 they organized a coup in which they deposed their father, after which they exiled him to a monastery. They tried to seize power, but after a revolt of the crowd in Constantinople, who were dissatisfied with this gesture, in the first months of 945, the legitimate emperor Constantine VII Porphyryetus took power. The sons of Roman I Lecapenos were exiled to the monastery with their father.

So, from now on, when Constantine VII Porphyryeth was thirty-nine years old, he would be able to lead the Byzantine Empire alone. To ensure the continuation of the Macedonian dynasty, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus soon crowned his son Roman II Porphyrogenitus as emperor.

Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus was passionate about culture and was surrounded by many scholars, who wrote histories and encyclopedic works on various topics. According to some opinions it seems that he compiled *De administrando imperio* (About the administration of the empire), *De thematibus* (About the government in the provinces) and *De ceremoniis* (About the imperial ceremonial). Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus was also actively involved in state affairs, appointing Bardas Focas as the domestikos of the scholai troops, and his government took important steps to protect the lands of the soldiers.²⁸

During his reign the Balkan Peninsula and the West did not create problems and therefore externally the main danger to the Byzantine Empire was posed by the battles with the Arabs, who were led by Saif ad Daulah, who was now Emir of Aleppo. He fought hard against the Byzantines and escaped with difficulty.²⁹

²⁷ VASILIEV, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 315.

²⁸ GREGORY, *O istorie a Bizanțului*, 239.

²⁹ TREADGOLD, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului*, 163.

The Byzantines won several victories against the Arabs after 957, when Nichifor II Phocas replaced his father as domestikos of the scholastic troops.³⁰

Therefore, during the time of John Curcuas and John Tzimiskes, the borders of the Byzantine Empire will be extended beyond the Euphrates, inaugurating a period of brilliant Byzantine victories over the Muslims.³¹

Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus died in 959, while preparing for an anti-Arab expedition to Crete. During his long reign (913-959), but shorter rule (944-959), the Byzantine Empire managed to resolve internal dissensions, and externally repelled the Bulgarian invasions and won an important advantage over the Arabs. Therefore, during his reign Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus avoided making big mistakes, managing to gain power for himself, but also his dynasty at a time when it seemed lost forever.³²

His son Porphyrogenitus (959-963) will rule the Byzantine Empire. At the age of only twenty and a lover of entertainment, Roman II Porphyrogenitus left the problems of the state and most of the decisions in the care of the eunuch Iosif Bringas, who was his advisor.³³ Externally, Nichifor II Phocas started the war for the conquest of the island of Crete, which was planned by Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. Thus, in 961, after a long battle, the army led by Nichifor II Phocas, which had a huge fleet of seventy-seven thousand soldiers and oarsmen, conquered the island of Crete from the hands of Arab pirates after more than a century. After this conquest the island of Crete will become a Byzantine theme, and the Byzantine missionaries will begin to convert the inhabitants back to Christianity. By conquering the island of Crete, the Byzantine Empire will gain an important strategic and commercial point in the Mediterranean.³⁴

Nichifor II Phocas will come to the East and will fight with John Tzimiskes against Emir Saif ad-Daulah. With an army of about seventy thousand soldiers, they conquered the city of Aleppo, the capital of Saif ad-Daulah, and thus the Byzantine Empire will take possession of part of Syria. After this conquest, Nichifor II Phocas and John Tzimiskes learned that the Roman emperor Porphyrogenitus II, who was now only twenty-four years old, had died in the hunt.³⁵ At his death

³⁰ GREGORY, *O istorie a Bizanțului*, 239.

³¹ VASILIEV, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 316.

³² TREADGOLD, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului*, 163.

³³ GREGORY, *O istorie a Bizanțului*, 239.

³⁴ VASILIEV, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 316.

³⁵ TREADGOLD, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului*, 164.

in 963, Roman II Porphyrogenitus left his two sons as the official rulers, his sons Basil II who was five years old and Constantine VIII who was three years old, and their mother Theophanes assumed the regency, and in this regard she made an arrangement with Nichifor II Focas. He had come to Constantinople to celebrate the victories against the Arabs and had been acclaimed by the emperor's soldiers. Theophanes will marry Nichifor II Phocas, who was fifty-one years old. He was a widower and because he had no children, he adopted Theophanes' two sons. Thus, Nichifor II Focas (963-969) will become emperor and protector of the rights of the two young porphyrogenic emperors. It was the first time in the history of the Byzantine Empire that a member of the Antholian military aristocracy became emperor.

After Nichifor II Focas took power, he would replace the eunuch Iosif Bringas as parakoimomenos (great chamberlain) with Vasile Lecapenos, who was an illegitimate son of Roman I Lecapenos. General John Tzsmikes will also be called domestikos in the East, and in the West was named Leon Focas, the emperor's brother.

Nichifor II Phocas was a great admirer of the monks, and they were some of his best friends. Thus, in the year 963 St. Athanasius the Athonite (920-1003) with the help of Nichifor II Focas, will establish on Mount Athos the Great Lavra Monastery, which will become a famous center of Byzantine monasticism.³⁶ Although he was a great admirer of the monks, Emperor Nichifor II Focas issued a law prohibiting land donations to the Church. He gave this law because Patriarch Polyeuct (956-970) refused to honor as martyrs the Byzantine soldiers who died in the fighting against the Muslims, but also because the Church owned many properties for which he paid very low taxes.

If most of the Byzantine emperors until Nichifor II Phocas after their coronation did not personally lead the army on the battlefield, he was the one who wanted to expand Byzantine rule in Syria and thus went to war at the head of the soldiers.³⁷ In 944, Nichifor II went to war and organized a long campaign against the Arabs, which will be crowned with several victories. Thus, the Byzantine fleet will conquer the important island of Cyprus in 965³⁸, the Emirate of Tarsus, where it will create new themes in Cilicia. In 966, Nichifor II Phocas invaded

³⁶ GREGORY, *O istorie a Bizanțului*, 243-244.

³⁷ TREADGOLD, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului*, 165.

³⁸ VASILIEV, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 316.

northern Syria by conquering the city of Aleppo in 968. He would continue to conquer Antioch in the heart of Syria on October 29, 969, which was still large and with a predominantly Christian population, and which the Byzantines they called it the “City of God” (Theoupolis).³⁹ After these victories, northern Syria would be annexed to the Byzantine Empire, and although the south was independent, it was actually under Byzantine control after more than three centuries of Arab rule.⁴⁰ From the new themes founded by Nichifor II, Phocas drove out all Muslims who did not want to convert, and encouraged Christians in Armenia and Syria to settle in the fertile land, which was depopulated.⁴¹

In the Balkans Nichifor II Phocas rejected the claims of the Bulgarian emperor Peter (927-969) to pay tribute and invited the Russian prince Sviatoslav to attack the Bulgarians, who managed to defeat them in 968 and 969, after which took control of Bulgaria. Due to the fact that Nichifor II was present on the battlefields at the head of his army and was long absent from Constantinople and where he arrived only occasionally, his popularity declined among the inhabitants, dignitaries, but especially the young Empress Theophanes. She and General John I Tzimiskes plotted to assassinate Nichifor II Phocas, after which they were to marry and rule with her sons. Thus, in December 969 the conspirators killed Nichifor II Phocas while he was sleeping.⁴² The assassination of Nichifor II Phocas was probably the least justified assassination in the entire history of the Byzantine Empire.

Therefore, following this assassination John I Tzimiskes (969-976) will be crowned by the patriarch Polieuct (956-970) as emperor of the Byzantine Empire, after penance for murder, donation of personal property to the poor, separation from Theophanes, who was sent to the monastery, and the punishment of accomplices. Although he was an assassin and usurper, John I Tzimiskes will reign as co-emperor with the legitimate emperors who were minors, and he soon became related to them by marrying their aunt Theodora, daughter of Constantine VII. Porphyrogenate.

Because he wanted to continue the foreign policy of Nichifor II Focas, to conquer new territories for the Byzantine Empire, John I Tzimiskes would entrust

³⁹ KAPLAN, *Bizanț*, 28.

⁴⁰ GREGORY, *O istorie a Bizanțului*, 245-246.

⁴¹ TREADGOLD, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului*, 165.

⁴² GREGORY, *O istorie a Bizanțului*, 246.

most of the administrative problems to Vasile Lecapenos, who was an illegitimate son of Roman I Lecapenos. He will retain the function of *parakoimomenos* (great chamberlain), which he received from Nichifor II Focas. At the beginning of the reign of John I Tzimiskes he will have to face several revolts, which were organized by his aristocratic rivals. He also had to face the revolt organized by Bardas Focas, who was the nephew of Nichifor II Focas and who wanted to avenge his uncle but was defeated and exiled.⁴³ During all this time John I Tzimiskes' greatest ally was his brother-in-law, Bardas Skleros.

Externally, John I Tzimiskes faced the threat of Russian Prince Sviatoslav I (945-972), who gained growing authority over Bulgaria and the threat of attacking Constantinople. Thus, in 971 John I Tzimiskes at the head of an army of forty thousand soldiers, occupied the Bulgarian capital Great Preslav, taking prisoner Tsar Boris II (969-971), after which he headed for Silistra, which was occupied by Sviatoslav. He was forced to retreat and soon was killed, and so John I Tzimiskes will remain the master of Bulgaria.

In the West, John I Tzimiskes reconciled with Emperor Otto the Great of Germany (936-973), approving the alliance marriage that Nichifor II Focas rejected. So, John I Tzimiskes will send his niece Theophanes, who in 972 will become the wife of Otto II of Germany (973-983). Through this marriage John I Tzimiskes will be able to solve the Italian complications and will thus be able to return to the oriental problems.⁴⁴ Theophanes will have a great influence on her son Otto III, who will become emperor of the West (983-1002) and will copy the Byzantine court ceremony.

In the East, John I Tzimiskes will try to consolidate, but especially to extend the conquests made by Nichifor II Focas. Here the most dangerous enemy of the Muslim states was the Fatimid Caliphate of Egypt, which also owned southern Syria. With the help of Bardas Skleros, John I Tzimiskes managed to ease the pressure of the Fatimids on Antioch and made several conquests in Syria and the Holy Land. In 975 John I Tzimiskes conquered Emessa, Baalbek, Damascus, Nazareth, Accra, Tiberias, and Caesarea,⁴⁵ reaching a short distance from the walls of Jerusalem, and on his return to Constantinople, John I Tzimiskes

⁴³ TREADGOLD, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului*, 167-168.

⁴⁴ VASILIEV, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 318.

⁴⁵ KAPLAN, *Bizanț*, 29.

will conquer the cities of Beirut and Sidon.⁴⁶ Therefore, his military campaigns against Eastern Muslims were great success.⁴⁷

On his way back to Constantinople, John I Tzimiskes fell ill and died shortly after arriving in the capital in early 976. According to some, he was poisoned by the great chamberlain Vasile Lekapenos for not being investigated on the accusations of corruption brought against him.⁴⁸

During this period, the foreign policy of the Macedonian Dynasty was continued by the learned emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913-959), but also by the two usurpers who held power, respectively Nichifor II Focas (963-969) and John I Tzimiskes (969-976), they being rightly named the main authors of the “Byzantine reconquest”. Thus, the first managed to bring back to Byzantium: Crete, Cyprus, Cilicia, Antioch, Damascus, and northern Palestine, and the second, after he managed to defeat the Russians led by the prince of Kiev Sviatoslav I (945-972), he managed to annex most of the old Empire led by Simeon I (893-927).⁴⁹

At the death of John I Tzimiskes, Basil II the Macedonian / Bulgarocton (the Killer of the Bulgarians, 976-1025) was eighteen years old, so that in this situation he could reign without the need for a regent. Throughout his reign, Basil II will share power with his brother Constantine VIII, who was two years younger than him. However, the effective power was held by Basil II, and Constantine VIII was glad that he could enjoy life in the palace. As we have seen since the death of Roman II Porphyrogenitus, in 963 those who ruled the Empire were members of the military aristocracy, who ruled in the name of legitimate emperors. Bardas Skleros, who was a *domestikos*, believed that this tradition would continue during the time of Basil II and so, in 976 when he declared that he wanted to rule alone, he rebelled against the emperor and was crowned emperor at Melitene. At the beginning, Bardas Skleros managed to defeat the army of Emperor Basil II and thus, in 978, he controlled all of Asia Minor. However, Emperor Basil II will succeed with the help of Basil Lekapenos, who was *parakoimomenos* (great chamberlain) to form an alliance with Bardas Focas, the nephew of Emperor Nichifor II Focas, who was the leader of a rival aristocratic family, and who was

⁴⁶ GREGORY, *O istorie a Bizanțului*, 247-248.

⁴⁷ VASILIEV, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*,

⁴⁸ TREADGOLD, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului*, 169.

⁴⁹ Alain DUCÉLIER, *Bizantinii*, trad. Simona Nicolae, București, 1997, 14-15.

called from exile and named as a domestic of the East. They managed to defeat Bardas Skleros in 979, and he managed to escape and take refuge in the caliphate in Baghdad.⁵⁰

From this moment Basil Lecapenos will remain in the next years to lead the government, which he led for thirty-six years from 963, when he was appointed parakoimomenos (great chamberlain) by Emperor Nichifor II Focas. When Emperor Basil II tried to assert his independence from Basil Lecapenos, he organized a plot to bring Bardas Focas to power. Emperor Basil II revoked him and arrested him, and in 985, he sent him into exile.

All these internal struggles weakened the Byzantine Empire, and the Bulgarians began to take advantage of them. Thus, Tsar Samuil (976-1014) recaptured western Bulgaria from the Byzantines, after which he restored the independent Bulgarian patriarchate, which was abolished by John I Tzimiskes in 971. Samuil will try to expand his territory south into Greece and thus, it will conquer the cities of Serres and Thessaloniki followed by Larissa in the province of Thessaly. So, with the coming of Samuel to the leadership of Bulgaria, now a life and death battle will begin between the two empires.⁵¹

In 986, Emperor Basil II at the head of his army attacked the Bulgarians but was defeated by them in the battle of Trajan's Gate on 17 August. Thus, following this failure, Bardas Skleros, who had returned from exile in Baghdad, organized a plot to try to seize the imperial throne. Emperor Basil II sent Bardas Focas against Bardas Skleros, who in 987 proclaimed himself emperor, and in 988, he prepared to attack Constantinople. In this difficult situation, Emperor Basil II appealed to Prince Vladimir I of Kiev (978-1005), asking for his help and offering his sister Anne as his wife, if he would convert to Christianity. Vladimir will marry Anne, sister of Basil II on Pentecost Sunday of 988, in the church of St. Basil of Kherson. After his conversion, Vladimir returned to Kiev and organized the collective baptism of the Russians by immersion in the Dnieper on August 15, 988.⁵²

Vladimir I sent him an army of six thousand soldiers with the help of which he defeated Bardas Skleros. Therefore, only in 989 did Basil II remain the absolute master of the Byzantine Empire, and for this he had to wait seventeen years

⁵⁰ TREADGOLD, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului*, 171.

⁵¹ KAPLAN, *Bizanț*, 28.

⁵² *Ibid*, 29.

to rule alone, after which it took another thirteen years to defeat his aristocratic rivals. All these turmoil and trials have changed his character and from a young lover of pleasures he has become a politician and a hardened and determined commander, being gloomy and quick to anger. From now on Basil II will dedicate himself entirely to the leadership of the Byzantine Empire, he did not marry and had no descendants to succeed him to the throne.⁵³

After Emperor Basil II succeeded in suppressing the rebellions of Bardas Focas and Bardas Skleros in Asia Minor, the emperor would start several wars against the Muslims, even if the war with the Bulgarians was not over.⁵⁴

Externally, for Basil II, it was now a priority to restore influence in the eastern and central Mediterranean, to recapture the Balkans and bring under his control the Danube basin and other trade routes leading to the West. To control the other trade routes that connected the East, Byzantium recaptured Armenia, Mesopotamia, and northern Syria. This attitude, which he had externally, was reflected in the conception they had when they wanted to restore the unity of the Byzantine Empire, but especially in its world power and the conception of "chosen people" that the Byzantines they had par excellence over other peoples.⁵⁵

It was Emperor Basil II who put an end to this reconquest of the Orient, especially after taking over Aleppo, Homs and Saizar in 995. His victories continued, weakening Muslim power, and Byzantium expanded its borders into the East. By their appearance in Syria, Emperor Basil II succeeded in restoring Byzantine influence in this province, even though he could not make any major conquests.⁵⁶ In 1020, Emperor Basil II annexed the Armenian provinces and subjugated Iberia, thus completing the great external victories of the Byzantine Empire. Through these successes the Byzantine Empire did not know this development from the time of Emperor Justinian (527-565).

An important moment of this period was the fight against the Bulgarians. In the tenth century, the external battle for Byzantium was more a struggle against the Bulgarians than the Arab war.⁵⁷ The Bulgarians managed to create an important empire that stretched from the Danube to the Adriatic Sea and therefore the Byzantines needed only a little over thirty years of war (986-1014) to end the

⁵³ GREGORY, *O istorie a Bizanțului*, 248-249.

⁵⁴ VASILIEV, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 319.

⁵⁵ Stelian BREZEANU, *O istorie a Imperiului Bizantin*, București, 1981, 78.

⁵⁶ VASILIEV, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 319.

⁵⁷ DIEHL, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 98.

claims of domination on which the Bulgarians had during this period. The qualities of Emperor Basil II as a remarkable army leader, but also due to the energy and toughness he showed in the battles against the Bulgarians and especially due to the cruel victories against them brought him the nickname of Bulgarocton (the killer of Bulgarians).

The first offensive against the Bulgarians failed in 986, when Emperor Basil II was defeated at the gates of Trajan's Gate in the Balkans. It was not until ten years later that the emperor prepared intensely to resume fighting against the Bulgarians, but during this period Samuel extended his kingdom from the Danube to the Adriatic to the Aegean Sea. The battle of 996 brought the tsar defeat on the banks of the river Sperkios, after which he lost Greece, failing in front of Thessalonica, and thus part of Danube Bulgaria became part of the Byzantine Empire in 1000. However, the tsar was left with a part of western Bulgaria.

The following year Basil II resumed his attacks on Bulgaria, gradually conquering the surroundings of Berhorea, Sevia and Vodena. Surrounded by mountains, Samuel managed to escape and headed for Adrianople, which he wanted to plunder in 1003, but was pursued by Emperor Basil II, who conquered the city of Skopje, followed by Macedonia. lower and southern in 1007. Samuel wanted to avoid a direct confrontation, but his army was defeated in the Cimbalongu gorge, on the road from Serves to Melnik on July 29, 1014. Fifteen thousand prisoners were taken, and Basil II ordered them all to be blinded, leaving only one eye out of one hundred at a time, so that he could take the others home. At the sight of this grotesque spectacle on September 15, 1018, Tsar Samuel had a heart attack and died. From now on, any resistance in Bulgaria will cease⁵⁸ it is now annexed by the Byzantines.

Emperor Basil II crossed Greece to Athens in great triumph, which will be celebrated in Constantinople with great pomp in 1019. After these brilliant victories, Emperor Basil II could rightly be proud that he succeeded to give the Byzantine Empire a power which, as I have already said, it had not known since the time of Justinian (527-565).⁵⁹ Therefore, Emperor Basil II managed to restore externally the importance of the Byzantine Empire, but also to restore the boundaries that corresponded to a true territorial unity. The Balkan Peninsula, Asia Minor,

⁵⁸ KAPLAN, *Bizanț*, 28.

⁵⁹ DIEHL, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 103-104.

northern Syria, Upper Mesopotamia, Armenia, Transcaucasia, the Adriatic region, and southern Italy were now included in the Empire.

After the reign of Justinian (527-565), that of Emperor Basil II, it is the longest in the history of the Byzantine Empire. However, there was a big difference between the two emperors, because Justinian's intellectual and theological capacity eclipsed Basil II. He was first and foremost a skillful soldier, who during his reign spent more time among his soldiers outside the walls of Constantinople. The emperor Basil II had as main objective of his reign the progress of Romania, the social problems occupying a special role, and his qualities of good administrator stood out by the way he managed to lead the Byzantine Empire.⁶⁰

The great scholar of this period, Mihail Psellos, managed to make a physical portrait of Emperor Basil II, which will fit very well in the image of the Psalter of Venice. Here he is represented in military equipment, where the leaders of the defeated Bulgarians came to pay homage to him. The image described by historians can be seen here: with white skin dominated by a high forehead, a thick beard adorns his face, his body is well proportioned, and his gaze is clear and determined.

Emperor Basil II was a very exceptional knight, he was accustomed to walking, and he exercised his authority by his short and clear speech, which was not prepared in advance, being inclined to anger. As a great army leader, Emperor Basil II also had the qualities of a good administrator, and when he was happy, he laughed widely. When he managed to get rid of the parakimomenos and the two Bardas, he did not need anyone's help, having no prime minister or other favorite people, and what is most interesting is that he was never married, leaving no descendants.

Although he managed to surround himself with valuable people, who were at the same time good administrators, Basil II made all the important decisions himself. Throughout his life he wanted to ensure the prosperity and domination of the Byzantine Empire, to maximize the results gained. One of his primary concerns was to bring as much money as possible into his treasury, so that after

⁶⁰ L. BRÈHIER, *Le monde byzantin. Vie et mort de Byzance*, Paris, 1969, 177.

his death two hundred thousand talents remained from him⁶¹, as well as huge treasures and jewels that he hid in caves dug in the shape of a maze.⁶²

After the death of Emperor Basil II, his brother Constantine VIII Porphyrogenitus, (1025-1028) came to lead the Byzantine Empire. He married his daughter Zoe to the elderly senator Roman Arghir/Argyros, who after the death of Constantine VIII, ruled the Byzantine Empire between 1028-1034. Roman Argyros will die in 1034, and Zoe, who was almost fifty-six years old, will marry her lover Michael the Paflagonian. At Zoe's insistence, he was proclaimed emperor and ruled the Byzantine Empire between 1034-1041, under the name of Michael IV of Paphlagonian. During his reign, but also during the short reign of his nephew, Michael V Calafates/Kalphates (1041-1042), the Byzantine Empire went through many violent agitations and grievances, which ended with the dethronement and blindness of Michael V. For almost two months, the Byzantine Empire will be ruled by Zoe, who was a widow for the second time, and her younger sister Theodora. Zoe will marry for the third time, and her husband will be proclaimed emperor and rule the Byzantine Empire between 1042-1055, under the name of Constantine IX Monomah.

Zoe will die before Constantine IX, and after his death the leadership of the Byzantine Empire will be followed by Theodora between 1055-1056. Thus, the reign of the two sisters, Zoe and Theodora, marks the second and last situation in which women ruled the Byzantine Empire. Shortly before she died, Teodora, at the request of the party at the imperial court, would appoint as her successor the old patrician Mihail Stratiotikos. He ruled the Byzantine Empire from 1056-1057 as Michael VI Bringas/Stratiotikos and ascended the throne after the death of Empress Theodora in 1056.

Empress Theodora was the last ruler of the powerful Macedonian dynasty, who ruled the Byzantine Empire for one hundred and eighty-nine years 867-1056.⁶³

Since after the death of Emperor Basil II, anarchy was established, and this situation encouraged the Muslims to begin several incursions in the vicinity of Aleppo, which were crowned with several victories. The young and powerful gen-

⁶¹ Mihaïl PSELLOS, *Cronografia. Un veac de istorie bizantină*, trad. de Radu Alexandrescu. Iași, 1998, 26.

⁶² BRÈHIER, *Le monde byzantin. Vie et mort de Byzance*, 180.

⁶³ VASILIEV, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 312.

eral Georgios Maniakes will manage to rectify the situation for the Byzantines, at the beginning of the third decade of the 11th century, when he will manage to occupy Edessa. He will now be able to recover the apocryphal letter of the Savior Jesus Christ to King Abgar of Edessa.

After the conquest of Edessa by the Roman emperor III Argyros (1028-1034), he proposed a peace treaty to the Muslims, in which he established two clauses for the city of Jerusalem. In the first, he demanded the right of Christians to rebuild all their churches destroyed by Muslims, and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher had to be rebuilt at the expense of the imperial treasury. In the second clause, the king had to retain the right to appoint the patriarch of Jerusalem. Due to disagreements over several clauses in the treaty, the negotiations lasted longer. According to some opinions, the caliph would have opposed the two clauses, but in 1036, when the treaty was finalized, the emperor received the right to restore the Church of the Holy Sepulcher at his own expense.

In Sicily, although Georgios Maniakes got several victories, they did not lead to precise results. In all these campaigns in Sicily, the Byzantine fleet was accompanied by the Varangian-Russian druzhina (company), which was in the service of the Byzantine Empire. Starting in the middle of the 11th century, the Byzantine Empire will face a new enemy, the Seljuk Turks. In the next period, they will play an important role in the history of the Byzantine Empire.

Although the Byzantine Empire passed after the death of Basil II, through a period of unrest, during the Macedonian dynasty, its eastern borders reached the Euphrates, and Syria and Antioch were part of the Empire. So, this was the brightest period in the history of Byzantine relations with Eastern Muslims.⁶⁴

After these significant political and military successes and especially with the end of the Macedonian dynasty between 1025-1081, the Byzantine Empire will go through a great crisis, as the many battles for the throne will lead to the rule of Byzantine emperors who did not was at the height of the forerunners being very weak in relation to them, and the usurpations were numerous. Now the free peasantry will be ruined, and the Byzantine state has lost the world power it once had.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 320.

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