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THE ALEXIOS STOUDITES’ PATRIARCHATE (1025–1043):
A DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE IN PATRIARCHAL POWER

After the reign of Basil II (976 (985)–1025) when the church of Constantinople was in many ways subjected to the emperor’s will, the patriarchate of Alexios Stoudites (1025–1043) marked the beginning of a new period. As his influence strengthened inside the church, Alexios was able to resist many challenges from secular power. His long patriarchate made the patriarch an important and influential factor in Constantinople, which would become evident at the time of his successor.

The reign of Emperor Basil II represents one of the turning points in Byzantine history. His powerful rule, which lasted for four decades (from 985 when Basil overthrew his homonymous great uncle until 1025), was marked by the emperor’s wish to control all segments of political life. The same tendency could be observed in his policy and attitude towards the church of Constantinople. This was apparent in only few examples during his long reign. The scarce information regarding the church speaks for itself, and proves its minor influence on politics during that period. Byzantine sources mention the Constantinopolitan church and the patriarch in only a few episodes, most of which dealt with the question of allelegion.¹

The patriarchate of Constantinople lived through many ordeals in the ninth and tenth century. Because of these ordeals this highest spiritual institution underwent serious evolution. After the establishment of orthodoxy in 843, with the great patriarchs Photios, Nicholas Mystikos, Polyeuktos (to mention only the most important), the institution changed its character, gaining a more solid ideological foundation. Photios made a very important distinction between the emperor, who was completely “of this world”, and the patriarch who was consecrated through direct connection with the Saviour. Definitions from the Epanagoge meant more than a simple division of the spheres between the emperor and the patriarch. In the Epanagoge (between

879–886) the emperor was the legal ruler, while the patriarch was defined as the living image (icon) of Christ.2

Already with the son of the emperor who issued this Law, it was obvious that there was a great difference between theory (or the ideal, from the church’s point of view) and practice. Leo the Wise had to put up not only with the creator of the cited ideology, but also with Nicholas Mystikos, one of the boldest patriarchs during the Macedonians’ rule. His second patriarchate (912–925) represented the culmination of the patriarch’s political power and influence on state politics. Nicholas Mystikos had almost complete power in his hands, acting as a regent and negotiator not only with foreign rulers, like Symeon of Bulgaria, but also with domestic usurpers.3 The patriarch confirmed this somewhat awkward situation (when the patriarch was much stronger than the imperial government and the emperor himself) in the Tome of Union in 920, making young Constantine VII sign the decision that condemned his own father Leo VI.4 Moreover, at that time, the patriarch’s power over the emperor was depicted in its full significance on the Narthex Mosaic in St. Sophia in Constantinople. Situated over the main entrance for the naos, over the so-called imperial door through which the emperor (without his crown) was led by the patriarch to the altar, the famous mosaic equally symbolised the emperor’s repentance (μετάνοια) and his submission to Christ, Emperor of Emperors.

The relationship between the State and the Church, the emperor and the patriarch, and their mutual interference, passed through many, sometimes hardly noticeable phases, from the time of the vigorous battle of Nicholas Mystikos for his rights until the similar struggle of young Basil II for his inheritance more than half a century later. The balance shifted from one side to another, but the predominance of the spiritual side would never be as great as in the times of Nicholas Mystikos. Theophylactos Lekapenus and Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus represented a deviation from the examples of their fathers. Their mutual indifference toward the State and Church matters respectively, allowed the peaceful cohabitation of the two powers, regardless of the political connotation of Theophylactos’ rise to the spiritual throne at the time of his father’s domination.5 After a few decades of lifeless harmony the church had to face soldier—emperors Nikephoros Phokas and John


3 That is why almost all Byzantine historians from the tenth century mention his decisive role in the acceptance of Roman Lekapenus as the “protector” and father-in-law of Constantine Porphyrogenitus: Symeonis Magistri Annales, ed. I. Bekkerus, Bonae 1838, 726–727; Georgi Monachi Vitae imperatorum recentiorum, ed. I. Bekkerus, 1838, 886; Leonis Grammatici Chronographia, ed. I. Bekkerus, Bonae 1842, 297; Theodosii Meliteni qui fertur Chronographia, ed. T. L. F. Tafel, Monachii 1859, 211; Scyl. 207–208.


Tzimiskes. Both of them dealt with the patriarch Polyeuktos, whose political cooperation first with Phokas, and later and more important with John Tzimiskes, seriously changed the church’s position towards the emperor. In other words, the strength of the great military leaders from the east greatly surpassed the power of the church and the patriarch. Even though Polyeuktos was regarded as one of the most striking examples of the patriarch’s superiority over the emperor, his actions could convey a slightly different conclusion. The usual perception of his successes in binding emperors to his will could be seen as an inverted picture of the prelate who was a great help to both Nikephoros Phokas and John Tzimiskes. When the question arose in the capital of the spiritual kinship between Nikephoros Phokas and the empress Theophano, which-if confirmed- could have serious consequences for the new emperor, Polyeuktos accepted the false testimony, overlooking its obvious lack of confidence. John Tzimiskes, on the other hand, may have said what Leo the Deacon states he did, but the patriarch did something undoubtedly more important. Polyeuktos convened the council which applied the 12th canon from the Council of Ankyra (held before the First Ecumenical Church Council in Nicaea in 325) and concluded: *As the gift of baptism erases the sins committed before that time, regardless of their number and kind, in the same way the gift of basileia erased from Tzimiskes the sin of murder committed prior to that.* Consequently, Polyeuktos stood firmly on the emperor’s side, consecrating his imperial personality and granting him absolution for the crime he committed. The patriarch’s death (only 35 days after Tzimiskes’ coronation) prevents deeper analysis of their relations. But the emperor’s behaviour toward his successor on the throne, Basil Skamandrenos, clearly shows that the idea of “bowing one’s head” to spiritual power was not very close to the thoughts of John Tzimiskes.

Political tensions also affected the decisions of secular and spiritual power. The patriarchs of Constantinople were in most cases anything but only spiritual leaders confined to exercising power inside the church. Nicholas Mystikos was maybe the most extreme example in that sense, with his political ambitions and real secular power, but Polyeuktos also, although a monk in a truer sense than Mystikos, was not
immune from taking sides in the battles for power in the Byzantine capital. Alexios Stoudites would be no exception to the rule.

It was not a common thing for the Byzantine church to have a patriarch from the powerful Constantinopolitan monastery of the Stouarios. From the times of Theodore Stoudites in the beginning of the 9th century, the emperors were always very cautious not to surrender to the sometimes extreme demands of the leaders of the Stoudios. Their zeal, their struggle against the moderate policies of the emperors as well as the patriarchs, made them infamous both in the domains of secular and spiritual power.

Tzimiskes’ decision to choose synkellos Anthony, a monk from the Stoudios, as the successor of the exiled Basil Skamanxenos probably had deeper reasons. Some indications could lead one to conclude that Anthony III Stoudites was a supporter of Tzimiskes, but since our sources are vague and indirect, we must remain doubtful. In some sense, our sources do connect the patriarch Anthony Stoudites and his resignation with the civil war, or more precisely, with the revolt of Bardas Skleros, Tzimiskes’ brother-in-law, and a member of his political clan.

With his downfall (in June 978) at the time when Basil the parakoimomenos was ruling the Empire, the church of Constantinople entered a period full of uncertainties, and also disturbing vacancies that lasted until 1001. Internal wars in the Empire and Basil II’s great struggle with Samuel had often prevented the emperor from reacting promptly and designating a new patriarch.

The first patriarch, who was chosen by Basil II, clearly demonstrated the emperor’s intention and also his attitude: Sisinnios (II), until that time a magister known for his medical skills. It is worth observing that Sisinnios was the first layman to be installed as the patriarch of Constantinople after Photios. Political and practical need made Basil II return to old practice of appointing laymen as patriarchs, which was abandoned after Photios’ struggle with Rome for recognition. Alexios’ next two predecessors were also from the capital: Sergios II (1001–1019) and Eustathios (1019–1025). Sergios waged an unsuccessful struggle with Basil II over allelengyon throughout entire his ministry, while Eustathios was only known as a eunuch and the former head of the palace priests.

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11 De cerimoniis 433–440.
16 Yahya II (255)= 463. Theodore Skoutariotes (Sathas, MB VII) 158–159. Glyc. 579. 6. sq. ioel. loc. cit. Zonaras (558) and Scylitzes (341) identify Sergios with Photios’ nephew, onetime associate of
By the time Patriarch Eustathios died, Basil II was also on his deathbed. A little earlier, 11 months to be precise, he had designated the hegoumenos of the Stoudios monastery, Nicholas, as the new patriarch of Antioch. Nicholas was consecrated in Constantinople on 17 January 1025. According to the story, it would seem that Basil II chose and proclaimed the next hegoumenos of the powerful Stoudios-Alexios- as the Constantinopolitan patriarch almost spontaneously, during the latter’s visit to the ailing emperor in an attempt to cure him with the help of the Stoudios’ most famous relic: the head of St. John the Baptist. The legendary structure of this story is obvious, but it is nevertheless evident that the new patriarch, Alexios Stoudites, was chosen only by the emperor’s will, uncanonically and without the consent of the church synod. The emperor Basil II had cultivated, at least in the last years of his reign, very close relations with some monks from the monastery of Stoudios. Michael Glykas confirmed the ties between the emperor and the future patriarch Alexios, claiming that Basil II "to uton ka i g a re i re i khsin." The first acts of Alexios Stoudites as the patriarch of Constantinople would have the same tendency and the same aim: to protect the Macedonian dynasty.

Alexios’ visit to the dying Basil II was his first appearance on the historical scene. Nothing is known of his lineage, his background, parental relations or his life prior to January 1025 when he became hegoumenos of the famous Stoudios. He had governed the monastery for almost 11 months at the time when he was made patriarch of Constantinople, by the order and the last wish of Basil II. In the last year of his reign, Basil II thus appointed two successive leaders of the Stoudios monastery patriarchs of Antioch and Constantinople. The emperor’s inclination toward the Stoudios may have had deeper reasons, which are unfortunately unknown due to the silence of Byzantine sources. The same silence shrouds not only the personality of Alexios Stoudites, but also much of his long patriarchate, with the exception of few episodes that have attracted the attention of historians. The same applied to the attitudes of modern scholars and their opinions about Alexios. The prevailing opinion was that Alexios Stoudites as a prelate was committed only to accumulating enormous wealth. This was the accepted view and it was repeated through the years, re-

17 Yahya III, (103)= 471.
19 Glyc. 579. 15–16.
20 The switch of stability from the imperial institution to the patriarchal after Basil II’s reign was underlined a few decades ago (Lemerle, Cinq études, 259. Cf. Dagron, Empereur et prêtre, 244). The emperor Basil II had to work with five patriarchs (including Anthony III Stoudites, December 973–June 978), of which he personally appointed four. Alexios Stoudites, whom he nominated almost on his deathbed, had held his patriarchal see during the reigns of five emperors (1025–1043): Basil II, Constantine VIII, Roman III Argyros, Michael IV, Michael V and Constantine IX Monomachos, not counting Constantine VIII’s daughters Zoe and Theodora.
cently again with stress on Alexios’ moral faiblesse.\textsuperscript{21} Alexios Stoudites was in that way clearly distinguished from his co-ministers at the time: Keroularios, Lichoudis and Xiphilinos.\textsuperscript{22}

Alexios’ first act is important for understanding his position, maybe even his personal views. It also showed very clearly that the situation in the Empire had changed completely after the death of Basil II. The Macedonian dynasty “suddenly” found itself in a difficult position. Without a male successor, Constantine VIII did not feel secure not only regarding the future of his family, but even then. It was in this set of circumstances that the emperor sought and received the support of Alexios Stoudites. In July 1026, with the synod, the patriarch issued the Tome (τὸμος συνοδικός), threatening to cast an anathema on all who rebelled against the emperor, or incited the emperor’s subjects to rebel against their ruler.\textsuperscript{23} The beginning of the reign of Constantine VIII was marked by the replacement of many old, high-ranking officials with the favourites of the new emperor. The reaction against the methods and preferences of the new government could have been one of the reasons requiring such an act.\textsuperscript{24} With his first move, Alexios had put himself in the position of a defender of the emperor and indirectly, of the dynasty. The Synergeia between secular and spiritual power had been already evident under Basil II, but in those times not much manoeuvring space was left to the patriarchs. Basil II exercised his will with the same force and determination in church matters as he did in matters of war.\textsuperscript{25} Cooperation between Constantine VIII and Alexios Stoudites, in that sense, was a clear sign of the patriarch and the church’s support for the new regime. The relation itself, between the head of the church and the head of the state, entered a new phase after Basil II’s death: with Constantine VIII, the emperors again became ready to make concessions to the church. Allelengyon was still a heavy burden for the church, and although Constantine VIII intended to abandon it, it was not until the beginning of the reign of Roman III Argyros, that Alexios Stoudites proved that he had not forgotten the great struggle of Patriarch Sergios II for its abolishment.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{22} Cheynet, Pouvoir, 314. Cf. P. Magdalino, The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos (1143–1180), Cambridge 1993, 267, who had included Alexios Stoudites among the “strong patriarchs of this period” together with Keroularios, Leichoudes and Xiphilinos, although, he added, they “were strong only in comparison with contemporary emperors”. G. G. Litavrin was of the same opinion in Sovety i rasskazi Kekavmena, Moskva 1972, 488, note 737, although he claimed that the patriarch’s power was strengthened during the time of Alexios Stoudites in Litavrin, Vosstanie, 37.
\textsuperscript{23} Jus I, 273–274 = \textit{Ralles – Potles} III, 103.
\textsuperscript{24} Cf. Scyl. 370 sq. Cheynet, Pouvoir, 38–41.
\textsuperscript{25} Leo of Synada wrote a sarcastic commentary on the “influence” of metropolitans and archbishops on the elections of patriarchs, Darrouzès, Épistoliers, 209 (= edition by M. P. Vinson, The Correspondance of Leo Metropolitan of Synada, Washington 1985, 86).
\textsuperscript{26} It is interesting that Yahya from Antioch ascribed the abandoning of allelengyon to Constantine VIII, Yahya, III, (115)= 483, and that Skylitzes, 375, 54–55, also claimed that Constantine intended to abandon allelengyon but he did not have the time (οὐκ ἐφώθα αὐτῷ δεό). The same formulation, Ioel. (note 15) 61. 9.
The next political act of Alexios Studites was guided by the same intention as his previous move. It was the patriarch’s approval for the marriage between Constantine VIII’s daughter Zoe and the future emperor Roman Argyros, a decision which was very important for the Macedonian’s heritage. In that way the heir to the throne was secured only few days before the death of Constantine VIII.

During the reign of Basil II the church of Constantinople was in one sense defeated by secular power, but at the same time, the patriarch had the chance to strengthen his position within the church. Basil II’s goal was not to weaken the Patriarch or the church of Constantinople, but to keep them away from secular politics. In a way, this stance helped the patriarchs to overcome the centrifugal tendencies in the church, that had been gaining ground especially since the patriarchate of Theophylactos (933–956). In reality the separate life of the church and the state was confirmed in Basil II’s reign, the only difference being that the emperor’s will prevailed in both spheres. Basil II’s attempt to obtain formal verification from Rome that the church of Constantinople was ecumenical in its sphere was a clear sign that secular power needed a strong and influential but, at the same time, obedient church by its side.

Alexios Stoudites was very skilful in playing by the new rules, pragmatic in his actions and cautious toward secular power. The new patriarch’s abilities were visible from the very beginning of his ministry, during the reign of Constantine VIII. In less than two years he became the patriarch, Alexios had secured the support of the most important metropolitans in the Constantinopolitan church. The most prominent among them at that time was Kyriakos of Ephesus, a relative of Alexios Stoudites. He was the first after the patriarch, to sign the synodical decisions in November 1027 and January 1028. He was joined in this second act by Alexios’ later opponent, Demetrios of Kyzikos, who signed after him. By the time ο κραταρίος κόλ αγίων ἡμῶν βασιλεὺς ο Πορφυρογέννητος Constantine VIII died, Alexios had already secured his position within the church.

Alexios Stoudites knew Roman Argyros well. The former eparchos of Constantinople was named Caesar by Constantine VIII, and he was also the oikonomos of the Great Church. From the very beginning of his reign, it was clear that the new balance between the two powers was cemented. Roman III felt that he had to make

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27 Scyl. 374–375. Zon. III, 573–574. Grumel – Darrouzés, Regestes 343–344, no. 836. Yahya III, (119) = 487, says that Alexios gave permission to Constantine VIII and Roman Argyros to dismiss the latter’s wife, therefore creating the possibility for a marriage between Zoe and Roman, a marriage that was “to bring peace to the Empire and destroy the ambitions of those who planned to fight for power after Constantine’s death.”


30 Ralles – Potles V, 24 (November 1027), 32 (January 1028). The absence of Demetrios of Kyzikos from the first synod could suggest that this associate of Roman Argyros was made a metropolitan between the two events: between November 1027 and January 1028.

31 Ralles – Potles V, 29.
some concessions to the church, and to act in concordance with the patriarch. His renunciation of the *allelengyon*, the tax that had reduced the church and bishops to “poverty” in a quarter of a century, as well as the alleviation of some other payments, in a way signified the victory of spiritual power over the emperor. And finally, it became evident with the accession of Roman Argyros that the imperial institution itself had lost something of its power. The new emperors now had to seek the patriarch and the church’s support.

It was an old political principle in Byzantium, pursued by patriarchs and emperors alike: to install their supporters in important posts, so that they could be of assistance if the need arose. In the church of Constantinople it was a common thing: Photios with Gregorios Azvestas; Nicholas Mystikos with Arethas; Theophylactos, Polyeuktos or Constantine VII, they all tried to promote their supporters. Roman Argyros and Alexios Stoudites acted in concord when the emperor “rewarded” three metropolitans with the prestigious title of *synkellos*. Their relations with the emperor and the patriarch speak for themselves: Demetrios of Kyzikos was a very close friend and associate of Roman Argyros even before he became emperor; Michael of Euchaita was Roman’s relative, while Kyriakos of Ephesus was the relative of Patriarch Alexios. John Skylitzes mentions the emperor’s appointments in a summarized introduction to Roman’s good deeds, but the real consequence became obvious only a few years later: adorned with new titles, the three metropolitans rose in the hierarchy of the Constantinopolitan church. They were the first to sign the decisions of the church synods, thus confirming their importance both for the patriarch and the emperor. Their conduct in the near future was, at the same time, a good example of the increasing importance of *solidarity by blood* in Byzantium in the 11th century. Demetrios of Kyzikos was the first to change sides after the death of Roman Argyros — only three years later to be seen as the closest associate of the new *master* of the Empire, John Orphanotrophos.

Obviously on good terms with Roman Argyros, Alexios remained out of sight for Byzantine historians until the end of the former’s rule. It was only on the eve of Roman’s death (11 April 1034) that the patriarch was summoned to the Palace by the empress Zoe and John Orphanotrophos. There he was confronted with their order to marry the latter’s brother, Michael Paphlagonian, and Zoe. The story, as told by our sources, contains four major events:

1) Zoe and John Orphanotrophos had been poisoning Roman Argyros for some time making him weak and sick; 2) Michael and John’s men drowned or half-drowned Roman in the bath in the palace; 3) The empress Zoe, hastened to make Michael emperor — she placed the crown on his head, gave him the imperial *insigniae*, and seated him on a throne beside her; 4) On the same night, as confirmation of the *status novus*, the patriarch, Alexios Stoudites,

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32 Zon. III, 573–574. Scyl. 375. 44. sq.
33 Scyl. 375. 58–62.
34 Ficker, Erlass, 18–19; 25–26; 42 from 1039, where Michael of Euchaita is absent (but it is the shorter list).
married Michael and Zoe. Every historian has his peculiarities. Psellos does not mention the patriarch at all, not even in an allusion, thus indicating his insignificance in the palace revolution. Skylitzes goes to the other extreme. In his account, the patriarch Alexios Stoudites was summoned to the palace by Roman Argyros. It was when the patriarch arrived in the Imperial Bath that he realized that the emperor who had sent for him was dead. In that moment of confusion, as he stood in bewilderment, the empress Zoe asked him to marry her to Michael. Alexios began to have second thoughts about the empress’ order, until John and Zoe persuaded him to change his mind with a huge gift of gold (50 liters of gold for the patriarch and the same sum for clergy). Zonaras’ report stands in the middle of them. According to him, the events took place in a less dramatic atmosphere, and Alexios, summoned in the night hours when Michael was already “crowned” by Zoe, only confirmed what had already been done. The discrepancies between the versions are much more evident if compared with their uniform account of the causes of Roman’s death. The same elements are found in all their reports (the first two events mentioned above) as well as their common doubt as to whether the information about poisoning was correct. The lively account of John Skylitzes was accepted almost unanimously, especially his data about the patriarch’s greed and his willingness to cast away moral principles when confronted with a great sum of gold, providing a basis for the overall judgment of Alexios. Skylitzes’ addition to the basic story cannot be confirmed, or completely rejected for that matter, especially since his Synopsis contains many similar examples with unique data. The complete silence of Michael Psellos may be a sign that more attention is needed in reading John Skylitzes, since Psellos did not use that opportunity to comment on Alexios’ (mis)behaviour, which he did with great irony in a similar situation, in his description of another palace wedding in 1042. This could mean that Psellos, usually well informed about events inside the palace, had no knowledge of the gift to the patriarch Alexios. On the other hand, Psellos is famous for his ability to avoid naming the actors of events. Still, the inaccuracy of Skylitzes’ story cannot be verified only by Psellos’ silence. It may be worth noting that both Skylitzes and Zonaras mention that the patriarch Alexios had about 25 kentinaria of gold placed in the treasury in his monastery, while the latter did not refer to Zoe and Orphanotrophos’ gift to the patriarch.


37 Glykas’ story is almost identical to the one told by Skylitzes, but he adds that Alexios was called to the palace “διαθέει” by Roman, loc. cit. in note 35.

38 The exemption is Skabalanović, 368 sq., followed by Anastos, op. cit., 29, who suspected that it might have been the usual gift of 100 liters of gold, made by the newly crowned emperor to the patriarch and the Great Church.

39 Only few examples (excluding additions by the later hands, e. g. Michael, bishop of Devol): 17. 74 sq.; 208. 40–41; 226. 26. sq.; 244. 89. sq; 245. 21. sq.; 311. 74. sq.; 340. 4. sq. 400. 29–31.

The relations between Alexios Stoudites and the new regime that was established in 1034, represented first of all in the powerful personality of the emperor’s brother, John Orphanotrophos, were soon to become very strained and strange. Orphanotrophos showed that he had learned a lot from the political ways of the former emperor Roman Argyros. As he had promoted his political associates and relatives to the rank of metropolitans and granted them lofty titles, John Orphanotrophos and his brother Michael did the same. One aspect of their family policy was a plan to take spiritual power into their hands. As a start, the brothers chose their relative, the eunuch Anthony as the new metropolitan of Nicomedia, whom Skylitzes described as being dumb as an ox. In the first three years of the Paphlagonians’ rule, they also designated the new metropolitan of Thessalonica and Leon as the archbishop of Bulgaria. And then in the middle of 1037, they felt that their influence in the church was great enough to challenge the patriarch Alexios Stoudites himself. The main charge against Alexios was his uncanonical election as patriarch, by the will and order of the emperor Basil II. John managed to gain the support of the influential metropolitan Demetrios of Kyzikos, an associate of the late Roman Argyros. Among others, the newly elected metropolitan and a member of Paphlagonian clan, Anthony of Nicomedia came second. With their help the “rebellion” began of the bishops against the patriarch, incited by Orphanotrophos, who was consumed by a great passion to attain the highest spiritual office. Alexios’ response is a testimony per se of the political climate of that period, of the bitter struggle for power in the highest circles in Constantinople, both secular and spiritual. It shows, also, that the power of the patriarch was established more firmly inside his church, although some “disloyal” bishops had decided to side with secular power. The patriarch, Alexios Stoudites, did not try to defend himself from the charges. On the contrary, he threatened not only the rebellious metropolitans but secular power as well, using the simple argument: if he had uncanonically held his see for eleven years and a half, then all the metropolitans he had installed had to be anathemised; and not only them, but three emperors who were crowned by him as well, including the ruling Michael IV. John Orphanotrophos had underestimated Patriarch Alexios Stoudites, and his power and influence within the church of Constantinople. His defeat by the patriarch was evident, but it seems that the consequences for the rebels were not so serious. The most prominent opponent of Alexios Stoudites among the metropolitans, Demetrios of Kyzikos, remained in office, and his signature is found on the decision of the synod presided over by the patriarch himself. The circumstance that Demetrios on that act of September 1039 was no longer oikonomos of the Great Church and that his name was signed after Kyriakos of Ephesus who was a relative of the patriarch Alexios, could be confirmation of his degradation after the unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the patriarch. This is unique, if indirect, proof of the

41 Scyl. 400. 29–31.
42 Ibid. 400. 32–38; 402. 81–85.
43 Zon. III, 594.
44 Scyl. 401. 73–77. Cf. Zon. III, 594, who is not mentioning emperors at all.
45 Ficker, Erlasse, 42.
consequences suffered by Alexios’ opponents. The lack of information prevents more reliable conclusions, but it was clear that the secular power and the patriarch continued to develop a certain parallel life. It could be described as a specific condition in which the patriarch avoided interfering more openly in political matters, while securing his rule in the church. Alexios’ ability to confront John Orphanotrophos and to win eventually, confirms that specific power that the patriarch and the whole spiritual institution had gained since the death of Basil II, i.e. under Alexios Stoudites himself. The patriarch was still not able to influence or decide by himself on the candidates for metropolitans and bishops, but his influence had increased significantly in the capital. After the time of Basil II, the patriarch again began to be looked upon as an important factor in Constantinople. The successful defence of the patriarchal throne was a sign that Alexios Stoudites had made good use of his long ministry. For, if secular power had prevailed on that occasion, it would certainly not be possible for the patriarch to play any part in the events of 1042 or 1057, nor would the great ambition of Michael Keroularios be imaginable. With John Orphanotrophos as the patriarch of the New Rome, the history of the supreme spiritual institution would have taken a completely different direction.

Relations between secular and spiritual power, or rather between their leaders, were not as simple as can be deduced from the reports by Byzantine historians. It was a mixture of cooperation and strife that allowed for cohabitation, if not the symphony of two powers as imagined by Photios and others. After the great challenge of 1037, the patriarch, Alexios Stoudites, remained in office. Orphanotrophos himself, since he could not overthrow Alexios, needed his help or support in various situations that required the patriarch’s acquiescence. After the death of the emperor, Michael IV, his already designated heir, the future Michael V, had to be confirmed as the emperor at a coronation performed by the patriarch. Alexios Stoudites crowned another member of the Paphlagonian family on 11 December 1041, thus finalizing the already prepared plan of John Orphanotrophos.

By the time Michael V Kalaphates became basileus, Alexios Stoudites had already built his monastery, somewhere on the shores of Bosphorus, possibly on its European side.46 His influence in the capital, relations and circle of supporters are not easy to discern, especially when compared with their inconspicuous appearance under his successor, Michael Keroularios. Alexios Stoudites had no known relatives aside from Kyriakos, whom he made metropolitan of Ephesus. But the importance of the patriarch had become evident in the events of April 1042. No sooner had he established himself on the imperial throne, Michael V hurried to get rid of all the influential or possible dangerous persons in his vicinity: in the first place his uncle John Orphanotrophos, and then the empress Zoe. There is no doubt that the patriarch, Alexios Stoudites, took the side of his opponents. The details, though, are still not completely clarified, due to the usual discrepancies in the sources; and, in the first place, due to the unique and peculiar

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46 Scyl. 418. Only Theodore Skoutariotes in Sathas, MB VII, 162. 26–28. mentions the “other side”, τὸ Πέραν, which could simply be the European side, Pera in the usual sense.
Concerning the role and position of Alexios Stoudites, few questions present difficulties: had Michael V really planned to exile the patriarch; was Alexios one of the rebels’ leaders against the emperor; did he crown Theodora under pressure from the “pro-Theodora” party, the members of which were experienced “servants” of her father; did the patriarch play any role in the escape of Michael V and his uncle (πατρόθεοιος), the nobelissimos Constantine to the Stoudios monastery or in their being dragged from the altar of its Prodromos’ church?

John Skylitzes is the only Byzantine historian whose report of Constantinopolitan revolt mentions the patriarch Alexios in its earliest phase. He says that Michael V, planning to exile Zoe and still weighing all the consequences of that act, sent Alexios Stoudites to his monastery ἐν τῷ Στένῳ so that the patriarch could organize a reception for him there, thus confirming his imperial status. For that occasion, he rewarded Alexios Stoudites with 4 liters of gold, which is the second time that Skylitzes mentions imperial gifts to the patriarch. In the meantime, Skylitzes goes on to record that Michael V had exiled Zoe, ordered her guards to make her a nun, and send him her hair as proof. The very next day, Michael V had his order publicly read on the Forum of Constantine. In it, the emperor announced that Zoe has been sent into exile because she had conspired against him, and the patriarch was “expelled from the church” (Scyl. 418. 20–22) because he had helped the empress. Psellos, Zonaras and Attaliates, who all mention Michael V’s order read at the Forum in a similar manner, did not know about the exile of Alexios Stoudites, or any other of his activities by that time. Skylitzes’ strange story would suggest a much greater role of Alexios Stoudites than any other Byzantine source, almost as important as the one given to the patriarch by the Arab writer Ibn al Athir, according to whose report Alexios himself had started the revolt. For, Skylitzes tells that the patriarch was back in the Great Church that very day when the emperor’s order was read. Attaliates confirms that Alexios was in St. Sophia, while Zonaras and Psellos do not name the patriarch. One Short Chronicle reports that the patriarch was in the Great Church, but supplies interesting details, much of a different sort: the patriarch Alexios Stoudites was forced, on pain of death, to come down from his hiding place in the Great Church and to crown Theodora. The description of the anonymous


49 He claims that Alexios Stoudites went to “some” monastery near or “behind” Constantinople to prepare a reception for the emperor. But Michael had another plan, since he wanted to “free himself from the patriarch’s power”, in the moment when he had already exiled the empress Zoe. So he sent some Russian and Bulgarian troops to kill Alexios in that monastery. But the patriarch paid for his life, and started a rebellion against the emperor, V. R. Rozen, Imperator Vasilij Bolgaroboica, 330. (= Aristakes (note 47), 41, translation by M. Canard of Rozen’s translation).

50 Zon. III, 611. 15–612. 1, says that those from the Church (αὐτῶν τῆς ἐκκλησίας) also took part in the proclamation of Theodora as empress.

51 Kleinchroniken 1, 166, no. 16/12. The only known report of the Dysphemia against the patriarch, cf. Commentary of its editor P. Schreiner, Kleinchroniken 2 (note 36), 4.
writer of the Short Chronicle has much in common with John Skylitzes’ narration of the events that happened 15 years later, when the patriarch, Michael Keroularios, was hiding in the *labyrinths* of St. Sophia. The message is the same in both cases: the patriarchs of Constantinople had established themselves as a powerful factor in the capital, where “everything was happening.” The patriarch’s “domain”, St. Sophia, had become a customary meeting place of different *conspirators*: from those in 1042, the rebellious military leaders in 1057, to the semi-official meeting of Botaniates’ supporters in 1078 under the patriarch, Cosmas I.

In any way, Alexios Stoudites participated actively in Theodora’s *anagoreusis* (and probably crowned her), and maybe even in the decision to bring the youngest daughter of Constantine VIII from the Petron monastery. The role of the members of the highest circles in the Empire is underlined, but the dilemma still remains as to whether Alexios Stoudites really gave precedence to Theodora over Zoe, or the confrontation was greater between the empress Zoe and the suppressed servants of her father. Attaliates, whose account of the events is summarised but thorough, says that the rebels who came into the Great Church, asked Alexios not to overlook the unjust treatment of Zoe by Michael V. They received great help from the patriarch himself, which was enough for Attaliates to praise the patriarch and name Alexios Stoudites for the first — and the last time — in his History. That fact is not without significance, since the other writer from the *eleventh century*, Michael Psellos, did not name the patriarch, nor even mention this dignitary! Alexios Stoudites had to wait for the strange circumstances that followed the wedding of Constantine Monomachos and Zoe to “deserve” to be named by Psellos in his Chronography.

The patriarch’s role was evident in guarding Theodora in St. Sophia, where she stayed overnight, even after Zoe returned in the Imperial Palace and Michael V escaped to the Stoudios. Whether he demonstrated in that way which of the sisters was his favourite is difficult to tell, since Theodora is only seen surrounded by former associates of her father. The tension between the imperial sisters, or rather their supporters, was seen in its full measure when Theodora (Theodora’s side!) insisted that Michael V be blinded. Zonaras tried to explain the situation in all its complexity: Theodora, or rather those around her, feared that Zoe could ask Michael V to return, thus preventing the division of power with Theodora as co-ruler. That is why no one from the monks’ community in that monastery did anything to calm down the desperate cries of the former emperor and his uncle in the moment when they were

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52 Scyl. 498.
53 *Lemerle*, Cinq études, 258.
55 Attal. 16. 4., who, it seems, suggests a more active part played by the “people” and the patriarch.
56 *Litavrin*, Vostanie, 36 sq., thought that Alexios was openly on Theodora’s side and against Zoe. According to him, that was the reason why the patriarch later hesitated to crown Zoe and Monomachos, which cannot be confirmed in sources.
57 *Zon.*, III, 612. 8. sq. Glyc. 592, confirms Zoe’s inclination toward Michael V, ascribing a much greater role to the “people” (ο* λαός*, in this case the people rather than the army) of Constantinople. Cf. Kleinchroniken 1, 166/ no. 16/12.
dragged ὧς θηρες from the church in which they took refuge. The occasion that the patriarch and one of Michael V’s opponents was a former monk and the hegoumenos of the Studios monastery, could only encourage the passivity or the acceptance of Theodora’s orders by the monks, although there are no indications that Alexios Stoudites used his influence in his former monastery.

The perception and the explanation of the patriarch’s importance in the revolt of April 1042 in the works of 11th century Byzantine historians (Michael Psellos and Michael Attaliates) in a way is similar to their description of Keroularios’ role in the overthrow of Michael VI. The situation was different, as were the personalities of the two prelates, but the historians showed the same caution in describing the behaviour of Alexios Stoudites and Michael Keroularios. According to Psellos’ report on the events of 1042, the whole decor is there: St. Sophia, Theodora who was euphimized, the honorable elite of Constantinople, but the patriarch is missing. Attaliates connected Alexios both to Zoe and Theodora, but in their descriptions of the events from 1057 they were both reluctant to name Keroularios as the leader of the rebellion in favour of Isaac Comnenus. For Psellos it could only be a matter of style, his intentional preference for evasive narration. Attaliates’ less detailed report also reflects some doubts about the role and the position of Michael Keroularios, and both of them were far from naming him as being the “most responsible” (προταίτως) for the revolt, as Skylitzes did. Psellos’ inclination toward unclear exposition leaves some doubts in the interpretation of his allusions. Always rather inclined to playing with words, he did the same thing in the oration offered to Constantine IX Monomachos, when in describing the revolt of 1042, he said that Michael V in the end, had to bow his head to the priest (τῶν ἱερεί). Whether was he alluding to the patriarch Alexios Stoudites, somebody from the Studios monastery, or he was referring to Michael’s new status, cannot be answered with certainty.

John Skylitzes is, thus, the only source that claims that the emperor Michael V had planned the overthrow of Alexios Stoudites and had acted in that way. The reason given, that the emperor felt insecure and suspected the patriarch helping possibly the “legal” empress is not sufficient. Alexios had crowned him, and there is no evidence that the patriarch had attempted or actually done anything against his government before the revolt of April 1042. If Michael V had actually tried to exile the patriarch Alexios, contemporary Byzantine writers would not have considered his action important enough. Following Skylitzes’ account closely, it would appear that Michael V’s order that was read on the Forum of Constantine occurred later than

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58 Psellos claims that he was an eye-witness to that situation, Psello, Cronografia, I, 236 (ed. R. I, 113).
some action by the patriarch Alexios, since it was in its true sense a charge of betrayal (καθοσιωση). By that time, though, the rebellion had not yet started, so the obvious chronological discrepancy remains.

The patriarch Alexios Stoudites last appeared on the wedding day of the empress Zoe and Constantine Monomachos (11 June 1042) and the day after. Constantine Monomachos — onetime rebel against Michael IV and John Orphanotrophos — was “elected” by Zoe as her new husband and emperor. Another bride-groom for the empress, and another plea for the patriarch’s help. Similar to the occasions of the previous two marriages, Zoe needed at least the patriarch’s tacit approval of her wishes. Alexios was expected to overlook the hard evidence: the planned marriage was to be the third union not only for Zoe, but also for Constantine Monomachos. In other words, the empress Zoe expected him to apply the famous Byzantine principle of oikonomia. Since it was an important matter, the transgression of the canonical laws could be justified in that way. Just as in 1028, when he gave permission for Zoe’s marriage with Roman Argyros, or in 1034, when he had granted the empress’ wish and blessed her union with Michael Paphlagonian, so did Alexios obey her will in 1042. The way in which the whole arrangement was made sheds full light on the character of Alexios Stoudites: his pragmatic way of thinking, his readiness to play along with secular power, combined with a determination to secure his own position at the same time. Since he was well aware of the circumstances that forbade the planned marriage, he decided to stand aside, and let things happen, as it were without his knowledge: the marriage was celebrated in the Nea, the palace church built by Basil I Macedonian, and the ceremony was performed by its priest, Stypes.62 In that way, by avoiding a formal objection, the patriarch was ready to “accept” the newly weds, and to crown Constantine Monomachos as the emperor of the Romans the very next day. He attributed the decision of Monomachos’ rise to God himself, thus providing a much needed explanation and pretext for a deed that was in defiance of canonical law. Naturally, his reasons were no secret at all, since it was obvious that it was the mere acceptance of Zoe’s wish. Only literary pretentiousness led Michael Psellos to state that he was not sure whether “this (sc. marriage and coronation) was done in accordance with priestly tradition, or was a bit of flattery and done to suit the occasion”.63 Maybe it is more important that this was the first time that Psellos named the patriarch Alexios in his historical work. This fact indicates the author’s perception of the patriarch’s importance and influence, not forgetting all the peculiar tendencies that are evident in his Chronographia. Nevertheless, it is interesting that no explanation was offered by Patriarch Alexios Stoudites for his consenting to the third marriage of the imperial bride and groom and, that he considered it sufficient for another priest to perform the marriage. He himself did not feel the need to

63 Psello, Cronografia I, 266 (ed. R. I, 127) (Translation E. R. A. Sewter). Cf. Kleinchroniken 1, 167, no. 16/14, which confirms that the patriarch Alexios crowned Constantine IX.
explain his application of oikonomia at some “higher” level, nor was the question raised by any other factor in Constantinople.64

Eight months after the wedding of Zoe and Constantine Monomachos, and the latter’s coronation, the patriarch Alexios Stoudites died on 20 February 1043. “Michael Keroularios replaced him on his throne”, wrote John Skylitzes interpreting the succession of the church leader.65 Almost two decades of Alexios’ patriarchate left an important mark not only on the institution itself, but also on the common perception of the patriarch. Sergios II, for example, had governed the church for an equal time (1001–1019), but his influence was overshadowed by the strong will of the emperor Basil II. Alexios Stoudites managed to remain on the throne until his death in very difficult times, and not without challenges from secular power. His authority is clearly noticeable in the fact (although mentioned only by historians of the next century, Skylitzes and Zonaras) that he was able to collect 25 kentinaria of gold in the monastery he had built.66 This is the only case in the post-iconoclastic period that a patriarch became famous for his wealth. Meanwhile, like many of his predecessors, he built a monastery, in that way continuing the specific patriarchal tradition. Although a monk from the prestigious and powerful Stoudios, Alexios had chosen to build a new monastery, confirming by his example a growing sense of individuality in the Byzantine empire.

With Alexios’ patriarchate the church of Constantinople emerged from its uncertain, “dark” period, which had lasted from the time of Anthony III Stoudites, after whose resignation in June 978 it began. The great change that occured in the 11th century, especially after the death of Basil II, the new strength of the Empire that believed it had conquered all its enemies, in a way supported the patriarch’s growing influence. Since everything gravitated towards Constantinople, the patriarch(s) had more scope for manoeuvring, more opportunities for strengthening their own political position. Alexios was the herald of new times: a monk, but a very influential one, wealthy, from the capital (at least some time before his election) and with no lack of fighting spirit or cunning for that matter. He had a good and pragmatic political sense, which he demonstrated in all troublesome situations during his 18 years in office, from the anathema cast on all potential rebels against the emperor, to the (ab)solution of the crisis in 1042. In another sense, he also showed the potentials of the patriarchal institution and the respective ideology, announcing the path which the church of Constantinople could take under some more ambitious patriarch. His resistance to secular power could have been one example for Michael Keroularios, who remained a layman under his monks’ robe. Alexios’ role in the revolt against Michael V (regardless of all the circumstances), and the importance that the Great

64 Including Theodora, who certainly had lost her influence after her sister’s decision to take another husband.
65 Scyl. 429. 18–20.
66 Which the emperor Constantine Monomachos took from the monastery after his death, Scyl. 429. 20–24. Zon. III, 624. 11–14.
Church gained in those events as a specific counter-weight to the imperial palace, could have been another. The patriarch gathered the opponents of Michael V in St. Sophia less than a year before Keroularios acceded to the spiritual throne himself. And last, but not least, the patriarch’s importance in the “legitimisation” of the new emperor by the act of crowning him was emphasised during Alexios’ patriarchate, even if he himself did not have the political strength, courage, ambition or interest to directly defy secular power. All these elements helped to establish a certain parallelism between the two powers, which enabled Keroularios to proceode with his unprecedented act, the great boldness of his.67 Alexios’ long rule enabled the new development of the patriarchate of Constantinople. By strengthening his position within the church in the first place, Alexios had managed to gain more power in both spheres, spiritual and secular. His reliance on relatives was but an intimation of the great family policy that would be conducted by Keroularios.68

Like his predecessors on the patriarchal throne, but unlike his successor Michael Keroularios, Alexios Stoudites was left without an Encomium or Epitafios Logos, or some other form of official eulogy. The judgement of Michael Psellus about the patriarch Alexios is, therefore, of great importance, especially since the hypatos of philosophers did not pay much attention to events in the church. In his Chronography he left aside almost the entire story about Keroularios’ usurpation and rebellion against Isaac Comnenus, but had found it appropriate to refer to the deceased Alexios as “the divine”.69 Psellus was famous for his ability to introduce intensional criticism even in a eulogy, by comparing his hero to another one, who was always more positive.70 He did the same in the Epitafios Logos of Michael Keroularios, emphasizing his brother’s virtues. In this same text one also finds the only known, if short, eulogy of Alexios Stoudites.71 Whether Psellus’ intention was to compare the two archpriests, and by comparing them to give the precedence to Alexios Stoudites, or whether the short eulogy was the expression of his real emotions, thoughts and perceptions of Alexios, is hard to discern. Be that as it may, the eulogy of the patriarch Alexios Stoudites from the pen of the most learned and one of the most influential men in Constantinople is, without doubt, a confirmation of his importance and his reputation in the capital. According to Psellus, Alexios, “the luminary of the church”, had long since ceased to be concerned about his “body” and earthly things. In his earthly life, he had depicted an image of “heaven on earth”, but he shone like the sun in his new, spiritual existence.

68 Cheynet, op. cit., 4–5.
71 Sathas, MB IV, 326.
ABBREVIATIONS

Attal | Michaelis Attaliota Historia, ed. I. Bekkerus, Bonnæ 1853
Cheynet, Pouvoir | J.-C. Cheynet, Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963–1206), Paris 1996
Dagron, Empereur et prêtre | G. Dagron, Empereur et prêtre. Étude sur le “césaropapisme” byzantin, Paris 1996
Darrouzès, Épistoliers | J. Darrouzès, Épistoliers byzantin du Xe siècle, Paris 1960
De cerimoniis | De cerimoniis aulae Byzantinae, ed. I. Iac. Reiske, Bonnæ 1829
Ficker, Erlasse | G. Ficker, Erlasse des Patriarchen von Konstantinopel Alexios Studites, Festschrift der Universität Kiel, Kiel 1911
Glyc | Michaelis Glycae Annales, ed. I. Bekkerus, Bonnæ 1836
Kleinchroniken I | P. Schreiner, Die byzantinische Kleinchroniken 1, Wien 1975
Lemerle, Cinq études | P. Lemerle, Cinq études sur le Xle siècle byzantin, Paris 1977
Leon. Diac | Leonis Diaconis Caloensis Historiae, ed. C. B. Hase, Bonnæ 1828
Litavrin, Vosstanie | G. G. Litavrin, Vosstanie v Konstantinopole v aprele 1042 г., VV 33 (1972) 33–47
Sathas, MB | K. N. Sathas, Μεσαιωνική βιβλιοθήκη, IV, VII, Paris 1874, 1894
Skabalanović | N. Skabalanović, Vizantiskoe gosudarstvo i cerkva v XI vekе. S.-Peterburg 1884
Zon. III | Ioannis Zonarae Epitomæ Historiarum, III, ed. Th. Büttner-Wobst, Bonnæ 1847

Влада Станковић

ПАТРИЈАРХ АЛЕКСИЈА СТУДИТА (1025–1043):
ПОЧЕТАК ПОРАСТА ПАТРИЈАΡШИЈСКЕ МОЂИ

Патријарх Алексије Студит обележава крај једног и почетак новог добра у историји цариградске патријаршије. Његово стupaње на патријаршијски трон временски се подудара са једном од великих прекретница византијске историје — смеђу Василија II, цара који је за четири деценије своје строге владавине потп...
пунотиснуо утицај престоничке цркве и њеног првосвештенника на световну политику. Доведен за патријарха вољом цара Василија II у његовим самртним моментима и без иакакве одлуке синода или мишљења цркве уопште, Алексије Студит је до краја живота остао веран Македонској династији, односно њеним последњим представницима: цару Константину VIII и његовим ђеркама Зоји и Теодори.

С друге стране, суочен са укупним променама које су захватали Царство нестанком снажног владара какав је био Василије II, Алексије Студит је успео да оснажи власт патријарха унутар цркве а тиме и повећа његов утицај и моћ у престоници и у политичким односима. Његови односи са световним властодржцима кретали су се у распону од најнепосредније сарадње, какав је био случај са Константином VIII и касније Романом III Аргиrom, до отвореног сукоба половином 1037. године са најмоћнијим човеком у држави, Јованом Орфанотрофом. Овај последњи, вођен жељом да сам заузме патријаршијски трон, организовао је „побуну“ митрополита против патријарха Алексија и покушај његовог збацивања. Снага самог Алексија Студита али и моћ коју је цариградски патријарх задобио у промењеним друштвеним околностима за време његовог управљања црквом, омогућили су му да се отворено супротстави Орфанотрофу и његовом брату цару Михаилу IV и да изађе као победник из борбе са световном влашћу — на сличан начин као што је тек нешто касније, априла 1042, био отворен на страни последњих потомака династије Македонаца, Зоје и Теодоре, а против цара Михаила V Калфата.

Алексије Студит је био весник новог доба, доба у коме ће се његов наследник на духовном трону Михаило Керуларије осетити моћнијим и од самог василевса. За осамнаест година управљања црквом Алексије Студит је указао на пут којим ће престоничка патријаршија ићи у наредним годинама: од ослањања на рођаке, преко истицања значаја духовног поглавара за све претенденте на царску крнуну, до стварања од свете Софије центра за окупљање незадовољника и побуњеника против царске власти.