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Schrödinger's Rule: Making Apparent the Emperor's Body in 1453

Abstract: 'The king is dead, long live the king!' serves as one of the best-known exclamations for marking changes of monarchical rule. While literally reducing the proclamation of the incumbent's death and his successor's accession to a single (prolonged) held breath, this paper argues that successions of rule cannot always be condensed to such a barely noticeable reflex that focuses solely on emphasising dynastic continuities. Assessing the ruler's body as cornerstone in narrating these moments of change, it is argued that, for instance, notions of the return of a supposedly dead predecessor to restore rulership ultimately run counter to established narrative strategies of dynastic upheavals. How is a ruler believably dead and yet still alive, a change of rule accomplished and yet still in progress, and rulership, thus, there and not? In this paper, such ambivalences are discussed using the change of rule after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 as example.

Introduction: Weird Tales – Kings, Queens, and Fools

After the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 which was led by the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446, 1451–1481),[1] Greek scholars remained an important source of reference concerning various topics – be it the humanist recovery of ancient Greece,[2] the political discourse on the Ottoman Expansion,[3] the discovery of the Greek

1 From the high number of overviews on the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 cf. for a historical reconstruction of the events still *Runciman*, Fall (1965), and *Babinger*, Mehmed (1959), albeit outdated in some facts. Further overall displays provide *Harris*, End (2010), and *Nicolle*, Constantinople (2000). For a quick overview cf. *Saint-Guillain*/*Vatin*, Introduction (2016), 13–61, for Latin perspectives *Meuthen*, Konstantinopel (1983), *Philippides*, Mehmed II (2007), and for the entanglements of Byzantine, Greek, and Latin political, economic, and social life *Necipoğlu*, Byzantium (2009).

2 Cf. *Monfasani*, Renaissance Humanism (2016); *id*., Greeks (2012), even more recently *Aschenbrenner*/*Ransohoff* (Eds.), Invention (2021); *Abbamonte*/*Harrison* (Eds.), Renaissance (2019); *Päll*/*Volt* (Eds.), Hellenostephanos (2018); *Ciccolella*/*Silvano* (Eds.), Teachers (2017). Cf. extensively *Wilson*, Byzantium (^{2}2017), and *Ben-Tov*, Lutheran Humanists (2009), remarking *ibid*., 100: "The fall of Byzantium brought an end to the city's role as storehouse of Greek erudition but did not extinguish Greek erudition itself (…)."

3 The number of contributions is abundant albeit there is still no overall survey on the topic. A brief English introduction is provided by *Schmitt*, Ottoman Conquest (2021), with extensive references to further literature in the footnotes, and *id*., Introduction (2016). For discourses on the Ottoman Expan-

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church during Reformation,[4] or for obtaining further knowledge about Greek life under the recently established Ottoman rule.[5] The *loss of the Greek Empire*[6] indeed evoked a new thirst for knowledge and curiosity about 'everything Greek':[7] This was also true for Martin Crusius (fl. 1526–1607), a Humanist scholar, historian, and professor for Greek and Latin at the university of Tübingen.[8] He was especially interested in the contemporary state of Greece[9] – namely in the 'Turco-Graecia', as he calls it in the letter of dedication to his work *because it comprises the affairs of the Greeks that happened under Ottoman rule and that* [still] *tend to happen* [in our times] (…).[10]

Against this background, it comes as no surprise that Crusius wanted to be directly in communication with Greeks as best as he could in order to obtain as much information as possible for his 'Turco-Graecia'.[11] But composing history sometimes turns out to be no less than a rabbit hole: Crusius was almost obsessed with specifying and verifying all the information given in his work down to the smallest details.[12] He even composed a double epitaph for the last Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI (r. 1449–1453) and his wife:

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sion, aspects on the medialisation of 'the Turk' as a figure of alterity, and for the media coverage on the Ottoman Wars cf. *Höfert*, Feind (2003), esp. 56–62, *Topkaya*, Augen-Blicke (2015), *Thumser*, Türkenfrage (1997), *Hille*, Türkengefahr (2016), each with further literature.

4 Cf. on this topic recently *Moore*, Wittenberg (2022), furthermore *Ben-Tov*, Lutheran Humanists (2009), *Hering*, Orthodoxie (1995), *Geanakoplos*, Episodes (1994), *Wendebourg*, Reformation (1986), and *Zachariades*, Tübingen (1941).

5 Cf. e. g. *Calis*, Reconstructing (2019), *Extremera*, Surviving (2014), and *Ben-Tov*, Lutheran Humanists (2009), 83–132.

6 The expression *Imperij Græci amissio* is taken from the letter of dedication to Martin Crusius, Turcogræciæ, ep., iii–xii, at iv, which is also cited in note 10 (hereafter referred to as ep. in the footnotes). Unless indicated otherwise, the English translations and additions given in brackets in this article are mine.

7 This was further encouraged by numerous Greek manuscripts brought to the West, cf. e. g. *Tinnefeld*, Erinnerung (2011), 83.

8 On Crusius cf. comprehensively *Calis*, Reconstructing (2019), 152–162, more concisely *Rhoby*, Friendship (2005), 250 f., with further literature in note 6.

9 Cf. *Kresten*, Patriarchat (1970), 17, and *Tinnefeld*, Erinnerung (2011), 87.

10 Martin Crusius, Turcogræciæ, ep., iv: (…) *propterea quod res Græcorum* (…) *sub Turcico dominatu factas, & fieri solitas, continent.* For a brief overview of the 'Turco-Graecia' (hereafter referred to as TG in the footnotes) in terms of its contents cf. *Lackner*, Rev. of Crusius, Turcograecia (1974), 514, and the assessment made by *Monfasani*, Byzantium (2019), 246: "[T]he work aims to reveal the miserable condition of the Christian Greeks now that they have fallen under the yoke of the Infidel Turk."

11 Cf. on Crusius' contacts to other Greek scholars *Rhoby*, Letter Network (2009), *id.*, Friendship (2005), each with further literature, and more generally *Kresten*, Patriarchat (1970), esp. 18–24. An overview on Crusius' correspondences is provided by *Zachariades*, Tübingen (1941), which is supplemented by *Rhoby*, Letter Network (2009), 139–152.

12 This is evident from the comprehensive appendix of the TG which not only comprises several notes by Crusius himself but also provides insight into exchanges with other scholars who were consulted for information, cf. Martin Crusius, TG VII, 410–557.

> *Here* (*Where?* [Only] *God knows!*) *your own homeland became your tomb,* / *Lord of the Hellenes, most wretched Constantine.* / *Here* (*Where?* [Only] *God knows!*) *a nameless tomb holds you,* / *Queen of the Hellenes; a mournful Niobe it conceals.* / *May God erase all tears from your kind* / *eyes with endless joy.*[13]

Commemorating Constantine and his anonymous wife in this way may prove that the German scholar was, indeed, *burning with interest about Greek matters*,[14] as he explained in a letter written in early 1575. Crusius, in fact, made quite an effort to discover the empress's name:[15] But *neither in Constantinople nor in Venice was* [he] *able*

13 Martin Crusius, TG I, 57: *Hoc utrique Epitaphium pono:* / Ἐνθάδε (ποῦ; Θεὸς οἶδε) κάρη σέο πατρὶς ἔχωσεν: Ἑλλήνων ἀγέ, λοῖσθε, ταλάντατε Κωνσταντῖνε, *Hic vbînam? Nouit Deus) est tua tumba: fidelis Rex Graium postreme, miserrime Constantine.* ἐνθάδε (ποῦ; Θεὸς οἶδε) τάφος σὸς ἀνώνυμος ἔστιν Ἑλλήνων βασιλίς, Νιόβην κρύπτουσα γοώδη. / *Hic tua (vbi? Nouit Deus) est sine nomine tumba: quae luctu Nioben superas, Augusta fidelis.* ὄψεσιν ἀλλὰ φιλανθρώποις Θεὸς ὑμετέρρησι / χάρμασι ἀλλήκτοις ἀπὸ δάκρυα πάντα καθαίροι. *Sed deus a vestris oculis mitissimus omnes abstergat lacrymas, aeternaque gaudia donet.* The English translation is based on *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 304, with minor changes. On the differences between the Latin and Greek text provided by Crusius cf. *ibid*., 328 (note 8), *Hanak*/*id*., Siege (2011), 135 (note 168), with further literature. On the textual and material evidence of the tombs of the Palaeologan emperors cf. *Melvani*, Tombs (2018).

14 Letter by Martin Crusius to Theodosios Zygomalas on 21st Jan. 1575. Ed. *Kampouroglou*, 51 f.: (…) διακαῶς περὶ τὰ ἑλληνικὰ σπουδάζοιμι (…) (= Martin Crusius, TG VII, 426 f., at 426). The English translation is taken from *Rhoby*, Friendship (2005), 267. Cf. also *Wendebourg*, Alles Griechische (1994), 119 f., and *Eideneier*, Martinus Crusius Neograecus (1994).

15 In the appendix of TG I, 57, Crusius notes: *De Augusta ultima, Constantini Imperatorem coniuge* (…). *Invenio duas uxores Constantini. Priorem,* (…) *Tochij* (…) *Leonhardi filiam* (…), *olim Cyllene dicta, nomine dotis.* (…) *Alteram autem, aliquandiu ante Varnessem cladem, Lesbi Ducis filiam* (…) *se Mahometo dedidit. Fortaßis hæc altera* δέσποινα, *fuit illa miserrima, de qua scribitur: Imp. Constantini uxorem, filias, & alias nobiles fœminas, iussu Tyranni, in conuiuium adductas fuisse, & post contumeliam dissectas. Nomen eius nondum ex libris inuenire* (…). *Mirum, personæ tam illustris, tantam in Historijs obliuionem esse – Regarding the last empress, the wife of Emperor Constantine. I was able to identify not one, but two women who were married to the ruler. The first was the daughter of Leonardo Tocco* (…) *who used to be called Cyllene according to her dowry.* (…) *But the second* [wife] *whom he* [had] *sometime after the defeat at Varna, the daughter of the ruler of Lesbos, surrendered to* [sultan] *Mehmed. Perhaps this second Queen was that most unfortunate* [women] *about whom is written: The wife of Emperor Constantine, daughters, and other noble women were brought to a feast banquet at the behest of the tyrant, and after being ill-treated, they were cut into pieces. I have not yet been able to find her name in the books* (…). *It is strange that such a respected and great personality has fallen into oblivion*. In a previous addendum *De Palęologis – On the Palaeologan dynasty – ibid*., 47, for Constantine XI, there are noted two *uxores eius, Itala, & Lesbij Ducis filia – his two wives, an Italian and the daughter of the ruler of Lesbos*. For the title δέσποινα, the title of the *emperor's wife*, cf. Dukas, Chronographia. Ed. *Reinsch*, 685 (note 703). It is true that Constantine was, indeed, married twice, first to Maddalena Tocco († 1429) in 1428 who was called *Cyllene* according to the city of Kyllini on the west coast of the Peloponnese, and, then, to Caterina Gattilusio († 1442) in 1441 who both died childless. Constantine never remarried but after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, rumour had it that the emperor had left a widow to which Crusius also testifies, cf. *Nicol*, Emperor (1992), 95 f., *Kolditz*, Kaiser (2010), and *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 108–111, 209–211, 244–249.

to find it out.[16] The reason for his failure was clear: She did not exist. What is more, it remained uncertain if Constantine himself had died during the conquest of Constantinople.[17] This knowledge is also perceptible in the 'Turco-Graecia' even though the epitaph may indicate quite the opposite, as it only gives a rather vague location for the tombs of the imperial 'couple' – *Here (Where?* [Only] *God knows!*[18] In general, all information regarding Constantine seems to focus on his death: After a few remarks on his descent and coronation,[19] the emperor already dies in the Ottoman assault on Con-

16 Martin Crusius, TG I, 57: *nec e Constantinopoli nec Venetijs cognoscere potui*[t]. Crusius further elaborates on this in the appendix under the marginal title *Imperatrix Byzantij ultima, the last Empress of Byzantium*, cf. *ibid*. VII, 497: *Nomen & familiam* (…) *cognoscere è Græcis non potui.* (…) *Nomen ultimæ Imperatricis Constantinopolitanæ (inquit Hieronymus Viscerus, Epist. 9 Nouemb. 1580: Venetijs ad me scripta) nondum comperi – Her name and family* (…) *I could not find out from the Greeks.* (…) *The name of the last Constantinopolitan Empress (says Hieronymus Viscerus in a letter dated 9th Nov. 1580 which he had written to me from Venice) I have not find out yet.* At least, the prothonotary (πρωτονοτάριος) of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, Theodosios Zygomalas (fl. 1544–1605), provided some information in order to answer Crusius' rather peculiar question, cf. *ibid.* I, 97: φέρεται δὲ λόγος ὅτι ὁ πρότερον μεταδοὺς τῶν θείων μυστηρίων τοῖς παισὶν αὐτοῦ, τῇ βασιλίσσῃ καὶ πολλοῖς συγγενέσι καὶ οἰκείοις ἅπαντας ἀποκεφαλισθῆναι προσέταξε τοῦ μὴ αἰχμαλωσίας τυχεῖν. βασιλίσσης ὄνομα ὑστάτης οὐκ οἶδα. ἠρώτησα γὰρ πολλοῖς, καὶ οὐδείς μοι εἶχε ἀληθείας ῥήματα ἢ γραφὴν δεῖξαι – *There is a tale that he* [sc. Constantine XI] *first partook of the divine sacrament together with his children, his queen, his numerous relatives, and all his servants, whose decapitation he then ordered so that they would not be captured. I do not know the name of the last empress. I have asked many people but no one could tell me true words or could show me a document*. The translation is taken from *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 304. For a brief overview on Zygomalas' life cf. *Rhoby*, Friendship (2005), 251 with further literature in note 2, *Wendebourg*, Reformation (1986), 70. *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 303 f., also has shown that, in his letter, Zygomalas passes on information that can go back to Hierax, a 16th century Greek poet and functionary of the Greek patriarchate in Constantinople. The Slavonic eyewitness account 'Tale on the Taking of Tsargrad' by Nestor-Iskander also testifies to the existence of an empress, cf. *ibid*., *Hanak*/*id.*, Siege (2011), 54 (note 148), 132 f., 202 f., and *Nicol*, Emperor (1992), 95 f.

17 In fact, the circumstances of Constantine's death quickly became so contradictory that already the anonymous author of the Ἅλωσις τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως. Ed. *Legrand*, 195 f., V. 824–826, a '*Lament on Constantinople*' which was composed not even five years after the conquest of the city, asked an imaginary Constantine himself about his whereabouts: Ὦ Κωνσταντῖνε βασιλεῦ, (…) ἐιπέ μοι, / ποῦ εὑρίσκεσαι; ἐχάθης; ἐκρυβήθης; / ἢ ζῇς; ἢ καὶ ἀπέθανες ἐπάνω 'ς τὸ σπαθί σου – *O Emperor Constantine* (…) *tell me:* / *Where are you? Did you vanish? Were you hidden?* / *Are you alive or did you die, a sword in hand?* The translation is taken from *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 319, cf. identical *Hanak*/*id*., Siege (2011), 240. Cf. with a similar direction in terms of content Ἅλωσις τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως. Ed. *Legrand*, 202, V. 1014–1018, and, furthermore, *Fernández Galvín*, Tradiciones (2006), 366–368.

18 Cf. note 13 for the Latin and Greek original text.

19 In Martin Crusius, TG I, the information on Constantine is, indeed, limited to biographical outlines, such as that he was one of the *filij Emanuelis* – the *sons of Manuel* [sc. II Palaiologos (r. 1391–1425)] (*ibid*., 3). After the death of his eldest brother John VIII Palaiologos (r. 1425–1448), *administratione imperij urbis Constantino tradita* (*ibid*., 8) – *Constantine was given the rule over the imperial city*. Henceforth, he is called *Imperator* in Crusius' narrative.

stantinople in battle *in which his head was cut off* (…).[20] Crusius, then, continues giving an interesting explanation for Constantine's demise:

> *This only happened because the barbarians did not know that it was the emperor. Otherwise, in my opinion, they would not have killed him, but* (…) *led him alive and* [still] *in power before their king. In fact, an exact search* [for his body] *took place afterwards,* (…) *at the sultan's behest, of course, to see whether he might still be alive and have fled to renew the war with troops assembled elsewhere. They found his head and recognised him by his chest* [armour] *and the other nobles.* [Only] *then did he* [sc. the sultan] *desist from his fear.*[21]

It is only after the identification of Constantine's body that Mehmed regards himself as legitimate ruler over the 'Turco-Graecia' – 'The king is dead, long live the king!' But what serves as probably one of the best-known sayings to mark changes of monarchical rule does not quite add up in Crusius' account:[22] For it is explicitly stated that neither the Ottoman soldiers nor Mehmed himself knew about Constantine's physical appearance (*ignorarunt Imperatorem Barbari*). This lack of knowledge eventually led to the problem of identifying the ruler's body in the first place.[23] Crusius states that Constantine was not killed deliberately but rather by chance, if not by mistake (*alioquin* […] *haud interfecturi*), and that his body was not brought to the sultan immediately but after a belated, yet diligent search (*posterius vero diligenti inquestione facta*). Eventually, the ruler was not recognised by his face but by imperial insignia on the torso and other nobles who lay dead around him (*a Mamale, alijsque proceribus agnitum*). For Mehmed II, this (necessarily) sufficed: After having confirmed that the 'right' person had been found dead, his fear of a counter-offensive – led by a former ruler who wanted to regain his throne – dissolved (*ne forte* […] *bellum renouari* […] *tunc a metu ille destitit*). Being therefore assured that the change of rule from the Byzantines to the Ottomans was successfully completed, both Mehmed and his troops could breathe easy. However, it is precisely because of the emphasis on the sultan's fears, his subsequent relief, and the many inconsistences in identifying Constantine's

20 Martin Crusius, TG I, 12: (…) *miserrimus Imp. Constantinus: eodem tempore, quo Turcæ irruerunt, qua parte S. Romani porta est, obibat mœnia, ipse et alij proceres, inspiciendi causa. Tunc obuiam facti hostes, pugnam commiserunt, in qua caput ei prœcisum est, pugnanti, & neutiquam seruitutem subire volenti.* (…) – *The most pitiful Emperor Constantine and other nobles died when the Turks invaded the city, at the Gate of St. Rhomanos, while inspecting the walls. After they encountered the enemies, a fight ensued in which his* [sc. Constantine's] *head was cut off, for he fought since he did not want to be enslaved under any circumstances.*

21 Martin Crusius, TG I, 12: *Id factum inde, quod ignorarunt Imperatorem Barbari: alioquin, ut mea fert opinio, haud interfecturi: sed, quoquo modo potuissent, viuum in potestate redacturi: & suo Regi adducturi. Posterius vero diligenti inquestione facta (meiuente videlicet Sultano, ne forte adhuc in viuis esset: profectusque, auxilijs alicunde adductis bellum renouari) inuenerunt caput eius: a Mamale, alijsue Proceribus, agnitum. Tunc a metu ille destitit.*

22 For the Latin original text that is quoted in parantheses in the following paragraph cf. note 21.

23 A similar problem in identifying the ruler's body is discussed in *Prietzel*, Schlachtentod (2015), esp. 120, who examines the death of the Sicilian King Manfred (r. since 1258).

body that the text also hints at the possibility that this sigh of relief was not justified:[24] Was it 'really' the former Byzantine emperor whom the Ottoman troops had identified by his chest armour?

It was mainly these nebulous circumstances of Constantine's death that should spark so many diverse iterations:[25] Indeed, Crusius' account fits in well with this hardly manageable number of sources dealing with the many facets of the last Byzantine emperor's death. In view of the questions posed by the editors of this volume, however, the account of the German scholar also illustrates the complexity, fragility and, thus, processuality of changes of rule. Crusius seems to mark the end of all varieties of Byzantine rule permanently at first: By composing a double epitaph, he literally buries not only the idea of Byzantine rulership but also the idea of a widow being a potential heiress of her husband, a figure of continuity and, thus, the possibility of female rule in Byzantium.[26] At the same time, however, the ambiguity of the words Crusius chose for identifying the ruler's body offers potential for subversive readings of the change of rule from the Byzantines to the Ottomans.

This paper, therefore, argues that finding and identifying Constantine's body has a deeper meaning in the telling of the succession after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453: Mehmed may have been able to successfully bring about the city's conquest which made him *de facto* the new ruler. However, he was not able to seize its rulership on his own as long as there is no predecessor whom it can be taken from. Thus, in order to be considered the legitimate new ruler, Byzantine rule had to be concluded formally first. To this end, Mehmed had to find the former ruler: Whether brought about by force or not, the sultan's accession to power, consequently,

24 Cf. also the trenchant assessment by *Hanak*/*Philippides*, Siege (2011), 236, remark: "It is not at all certain, however, that a proper identification of the emperor's remains was ever made." Cf. also *Carroll*, Constantine (1984).

25 On this vast field of research cf. *Nicol*, Emperor (1992), 96–108, *Papayianni*, Polis (2010), *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 11 note 5 and *passim*, *Hanak*/*id.*, Siege (2011), 236–288, *Halstead*, Greeks (2019), *id.*, Everyday (2022), esp. 244–247, and more generally *Marciniak*/*Smythe*, Introduction (2016), with an extensive bibliography in the footnotes and who *ibid.*, 6, among others, also mention the science fiction author Harry Turtledove (* 1949) whose short story 'The Emperor's Return' in the pulp magazine 'Weird Tales' served as inspiration for the chapter headings in this article. On this, cf. *Turtledove*, Emperor's Return (1990), and more generally *Everett*/*Shanks* (Eds.), Legacy (2015). On 'iterations in the border region' of Crown Ruthenia cf. recently *Jaros*, Iterationen (2021), 5 f., 13–24.

26 Female rule is, of course, also attested in Byzantium – to name but a few with Irene (r. 797–802), Theodora (r. 830–867), and Zoë (r. 1028–1050) who temporarily ruled together with her sister Theodora (r. 1042–1056). But albeit the study of female power, agency and political activity in Byzantium has increased considerably since the turn of the millennium at the latest, early and middle Byzantine empresses have received far more attention in research than those of the later period, cf. *Herrin*, Influence (2013), 161–193, *id.*, Women (2001), *James*, Empresses (2001), *Garland*, Empresses (1999), and *Hill*, Imperial Women (1999). Cf. recently on the late Byzantine period *Melichar*, Empresses (2019). On the general potential of gender studies in Byzantium cf. *Neville*, Gender (2019), with further literature, and also *Kinloch*, Subordination (2020), esp. 305–307.

remains in the balance until his predecessor is found and identified. This prolongs the transition of rule as such since it has, strictly spoken, not taken place, or at least not been completed yet. While, for the sultan, Ottoman rule in Constantinople seems so close and yet so far, the opposite applies to the Byzantines: Their rule is not over yet, but, most probably, will be soon.

In this context, the mere possibility that Constantine had survived the fighting highlights the ambiguity that is inherent in changes of rule in general. Thus, a paradoxical situation arises: While the predecessor is simultaneously alive and dead, both his and his successor's reign – and, thus, the change of rule itself – remain in the balance, causing a predicament that is not easy to resolve. But how is a ruler credibly dead although he might still be alive, a change of rule accomplished and yet still in progress, and rulership, thus, there and not? This moment is what I would like to coin as 'Schrödinger's Rule'. For in the overlay of both the ruler's survival and death and in contradiction to the temporally rather condensed perception of monarchical successions as happening on the spot, possibilities of deliberate discomfort and delegitimisation are created. The change of rule is, thus, dynamised itself.

Using the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 as an example, this paper contributes to aspects of different temporalities inherent to narrating changes of rule by focusing on the ruler's body. It is argued that the body has a particular narrative potential in offering both contemporary and later authors the opportunity to comment on changes of rule. Thus, in combining recent approaches from the fields of body history and cultural history, this paper offers a re-examination of a pivotal contemporary account which is generally regarded to be not only critical of the newly installed Ottoman rule but also of Constantine XI: the 'History' of the late Byzantine author Doukas (fl. 1400– after 1462).[27] To this end, after some introductory remarks on the author and his work and a brief discussion of the current state of research, the narrative logic of Doukas' account and the role of the emperor's body in it will be analysed in detail.

27 Cf. comprehensively *Reinsch*, Einleitung (2020), 7–56, with further literature *ibid*., 52–56, who has to be considered "the main point of reference for (…) dealing with Doukas' historiographical work", as *Monticini*, Rev. of Dukas, Chronographia. Ed. Reinsch (2021), 241, has rightly pointed out. For more concise introductions cf. *Prinzing*, Doukas (2013), *Karpozelos*, Βυζαντινοὶ (2015), 287 f., *Talbot*, Doukas (1991), and *Magoulias*, Introduction (1975), 23–41. A critical edition is being prepared by Sofia Kotzabassi (University of Thessaloniki); the text presented in Ducas Istoria. Ed. *Grecu*, has been republished with a German translation in Dukas, Chronographia. Ed. *Reinsch*, based on a new collation of the *codex unicus*, cf. *id.*, Einleitung (2020), 48. For an English translation cf. Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*. Unless otherwise indicated, for the 'History' of Doukas, this paper uses the edition prepared by Reinsch and the English translation by Magoulias.

Merely old Wine into new Wineskins? Telling the Death of Constantine XI in contemporary Byzantine Historiography

There is no account considered historical that relates the final moments of Constantine's life.[28] Not even George Sphrantzes (fl. 1401–1477/1479), the Byzantine imperial courtier, confidant of the Emperor and eyewitness to the Ottoman conquest, provides any specific information on the ruler's death in his 'Chronicon Minus' because *he was not at his side at that hour but had been inspecting another part of the City, according to his orders*.[29] This lack of actual eyewitnesses for the end of Constantine's life, how-

28 Cf. *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 7.

29 Sphrantzes, Chronicon minus 35.9. Ed. *Maisano*, 134.4 f.: [ἑαυτ]οῦ πλησίον αὐτοῦ οὐχ εὑρεθέντος τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐκείνῃ, ἀλλὰ προστάξει ἐκείνου εἰς ἐπίσκεψιν δῆθεν ἄλλου μέρους τῆς πόλεως. The translation is taken from *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 316. In the following, the citation of Byzantine Greek sources first designates the resp. chapter (sections) of each work and then indicates the pages and line numbers in the resp. edition. Cf. on Sphrantzes *Vachaviolos*, Church Union (2019), esp. 380–384, and *Hanak*/*id*., Siege (2011), 139–191, with further literature in the footnotes. That there initially was uncertainty about Constantine's fate after the Ottoman takeover of the city, is also made clear by Makarios Melissenos-Melissourgos († 1585), an exiled metropolitan bishop of Monemvasia who oversaw the forgery of the extended version of the 'Chronicon minus' of Sphrantzes, the 'Chronicon maius'. Makarios Melissenos-Melissourgos, Chronicon maius III, 9. Ed. *Bekker*, 290.18–291–10: ὡς οὖν ἡ πόλις, ἐάλω, ὁ ἀμηρᾶς ἔνδον εἰσελθὼν εὐθὺς πάσῃ σπουδῇ ζήτησιν ἐποίει περὶ τοῦ βασιλέως, κατὰ νοῦν λογιζόμενος ἄλλο, εἰ μὴ μόνον μαθεῖν ἢ ζῇ ἢ τέθνηκεν ὁ βασιλεύς. καί τινες μὲν ἐλθόντες ἔλεγον ὅτι ἔφυγεν, ἄλλοι δὲ ἐν τῇ πόλει ἔλεγον εἶναι κεκρυμμένον, ἄλλοι δὲ τεθνάναι μαχόμενον. καὶ θέλων πιστοθῆναι ἀληθῶς ἔστειλεν, ἔνθα τὰ σώματα τῶν ἀναιρεθέντων ἔκειτο σωροειδῶς (…). καὶ πλείστας κεφαλὰς τῶν ἀναιρεθέντων ἔπλυναν, εἰ τύχῃ καὶ τὴν βασιλικὴν γνωρίσωσι. καὶ οὐκ ἠδυνήθησαν γνωρίσαι αὐτήν, εἰ μὴ τὸ τεθνεὸς πτῶμα τοῦ βασιλέως εὑρόντες, ἐγνώρισαν αὐτὸ ἐκ τῶν βασιλικῶν περικνημίδων ἢ καὶ πεδίλων, ἔνθα χρυσοῖ ἀετοὶ ἦσαν γεγραμμένοι, ὡς ἔθος ὑπῆρχε τοῖς βασιλεῦσι. καὶ μαθὼν ὁ ἀμηρᾶς περιχαρὴς καὶ εὐφραινόμενος ὑπῆρξε καὶ προστάξει αὐτοῦ οἱ εὑρεθέντες Χριστιανοὶ ἔθαψαν τὸ βασιλικὸν πτῶμα μετὰ βασιλικῆς τιμῆς – *After the city was captured, the sultan entered and immediately showed great concern about the emperor; he was extremely anxious to find out whether the emperor was still alive or dead. Some individuals came and said that he had escaped; others said that he was hiding in the city; others that he had died fighting. And as he wanted to find out exactly what had happened, he sent to the place where the bodies of the slain were lying in heaps* (…). *They washed the heads of many corpses, in case they recognized the emperor's head. But they proved unable to recognize it; they did find the corpse of the emperor, which they recognized from the imperial greaves and shoes, which had been imprinted with golden eagles, as it was the custom with the emperors. When the sultan found out, he rejoiced greatly and became cheerful. By his order the Christians who were found there buried the corpse of the emperor with imperial honors*. The translation is taken from *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 380. The similarity between Melissenos-Melissourgos' and Crusius' account is due to the use of the 'Patriarchal History' by Manuel Malaxos, cf. *Hanak*/*Philippides*, Siege (2011), 92–94, with further literature in note 145, and more generally *ibid*., 139–192, on the 'Chronicon minus' and 'Chronicon maius'. A new critical edition is being prepared within the German Research Foundation funded project 'Forgery of a Chronicle – Chronicle of a Forgery. Origin and Transmission of the so-called Chronicon maius of Pseudo-Sphrantzes' which is led by Sonja Schönauer (University of Cologne).

ever, serves as only one reason why Crusius – who otherwise seems so concerned with accuracy – describes the circumstances of the emperor's death in his account clearly at first, though this proves inconclusive on closer examination. After all, there were other Byzantine survivors who could have likely identified the emperor.

This is also what the late Byzantine historian Doukas implies in his 'History'. Everything that is known about him is what the author lets his intended audience know in his work – and this information does not even include a reliable transmission of his first name.[30] Probably born around 1400, Doukas was in service of the Genoese ruling family Gattilusi on the island of Lesbos since the 1420s.[31] Having witnessed, from Didymoteicho, the Ottoman siege preparations outside Constantinople, he visited Edirne after the conquest of Constantinople to deliver tributes.[32] His historiographical work is considered to be one of the most important contemporary sources on the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople.[33] It is transmitted without a title or proper ending:[34] Origi-

30 That Doukas' first name was Michael is considered as certain by *Magoulias*, Introduction (1975), 27, *Talbot*, Doukas (1991), 656, and *Reinsch*, Einleitung (2020), 7, yet only "with a certain probability" *id.*, Mehmet (2009), 16 ("mit einer gewissen Wahrscheinlichkeit"); more reluctantly cf. *Moravcsik*, Byzantinoturcica (1958), 247, *Hunger*, Literatur (1978), 490, and *Magoulias*, Introduction (1975), 26, who remarks that this principle of name giving – if it was still consistently practised in the Eastern Mediterranean at the beginning of the 15th century – would only apply to the first-born. Cf. similarly cautious *Flusin*/*Saint-Guillain*, Doukas (2016), 105.

31 Cf. *Talbot*, Doukas (1991), 656, albeit *Reinsch*, Einleitung (2020), 7, correctly states that "[i]t is impossible to determine exactly when he was born." ("Wann er geboren ist, kann man nicht genau bestimmen.") Therefore, it can only – if at all – be given an approximate estimate for a rough temporal localisation. *Magoulias*, Introduction (1975), 26 f., does not mention a year of birth at all, yet *Flusin*/*Saint-Guillain*, Doukas (2016), 105, dates his birth "doubtlessly" ("sans doute") to the 1390s.

32 Cf. Doukas 35.2. Ed. *Reinsch*, 438.11 f., and *ibid*. 44.1, 570.3–6, with *Moravcsik*, Byzantinoturcica (1958), 247 f., *Hunger*, Literatur (1978), 490, *Talbot*, Doukas (1991), 656, *Flusin*/*Saint-Guillain*, Doukas (2016), 106 f., and *Reinsch*, Einleitung (2020), 9 f. The author also testifies himself to an unsuccessful diplomatic mission to the Ottoman Constantinople in Doukas 44.7. Ed. *Reinsch*, 580.5–9. The passages mentioned in this footnote are translated in Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 200 f., 250 f., 254.

33 Cf. e. g. already *Moravcsik*, Byzantinoturcica (^{2}1958), 249 f., *Magoulias*, Introduction (1975), 23 f., 34, and *Rosenqvist*, Literatur (2007), 179. On a brief overview of the content of Doukas' work cf. *Reinsch*, Einleitung (2020), 12–14.

34 The title 'Historia turco-byzantina' which Doukas' work is commonly referred to traces back to the first editions of the work by Ismaël Boulliau (1605–1694) and Vasile Grecu (1885–1972). It is also quite accurate in terms of content for it tells the story of the last centuries of Byzantium and the rise of the Ottomans, cf. *Magoulias*, Introduction (1975), 27, and *Flusin*/*Saint-Guillain*, Doukas (2016), 105 f. Cf. also *Reinsch*, Einleitung (2020), 7 f., 11 f., 607, and *id.*, Text (2019), 187, who discusses the repeatedly argued thesis that Doukas' work has neither a title nor an ending due to a loss of pages. Cf. on this view *Hunger*, Literatur (1978), 490 f., and *Kotzabassi*, Kopist (1993), 307, who, however, has revised her opinion *id.*, Kopist (2004), 683. Thus, my remark in *Szill*, Herrschaftszeiten (2020), 271 (note 17), is also incorrect: Doukas' work is transmitted as *codex unicus* in a 15th century manuscript compilation which is kept as MS grec. 1310, fol. 288^{r}–391^{r}, in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. There also is an early 18th century copy in BNF MS grec. 1766. Furthermore, there is an anonymous 15th century Italian translation which is kept as Cod. Marc. It.VI 83, fol. 1–133^{r}, in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice. For an

nally intended as universal chronicle, the account becomes increasingly detailed from the middle of the 14th century until, after a "harrowing account"[35] on the fall of Constantinople including the death of Constantine XI, the work breaks off abruptly with the Ottoman conquest of the island of Lesbos in 1462.[36]

Narrating the violent death of a Byzantine emperor could be regarded, in fact, as quite a literary spectacle particularly for contemporary Byzantine authors: For the fact that the last murder of this kind was committed during the Latin conquest of Constantinople about 250 years earlier[37] may have only encouraged the composition of further tales, myths, and legends about Constantine. This rich tradition is also reflected in modern contributions on the conquest of the city which almost always mention his death either at least in passing or dedicated entire chapters to it.[38] But while it is, thus, undisputed that Constantine's last moments in life are considered important, the significance and deeper meaning of his demise have hardly been analysed within the intrinsic logic of the individual narratives themselves: Instead, many contributions have focused on a reconstruction of historical events in comparing a wide range of sources, thereby concentrating on individual events and actors in an overarching meta-narrative, and, thus, aiming at a comparison of different modes of representation.[39] Indispensable and important as these results may be, the narrative

edition cf. Anonymous, Ducae Historia Italice. Ed. *Bekker*, 349–512. This Italian translation is being analysed by Miriam Salzmann (University of Mainz). Cf. comprehensively on the tradition of the text *Reinsch*, Einleitung (2020), 42–47.

35 *Moravcsik*, Byzantinoturcica (^{2}1958), 249, calls it "[d]ie erschütternde Schilderung der Einnahme von Konstantinopel (…)."

36 Cf. Doukas 45.23. Ed. *Reinsch*, 598.1–600.22, with a translation in Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 261. Cf. also the supplement that is transmitted by the 15th century Italian codex in Doukas 45.23. Ed. *Reinsch* 600.23–602.52, with a German translation. On the Italian codex cf. note 31 in this paper. The conquest of Lesbos is considered the only reliable *terminus post quem* for both Doukas' life and the period in which his work was written, cf. already *Hunger*, Literatur (1978), 491, and *Reinsch*, Einleitung (2020), 8, 14–16.

37 Cf. *Reinsch*, Tod (1994), 264, *id.*, Tod (2003), 199 f., and *Dennis*, Death (2001). On the death of Alexios V (r. 1204) cf. also *Kraft*, Prophecies (2021), with further literature in the footnotes. On the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204, cf. also the paper of Simon Hasdenteufel in this volume.

38 Only recently Constantine XI received a new monograph which can justifiably be considered the new standard work since it draws a much more balanced picture of Constantine's life and legacy than previous works did, cf. *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), with *Harris*, Rev. of Philippides, Constantine XI (2019). Constantine's death (and burial) has been subject to a vast amount of studies, indeed, cf. *Melvani*, Tombs (2019), 252 f. In this context, linking the circumstances of his death with its subsequent reception history proved a fruitful undertaking, cf. e. g. *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), esp. 314–317, *Hanak*/*id.*, Siege (2011), 232–237, *Sakel*, Tales (2006), *Nicol*, Emperor (1992), 74–108.

39 That the episode of the emperor's death has much analytical potential is illustrated not least by the fact that such comparative approaches focused on single phrases, cf. e. g. *Reinsch*, Tod (1994), 251–256, or on power constellations of individual figures and their interactions with each other, cf. e. g. *Philippides*, Rumors (2017), and *Reinsch*, Mehmet (2009). In this context, also Doukas' account on the emperor's death has found mentioning several times. Therein, the author harshly opposes the

potential of the disappearance of Constantine's corpse within the specific individual narrative framework has rarely been considered.

Yet the potential of this perspective is also reflected in current research: The interest in the 'King's Two Bodies' seems greater than ever,[40] and recent scholarship, too, has not only re-acknowledged the significant role the human body played as a material object in the Middle Ages but also highlighted its status as cultural construct shaped by the meanings and practices applied to it.[41] Since the corpse, therefore, was also used as means in political discourse,[42] incorporating it in the telling the change of rule, thus, offers particular potential not only to structure the narrative but also to determine the liminality of the succession more precisely in order to comment on the legitimacy of change of rule as a whole. The predecessor's body serves, therefore, equally as nucleus, and argument of the narrative – "and [its] disappearance does not seem to have been accepted with (…) ease."[43]

newly established Ottoman rule but "refuses to consider [Constantine XI] the legitimate emperor." (*Magoulias*, Introduction [1975], 35, cf. also *Philippides*, Constantine [2018], 222.) In Doukas' narrative, it is stressed that Mehmed, his "*bête noir*", as *Reinsch*, Mehmet (2009), 15, aptly put it, rules unjustly in Constantinople. Cf. on the broad range of insults the author, therefore, attributes to the sultan *ibid*., 15, and similarly *id*., Einleitung (2020), 32. This, indeed, fits well to an oracle that Doukas presents after describing the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople which prophesied a more or less simultaneous end to the rule of the Palaiologans and the Ottomans, (…) ὅτι τὸ τέλος τῆς τυραννίδος τῶν Ὀτμάνων, ἔσται ὁμοῦ φθάσαν σὺν τῷ τέλει τῆς βασιλείας Παλαιολόγων (…) – *that the end of the Ottoman tyranny would take place with the extinction of the Palaiologan dynasty*, cf. Doukas 42.14. Ed. *Reinsch*, 554.7 f. The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 244. Cf. on this aspect *Reinsch*, Einleitung (2020), 17, 24 f., and *Szill*, Herrschaftszeiten (2020).

40 Cf. e. g. *Antenhofer*, Concept (2016), *Figurski*/*Mroziewicz*/*Sroczyński*, Introduction (2017), and *id*./*Byttebier*, Introduction (2021), each with an extensive bibliography in the footnotes. Cf. also the criticism already stated by *Jussen*, Bodies (2009), 105. On Byzantium cf. recently *Studer-Karlen*, Image (2022), *Pawlik*, Epiphany (2021), and *Spingou*, Power (2017).

41 *Schmitz-Esser*, Leichnam (2014), offers both an encyclopedic insight and overview of the very different functions a dead body could perform in the Middle Ages: These include, for example, its state as an object of medical diagnosis such as a remedy or magical cure, as a pilgrimage goal in being considered as an actual relic or in its use as a political instrument of legitimacy or manipulation, cf. *ibid*., esp. 311–336. The book was recently published in English as *Schmitz-Esser*, Corpse (2021). Cf. also *Bruhn*, Kein Platz (in print), *Janßen*, Leben (2021), 23–29, *Kamenzin*, Tode (2020), 19–28, and *Marafioti*, Body (2014), each with further literature.

42 Cf. *Schmitz-Esser*, Leichnam (2014), 8 f., 311–336.

43 *Schmitz-Esser*, Leichnam (2014), 46, states that "ihr Verschwinden [sc. von Leichnamen] scheint keineswegs mit jener Leichtigkeit hingenommen worden zu sein."

Weirder Tales: A Change of Rule almost slipped from Memory?

The late Byzantine author Doukas is not considered to be particularly fond of Constantine.[44] Therefore, the mere fact that the ruler is assigned such a prominent role in his account on the conquest of Constantinople is not self-evident. For Doukas, Byzantine legitimate rule had already come to an end with the death of John VIII (r. since 1425) in 1448 – and, thus, five years prior to the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople.[45] Against this background, it is perhaps only consistent that Doukas does not provide a thorough account of Constantine's coronation as emperor – because *he had never been nor would he ever be crowned*.[46] That Constantine held this title at all was, according to Doukas, only due to a *foolish assembly of the Romans* (…) [that] *called him Emperor Constantine* (…).[47] Strictly spoken, this event had never taken place, for Constantine, indeed, had never been formally crowned: He was only invested secularly in Mystras on January 6th 1449 in a ceremony that lacked any religious significance.[48]

It is this very passage on the emperor's status that generally serves as crown witness for Doukas' dismissive attitude against Constantine.[49] And given this, the author may well have held a view that met with approval: As Marios Philippides has pointed

44 Cf. e. g. *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 222, and *Reinsch*, Introduction (2020), 14, 24.

45 Doukas 33.1. Ed. *Reinsch*, 396.1–398.6: Ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς Ἰωάννης ποδαλγίᾳ πιεζόμενος ἐν πολλοῖς ἔτεσιν καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἐπάνοδον ἀπὸ Ἰταλίας ἐν πολλαῖς θλίψεσι καὶ δυσφορίαις ὤν, πῇ μὲν διὰ τὴν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν ταραχὴν· πῇ δὲ διὰ τὴν ἐκδημίαν τῆς δεσποίνης, κατέλαβεν αὐτὸν νόσος· καὶ ἐν ὀλίγαις ἡμέραις ἐτελεύτησεν· ὕστατος βασιλεύς χρηματίσας Ῥωμαίων – *Emperor John who had suffered from gout for many years, a condition that was aggravated by the deep distress and grief he experienced after his return from* [the Council of Florence in] *Italy, partly because of the agitation resulting from the Union of the Churches, and partly because of the empress's death, fell gravely ill and within a few days died, the last to reign as emperor of the Romans*. The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 186. Already here, the strong focus on both the emperor's physical and emotional frailty is striking, as it neither corresponds with the expectations on the body politic nor with the ruler's virtues, cf. *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 213 f. In this context, Doukas also recalls the death of the last Byzantine Empress, Maria Comnene of Trapezunt (fl. before 1404–1439) who died before John's return from the Council of Ferrara-Florence-Rome, cf. Doukas 31.7. Ed. *Reinsch*, 382.1–384.1, with a translation in Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 181.

46 Doukas 34.2. Ed. *Reinsch*, 414.3–416.4: οὔπω γὰρ ἦν στεφθεὶς ἀλλὰ οὐδὲ στεφθῆναι ἔμελλε. The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 192.

47 Doukas 34.2. Ed. *Reinsch*, 414.1–3: μωρὰ τῶν Ῥωμαίων συναγωγὴ (…) λέγοντες πῶς ὁ βασιλεὺς Κωνσταντίνος. The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 192. Cf. also *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 222, 234 (note 123).

48 The coronation could have only been performed by the patriarch of Constantinople in the Hagia Sophia, cf. *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 221–223, esp. 222: "The contemporaries of Constantine were sharply divided on this issue. The majority seems to have accepted the legitimacy of his position. He was de facto and de iure emperor, even if the required ceremony in church had been denied to him."

49 Cf. e. g. *Reinsch*, Introduction (2020), 14.

out in his seminal study on Constantine, contemporaries were, indeed, highly divided on the issue of the ruler's legitimacy.[50] Yet, despite being so critical about the circumstances of the coronation, Doukas continues his narrative by explicitly referring to Constantine as 'emperor' himself – just as he did with John VIII and his predecessors.[51] Therefore, Doukas either did share the general acceptance of Constantine's *de facto* rule after all,[52] or at least agreed with this opinion insofar as he, too, assigned him as an indispensable role in the narrative.[53] But what seems even more important in this context is that Mehmed was neither particularly concerned with Constantine's legitimacy nor did he seem to be informed about his disputed status at all – at least, this is what Doukas suggests in his narrative: Mehmed calls Constantine the 'Emperor of the Romans' immediately.[54] As it was the case with Crusius' 'Turco-Graecia', it is also Mehmed's ignorance, indifference, or lack of interest that is at the heart of Doukas' narrative framework.

The notion that, also in Doukas' account, Constantine serves an important role in the change of rule from the Byzantines to the Ottomans despite not being fully legitimate may be not initially apparent: In large parts of the account of the Ottoman siege of Constantinople, Constantine hardly plays a role at all. He is only briefly mentioned as taking up his defensive position on the Theodosian Walls and as supporting the Genoese captain Giovanni Giustiniani Longo (fl. 1418–1453) alongside his troops.[55] It is only after the latter had been wounded that Constantine was put in charge. His behaviour, however, cannot be described as very imperial: Doukas does not ascribe the same – or even remotely similar – military qualities to him as he does to *the commander* (…) *and heroic and powerful warrior*[56] Giustiniani nor does Constantine seem to be successful in terms of keeping up the esprit de corps. But albeit *he and his companions lost heart, they continued fighting with all their strength*.[57]

50 Cf. *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 222, 234 (note 112) with further literature on this issue.

51 While *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 222, emphasises Doukas' inconsistency in this context, *Reinsch*, Mehmet (2009), 19, states that Doukas "quite consistently (…) only very hesitantly granted [Constantine] the title βασιλεύς" ("durchaus konsequenterweise (…) nur sehr zögerlich der Titel βασιλεύς zugestanden [wird]").

52 Cf. *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 222.

53 Cf. *Reinsch*, Introduction (2020), 14.

54 Cf. Doukas 34.3. Ed. *Reinsch*, 418.4. The passage is translated in Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 193 f.

55 Cf. Doukas 39.8. Ed. *Reinsch*, 496.1–4, and *ibid.* 39.9, 496.8 f. Both passages are translated in Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 222.

56 Doukas 39.10. Ed. *Reinsch*, 496.2–4: τὸν στρατηγὸν (…) καὶ ἰσχύοντα καὶ ἄνθρωπον πολεμιστήν. The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 222.

57 Doukas 39.10. Ed. *Reinsch*, 498.22 f.: ἐδειλίασεν καὶ οἱ μετ' αὐτὸν· πλὴν ὅσον ἡ δύναμις ἀντεμάχοντο. The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 222 f., with minor changes.

Doukas, then, describes the rapid and violent advance of the Ottoman troops into Constantinople who *cut down all those they met*.[58] Constantine dies in this bloodbath. Interestingly enough, the description of his death takes up almost twice as much space as that of the legitimate Byzantine Emperor John VIII. And in marked contrast to the death scene of his predecessor, the author even assigns a brief direct speech to Constantine in this context: *Is there no one among the Christians who will take my head from me?*[59] This passage has been adapted in pre-modern sources as well as analysed in modern scholarship multiple times. It not only foreshadows the tragic death of a Christian Emperor who *stood, despairing and hopeless, with sword and shield in hand* (…)*, abandoned and alone*[60] against his enemies, calling out his final words and also his death wish that was ultimately fulfilled by his non-Christian opponents.[61] More importantly, it highlights the only physical feature that clearly identifies him in course of the further narrative: his head. This seems all the more important since Doukas nowhere describes the emperor's insignia, such as his (chest) armour or cloak, nor any of his bodily features. Indeed, Constantine's death scene is kept rather short:

> *One of the Turks wounded him by striking him flush, and he, in turn, gave the Turk a blow. A second Turk delivered a mortal blow from behind and the emperor fell to the earth. They slew him as a common soldier and left him, because they did not know he was the emperor.*[62]

Having died an ordinary fighter, the emperor's body remains lying unrecognized in the streets of Constantinople for the next 20 chapters. Constantine already seems to be almost forgotten, indeed, until the Grand Duke Loukas Notaras mentions him to Mehmed II who is boasting about his success in taking the city:[63]

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58 Doukas 39.12. Ed. *Reinsch*, 500.18: τοὺς συναντῶντας κατέκοπτον. The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 223 f.

59 Doukas 39.13. Ed. *Reinsch*, 500.2–4: οὐκ᾽ ἔστι τίς τῶν Χριστιανῶν τοῦ λαβεῖν τὴν κεφαλήν μου ἀπ᾽ ἐμοῦ; The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 224.

60 Doukas 39.13. Ed. *Reinsch*, 500.1–4: ἀπαγορεύσας ἑαυτὸν ἱστάμενος βαστάζων σπάθην (…), μονώτατος ἀπολειφθείς. The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 224.

61 Cf. e. g. *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 314–319, *Reinsch*, Tod (2003), 200 f., *id*., Tod (1994), 256 f., and *Nicol*, Emperor (1992), 74–108, each with further literature.

62 Doukas 39.13. Ed. *Reinsch*, 502, 5–9: τότε εἷς τῶν Τούρκων δοὺς αὐτῷ κατὰ πρόσωπον καὶ πλήξας· καὶ αὐτὸς τῷ Τούρκῳ ἑτέραν ἐχαρίσατο. τῶν ὄπισθεν δ᾽ ἕτερος καιρίαν δοὺς πληγὴν, ἔπεσε κατὰ γῆς. οὐ γὰρ ᾔδεσαν ὅτι ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐστὶν· ἀλλ᾽ ὡς κοινὸν στρατιώτην τοῦτον θανατώσαντες ἀφῆκαν. The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 224.

63 *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 4: "Soon after the sack, Constantine's grand duke, Loukas Notaras, was accused of playing both sides. Gradually this charge of duplicity transformed itself into an accusation of treason. What circumstances Notaras' treason entailed, no one could say but the grand duke became the proverbial villain." On Loukas Notaras cf. *ibid*., 218–221, *Reinsch*, Turban (1996), and *Ganchou*, Rachat (2002), each with further literature.

> *'Did you do well not to surrender the City? Behold the damage and ruin! Behold the captivity of so many!' The duke replied, 'Lord, we did not have the authority to give you the City. The emperor himself did not have that authority.'*[64]

What was originally intended as a mockery of the defeated, now turns into its exact opposite for Mehmed. Because

> [w]*hen he heard the name of the emperor, he asked if he had escaped in the ships. The duke replied that he did not know because he was posted at the Imperial Gate when the Turks, who entered by the Gate of Charisios, encountered the emperor.*[65]

Two Ottoman soldiers, then, stepped forward, almost competing for the claim to be the one who gave the emperor the better, more deadly blow.[66] But since the first one was *in a hurry to enter the City with his companions to search for plunder,* (...) [he] *left him* [sc. the emperor's body] *behind dead.*[67] Being sent off by their sultan and *running swiftly, they found him* [sc. Constantine]*, and cutting of his head, they presented it to the ruler*.[68]

It is not only the satirical undertone that marks the scene as criticism. In contrast to Doukas' previous report, the Ottoman soldiers now claim that they had killed Constantine knowingly and willingly – but had consciously left him behind to indulge in their greed for loot. In this context, however, Doukas seems to have aimed less at a critique of Constantine whose body is almost forgotten since it is only one of many in a pile of corpses. Rather, the very act of leaving the ruler's body behind is used deliberately and purposefully to illustrate the sultans' ignorance, disorganisation, and forgetfulness. After all, it is Mehmed who *affirmed on oath that he desired for himself no gain other than the buildings and walls of the City*[69] before the final assault. Instead of giving the order to find the Byzantine emperor and bring him to him, he promises the

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64 Doukas 40.3. Ed. *Reinsch*, 522.3–6: 'καλῶς ἐποιήσατε τοῦ μὴ παραδοῦναι τὴν πόλιν. ἴδε πόση ζημία ἐγεγόνει· πόσος ὅλεθρος, πόση αἰχμαλωσία.' ὁ δὲ δοὺξ ἀπεκρίνατο· 'κύριε οὐκ' εἴχαμεν τόσην ἡμεῖς ἐξουσίαν τοῦ διδόναι σε τὴν Πόλιν· οὐδὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς αὐτός. (...)' The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 232.

65 Doukas 40.3. Ed. *Reinsch*, 522.10–14: τότε ἀκούσας τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ βασιλέως, ἠρώτησεν εἰ ὁ βασιλεὺς ἀπέδρα σὺν ταῖς ναυσί. καὶ ὁ δοὺξ ἀπεκρίνατο ὅτι οὐκ' οἶδεν. ἦν γὰρ αὐτὸς ἐν τῇ Βασιλικῇ Πύλῃ τότε, ὅτε οἱ Τοῦρκοι συνήντησαν εἰσελθόντες ἐν τῇ πύλῃ τῇ Χαρσοῦ, τῷ βασιλεῖ. The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 232.

66 Doukas 40.3. Ed. *Reinsch*, 522.14–18: εἴρηκεν ὁ εἷς τῷ τυράννῳ·κύριε ἐγὼ τοῦτον ἀπέκτεινα. (...) ὁ δ' ἄλλος εἶπεν· ἐγὼ τοῦτον ἐπάταξα πρῶτον – *The first informed the tyrant, 'Lord, I slew him.* (...)' *The second youth added, 'I struck him the first blow.'* The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 232.

67 Doukas 40.3. Ed. *Reinsch*, 522.16 f.: βιαζόμενος οὖν τοῦ εἰσελθεῖν καὶ ἁρπάσαι σὺν τοῖς σὺν [αὐτοῦ], ἔασα αὐτὸν νεκρὸν καταλείψας. The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 232.

68 Doukas 40.3. Ed. *Reinsch*, 524.20 f.: ταχυδρομήσαντες εὗρον· καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ τεμόντες παρέστησαν τῷ ἡγεμόνι. The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 232.

69 Doukas 39.2. Ed. *Reinsch*, 490.4–492.5: ὀμόσας ὡς οὐκέτ' ἄλλο χρῄζει κέρδος πλὴν τὰς οἰκοδομὰς καὶ τὰ τείχη τῆς πόλεως. The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 220.

treasures and prisoners to be captured in the city to the Ottoman troops as their reward.[70] Furthermore, it is Mehmed who, after *setting aside his suspicions and fears* (…), *made his entry into the City with his viziers and satraps*.[71] It is Mehmed who boasts confidently about his victory to Notaras, only to be reminded by the latter of his missing rival; having, therefore, directed the conversation to the emperor's whereabouts, it is also Notaras whom Mehmed finally asks for help in identifying Constantine's body:

> *'Tell me truthfully if this is the head of your emperor.' Upon careful examination, he answered, 'It is his, Lord.' Others saw it too and recognized it. Then they affixed it to the Column of the Augustaion, and it remained there until evening. Afterward, the skin was peeled off and stuffed with straw, and Mehmed sent it around, exhibiting the symbol of triumph to the chief of the Persians and Arabs, and to all the other Turks.*[72]

Several things seem worth noting here: While Doukas had emphasised that the two Ottoman soldiers had killed Constantine like a *common soldier* (…) *because they did not know he was the emperor*[73] earlier, his body was now found, decapitated and brought quickly before Mehmed without any further difficulties, albeit being buried under numerous corpses and without having any identifying features on him.[74] On the sultan's orders, the head was, then, identified by all the Byzantines present before being accordingly prepared to be finally passed around among the Muslim rulers as a travelling trophy. In fact, this passage is full of foreign stereotypes showing both Mehmed's cruelty and dishonesty in dealing with the conquered of Constantinople.

The alleged museification (*Musealisierung*) of Constantine's head, however, appears suspicious: For albeit there was, indeed, the Byzantine custom of displaying the severed head of a defeated enemy on a stake,[75] one would expect Muslim sources to

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70 Cf. Doukas 39.2. Ed. *Reinsch*, 492.6 f. The passage is translated in Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 220.

71 Doukas 40.1. Ed. *Reinsch*, 520.4–6: πᾶσαν ὑποψίαν καὶ φόβον ἀποθέμενος, εἰσῄει ἐντὸς τῆς πόλεως σὺν τοῖς αὐτοῦ μεσάζουσιν καὶ ἑτέροις σατράπαις. The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 231.

72 Doukas 40.3. Ed. *Reinsch*, 524.21–29: ὁ δέ τύραννος ἔφη πρὸς τὸν μέγαδοῦκα· ‚εἰπέ μοι τὸ ἀληθές εἰ ἡ κεφαλὴ αὕτη ἔστι τοῦ βασιλέως σου.' τότε καταστοχασάμενος αὐτὴν, εἶρηκεν· ‚ἐκείνου ἐστὶ κύριε.' εἶδον οὖν αὐτὴν καὶ ἕτεροι καὶ ἐγνώρισαν. τότε προσήλωσαν αὐτὴν, ἐν τῷ κίονι τοῦ Αὐγουσταίου· καὶ ἵστατο ἕως ἑσπέρας. μετὰ δέ ταῦτα ἐκδείρας καὶ ἀχύροις τὸ δέρμα στοιβάσας· ἔπεμψε πανταχοῦ δεικνύων τὸ τῆς νίκης σύμβολον, τῷ τῶν Περσῶν ἀρχηγῷ· καὶ τῶν Ἀρράβων καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις Τούρκοις. The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 232.

73 Cf. for the Greek text note 51. Doukas 39.12. Ed. *Reinsch*, 500.9–18, also describes the piles of corpses that prevented the Ottomans from entering the city. For a translation cf. Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 223 f.

74 In doing so, the Ottoman soldiers unwittingly fulfil Constantine's last wish, cf. the emperor's exclamation in Doukas 39.13. Ed. *Reinsch*, 500.2–4, which is also cited above in note 57.

75 Cf. *Miklós Szőke*, Treaty (2018), 202 (note 20), with further literature. On impaling as death penalty cf. *Heher*, Tod (2013).

report about such a spectacle had it happened. However, the opposite is the case: As Philip Bockholt demonstrated recently, the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 was regarded as important in contemporary sources of the Islamic East but they did not put any particular emphasis on the event.[76] Moreover, Doukas himself subsequently gives an alternative version of the whereabouts of the Megas Doux, Loukas Notaras, during the fighting:

> *Other say, however, that the duke was discovered with Orchan* [fl. 1412–1453] *in the tower of the castle of the Franks, and that they gave themselves up there because it was no longer possible to resist the Turks.* (…) *When the survivors in the tower had surrendered, they* (…) *were taken to* (…) [a] *ship. One of the captives, to gain his freedom, bargained with the ship captain: 'If you will set me free this day, I will deliver to you* (…) *the grand duke.'* (…) [And h]*e brought the grand duke to the ruler in Kosmedion* (…)*.*[77]

It is this second version that deserves closer scrutiny. Here, it is precisely explained exactly how Notaras was captured during the advance of the Ottoman troops into the city and how he came before the sultan. This course of events leads directly to the conversation that Doukas refers to at the beginning of his passage. The identification of the Constantine's head, however, depends on Notaras' statements about his own whereabouts during the final assault.[78]

Therefore, the confirmation by both Notaras and other Byzantines that the Ottomans had found the emperor's head can also be read subversively: Doukas evokes a second, more subtle level of interpretation for Notaras' conversation with Mehmed where the Megas Doux deliberately lied to the Sultan not only about his own whereabouts but possibly also about the identification of the emperor's head. Thus, Doukas suggests that Notaras deliberately made a false statement – a white lie, so to speak, in order to keep 'the truth' about Constantine's whereabouts a secret (about which he himself was not sure) and which all too easily found approval among the other Byzantines present because of the grand duke's office and authority.[79]

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76 I kindly thank Philip Bockholt (University of Münster) for pointing this out to me. Cf. on this in general *Bockholt*, Lost (2021).

77 Doukas 40.4. Ed. *Reinsch*, 524.1–18: ἕτεροι δέ φασιν· ὡς σ' δούξ εὑρέθη μετὰ τοῦ Ὀρχὰν ἐν τῷ πύργῳ τοῦ καστελίου τῶν Φραντζέζιδων· κἀκεῖ παρεδόθησαν· ὁρῶντες ὡς οὐκ' ἦν δυνατὸν ἀντίστασθαι πλέον τοῖς Τούρκοις. (…) οἱ δέ τοῦ πύργου παραδοθέντες (…) ἐντὸς τοῦ πλοίου (…) εἰσήχθησαν. τότε εἷς τῶν αἰχμαλώτων τῶν Ῥωμαίων· καταπραγματευσάμενος τὴν αὐτοῦ ἐλευθερίαν, εἴρηκε τῷ ναυάρχῳ· 'εἰ ἐλευθερώσεις με σήμερον, ἔχω σοι δοῦναι (…) τὸν μέγα δούκαν ὁμοῦ.' (…) Τὸν δέ μέγαδοῦκα (…) εἰς τὸν ἡγεμόνα ἀπήγαγεν ἐν τῷ Κοσμιδίῳ. The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 232 f.

78 Cf. on the fate of Notaras and his family after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople *Reinsch*, Mehmet (2009), 23–25, *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), 218 f., 245–247, with further literature, and the following footnote.

79 On the death of Notaras in Doukas' account cf. Doukas 40.5–40.7. Ed. *Reinsch*, 526.1–532.44, with a translation in Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 233–235. Mehmed, however, seemed to have learned from his previous dilemma, cf. Doukas 40.5–40.7. Ed. *Reinsch*, 523.41–44: λαβὼν οὖν ὁ δήμιος τὰς κεφαλὰς ἦλθεν εἰς τὸ συμπόσιον· ἐμφανίσας αὐτὰς τῷ αἱμοβόρῳ θηρίῳ. τὰ δὲ σώματα γυμνὰ ἐκεῖ καὶ

A misidentified corpse, a sultan who has fallen victim to cunning, who does not know his opponent and who does not recognise the lies told to his face – against this background, Doukas marks the moment of Mehmed's accession to power – which he had longed for so desperately – as mockery. He is ridiculed in front of everybody present: the Ottoman troops who represent the people he already rules, and the Byzantines who are represented by the grand duke and a (fake) emperor's body.[80] Thus, even though Mehmed now seemed to formally have ended Byzantine rule, he, however, still does not rule them completely. The Byzantines are, thus, not inferior.

Doukas remains silent about which of the presented versions he believes himself. Thus, it is left largely up to the intended audience to decide whether Constantine's head was now on display in distant Muslim countries, buried under a pile of corpses in the streets of the conquered Constantinople or to be found elsewhere – for example, on the shoulders of a still-living ruler. It is only in the lamentation on the fallen city that the topic emerges for one last time. Here, the authors asks: *Where are the remains of Constantine the Great and the other emperors?*[81] Although another – historically significant – Constantine is mentioned here explicitly, the resonances of the shared name 'Constantine' and the allusion to the loss of the other dead emperor's bodies, one may also feel reminded of the last, not fully legitimate ruler who allegedly died during the fall of the city to the Ottomans. However, whether this reflects the author's view or merely illustrates his own ignorance about the emperor's whereabouts cannot be fully decided. But be it as it may, Doukas ultimately answers this delicate question with a concise counter-question which should speak volumes in further reception.

White Lies and stinging Critique: Commenting Mehmed's 'Accession' to Power in the 'History' of Doukas

Changes of rule are dynamic processes: Manifesting both continuities and discontinuities of rulership, they also demonstrate the fragility and precariousness that is funda-

ἄταφα κατέλιπεν – *The executioner picked up the heads and returned to the banquet, presenting them to the bloodthirsty beast. He had abandoned the bodies where they lay naked and uninterred.* The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 235.

80 Whether Doukas alluded to Mehmed's own problems with legitimacy cannot be said with certainty at this point, cf. on this Doukas 32.3. Ed. *Reinsch*, 392.6–8, with a translation in Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 184.

81 Doukas 41.2. Ed. *Reinsch*, 534.6 f.: ποῦ τὰ (…) λείψανα (…) τὰ τοῦ μεγάλου Κωνσταντίνου; The translation is taken from Doukas, Decline. Ed. *Magoulias*, 236.

mentally inherent in power transitions. While the change of personnel from predecessor to successor may seem rather uncomplicated, its actual implementation and consolidation depend highly on a plethora of factors that go far beyond the people who represent the 'old' and 'new' rule. In this context, rumours about the return of an allegedly dead ruler ultimately run counter to common notions of dynastic upheavals and continuities, as they stimulated a broad discourse among both contemporaries and later generations that ultimately postponed the actual change of rule.

The mere possibility that the last Byzantine emperor had survived the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople thus dynamised the change of rule from the Byzantines to the Ottomans by keeping it in balance. The paradox of an emperor simultaneously alive and dead, which was called 'Schrödinger's Rule' in this paper, was thereby nourished primarily by lack of knowledge. Neither the Ottoman troops nor Mehmed himself were aware of the emperor's physical appearance; they were not able to recognise his body but had to rely on the testimony of others, namely the Byzantines themselves, since there were no identifying markers at hand that could not easily have been substituted (such as a cloak, a helmet, or other imperial insignia, such as shoes).[82] However, the Byzantines were unaware of their emperor's whereabouts as the Ottomans, simply not knowing if he was still alive or not. The situation was further complicated by the fact that this lack of information could not be overcome: The circumstances of the emperor's death remained unexplained – in a way, Constantine, thus, became Schrödinger's cat but without the opportunity for bystanders to simply open the box to gain certainty about his condition.

Against this background, it becomes clear why the death of the last Byzantine emperor has been told and retold again and again – and why modern historiography has also continued to reproduce this narrative loop: Constantine is a ruler known especially for his death. Not least for this reason, the focus has so far been on comparing

82 That, for instance, the location as such seems to be a weak indication for identifying any corpse also stresses *Schmitz-Esser*, Leichnam (2014), 61 (201). On the robbery of the dead's garments cf. *ibid*., 79, 86 f., 133 f. There are several examples on the identification of the ruler's body in medieval sources, on the identification of Harold II Godwinson (r. 1066) by Edith the Fair (fl. 1025–1066) after the battle of Hastings in 1066 cf. *Bruhn*, Kein Platz (in print), and *Schmitz-Esser*, Leichnam (2014), 87 f., 321, on identifying Charles the Bold (r. since 1467) after the battle of Nancy in 1477 and further examples cf. *ibid*., 32, 86–89, and *Prietzel*, Schlachtentod (2015), 129, each with further literature; on the death of King William (r. since 1256) after a battle near Hoogwoud in 1256 cf. *Kamenzin*, Tode (2020), 312–332, esp. 317 f., 330 f. For the death of the Byzantine Emperor Nicephorus (r. since 802) in the battle of Pliska in 811 cf. *Miklós Szőke*, Treaty (2018), 197, 202 (note 20), and *Ziemann*, Dangerous Neighbours (2018), with further literature. Although this source material includes typical and topical forms of speaking, it is worth noting that, regarding the social differentiation of bodies, all the abovementioned identification markers refer to physical characteristics, not to items of clothing. Cf. on garments of the dead in general cf. *Schmitz-Esser*, Leichnam (2014), 362–402, esp. 370. On the fate of the dead on the battlefield cf. *ibid*., 77–80, on face and facial scars as identifying markers cf. *Morosini*, Body (2017), 178 f., and on facial disfigurement *Skinner*, Challenges (2016), 32–34. On religious connotations of scars cf. recently *Dickason*, Sacred Skin (2022).

the circumstances of his death in different sources but not on the meaning ascribed to it and to the change of rule respectively.

Focusing on the historiographical work of Doukas, this paper argued that his account is determined by the emperor's disappearance in the fighting during the final Ottoman assault on Constantinople. In this context, it is especially the ruler's body that serves as cornerstone to make sense of the change of rule from the Byzantines to the Ottomans: Doukas, thereby, offers a biting commentary on Mehmed's accession which fits perfectly well with the authors' general attitude towards the sultan – and against this background, it is hardly surprising that Doukas characterises Mehmed both as illegitimate and incapable of ruling. Even though Doukas does not conceal his criticism of Constantine's coronation, the author was not so much focusing on delegitimising his rule but rather concerned with instrumentalising his death and, above all, his corpse for his own specific viewpoint on the power transition. In doing so, he undoubtedly attaches a great deal of importance to Constantine. But this significance is not to be equated with legitimacy: Even an illegitimate ruler can have significance, so that, consequently, even an illegitimate rule must be concluded formally. This is the difficult task Mehmed faces in the immediate aftermath of the city's taking: His troops may have been successful in their conquest but the change of rule can only be brought about by the presence of the sultan's predecessor. It is precisely this important closing, however, that Mehmed – in the subversive reading of Doukas – fails to achieve because "[s]imply put, Emperor Constantine XI (…) refused to die."[83]

Only recently the term 'Interregnum' has been used to describe historical constellations as principally "'open' situations in which political solutions and constellations of power can arise in different, unpredictable ways."[84] The change of rule from the Byzantines to the Ottomans may not have come unexpected[85] but it still fits well into this broader understanding of such "precarious temporal spaces of political in-between"[86] – or, as Stefan Tebruck has coined it recently, as a moment of "precarious 'Herrschaft'":[87] For the late Byzantine author Doukas uses the absence of Constantine's body not only to prolong the transition of rule and, therefore, of the *imperio vacante* itself. In his narrative, the rather complicated change of rule also leads to "a change of course being set with lasting consequences for the 'Herrschaftsverband'": For Mehmed both fails to for-

83 *Philippides*, Constantine (2018), ix.

84 *Kersken*/*Tebruck*, Interregna (2020), 4, understand interregna as "'offene' historische Konstellationen, um Situationen, in denen sich politische Lösungen und Machtkonstellationen in unterschiedlicher, nicht vorher absehbarer Weise herausbilden konnten." Cf. also *Jaros*, Rev. of Kersken/Tebruck, Interregna (2022).

85 Cf. concisely *Schiel*, Mongolensturm (2011), 13.

86 This wording is borrowed from *Zotz*, Interregna (2020), 14, 22, who describes these situations as "prekäre[…] zeitliche[…]" and "politische Zwischenräume".

87 *Tebruck*, Interregna (2020), 273, who discusses the term "prekäre Herrschaft" for such phases of transitions that are accompanied by a "Weichenstellung mit nachhaltigen Folgen für den Herrschaftsverband" (*ibid*., for the following quote).

mally end his predecessor's rule and to establish his own accession as successor. Doukas, thus, deliberately contradicts the idea of keeping the change of rule "as short as possible"[88] in order to emphasise the illegitimacy of Mehmed's rule and to blur the temporal lines between the new and the old regime.[89] However, precisely because of the fact that interregna themselves are commonly meant to last at least for several months and not just for a short moment,[90] they may not seem to be useful when it comes to the precarious micro-temporalities inherent to every transition of power. But they may offer suitable links for those phases of transition and moments of 'precarious Herrschaft' that are studied in this conference volume: For, strictly speaking, during changes of rule, rulership is always at stake – regardless of the actual duration and (ir)regularity of the processes inherent: If a change of rule is always a state of in-between, does a regular change of rule, then, even exist? Are changes of rule not always to be understood as precarious moments whose degree of 'unusualness' is ultimately determined by how long this moment lasts and how strong the consequences are that it yields? In this context, a ruler's supposed return in an attempt to regain his throne seems particularly suitable for comparative approaches towards examining changes of rule, as they are intended in this volume:[91] For these ideas run counter to the linear model of dynastic succession by showing great potential for discussing legitimate rule at the same time. Which narratives were established as rumours, which proved to be incapable of gaining support and, therefore, remained an individual opinion? Which patterns of argumentation were used? Did these patterns remain always the same or were they applicable and changeable in a context-specific way? Are there chronological or geographical trends, commonalities, and differences? It is precisely in tackling questions like these that approaches from the field of temporality studies can prove fruitful in order to highlight precarious micro-moments during changes of rule with regard to their potential political brisance. For if the king is not dead, or rather, if the king is no longer dead, when is rule, then, ever secure?

88 *Zotz*, Interregna (2020), 15.

89 Cf. on the fact that, also in contemporary perspectives, the description of controversial changes of rule are always an assessment *Tebruck*, Interregna (2020), 257 f.

90 Cf. *Kersken*/*Tebruck*, Interregna (2020), 4.

91 Cf. on apocalyptic connotations in this context e. g. *Moehring*, Weltkaiser (2000), and more recently *Brandes*, Predictions (2021).

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