

Byzantina Symmeikta

Vol 32 (2022)

BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA 32



Dating Issues: The defection of Sebastokrator Isaakios Komnenos to the Danishmendid Turks, the death of his brother Andronikos Komnenos, and the death of their mother Empress Irene Doukaina

Marina LOUKAKI

doi: [10.12681/byzsym.27280](https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.27280)

Copyright © 2022, Marina LOUKAKI



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

To cite this article:

LOUKAKI, M. (2022). Dating Issues: The defection of Sebastokrator Isaakios Komnenos to the Danishmendid Turks, the death of his brother Andronikos Komnenos, and the death of their mother Empress Irene Doukaina. *Byzantina Symmeikta*, 32, 11–16. <https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.27280>

INSTITUTE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH
SECTION OF BYZANTINE RESEARCH
NATIONAL HELLENIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION



ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΚΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ
ΤΟΜΕΑΣ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ
ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ



BYZANTINA ΣΥΜΜΕΙΚΤΑ

BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA

ΤΟΜΟΣ 32 VOLUME

MARINA LOUKAKI

DATING ISSUES:

THE DEFECTION OF SEBASTOKRATOR ISAAKIOS KOMNENOS
TO THE DANISHMENDID TURKS, THE DEATH OF HIS BROTHER ANDRONIKOS
KOMNENOS, AND THE DEATH OF THEIR MOTHER EMPRESS IRENE DOUKAINA

ΑΘΗΝΑ • 2022 • ATHENS

MARINA LOUKAKI

DATING ISSUES:

THE DEFECTION OF SEBASTOKRATOR ISAAKIOS KOMNENOS TO THE DANISHMENDID TURKS, THE DEATH OF HIS BROTHER ANDRONIKOS KOMNENOS, AND THE DEATH OF THEIR MOTHER EMPRESS IRENE DOUKAINA

Recent publications continue to view the year of the death of Empress Irene Doukaina as uncertain, with estimates falling within a ten-year range. Therefore, it is advisable to return to the subject and once again cite the testimonials and data that lead with certainty to the conclusion that the death occurred after 1130 and before 1136, possibly on February 19, 1133.

The year 1136 as the *terminus ante quem* of Irene Doukaina's death is irrefutably derived from the Typikon of the Pantokrator Monastery, which explicitly refers to her as deceased¹. We know that the Pantokrator Typikon was signed by Emperor John II Komnenos in October 1136 of the fifteenth indiction cycle².

When the sebastokrator Andronikos, son of Irene and Alexios I Komnenos died, Theodore Prodromos wrote a prose monody for his untimely death³ and also composed a poem of lament addressed to his mother⁴.

1. P. GAUTIER, Le typicon du Christ Pantocrator, *RÉB* 32 (1974), 41.200-201. Cf. P. GAUTIER, L'obituaire du typicon du Pantokrator, *RÉB* 27 (1969), 238, 245-247.

2. GAUTIER, Christ Pantocrator, 131.1670-1673.

3. A. MAJURI, Anecdota Prodromea dal Vat.gr. 305, *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei, cl. di scien. mor., stor. e filol., ser. 5, 17*, Roma (1908), 521-528, 545-547; M. D.J. OP DE COUL, *Théodore Prodrome, Lettres et Discours. Édition, Traduction, Commentaire* (Thèse soutenue à l'Université Paris IV, unpublished), Paris 2007, 224-237, 397-402. Cf. A. SIDERAS, *Die byzantinischen Grabreden. Prosopographie, Datierung, Überlieferung. 142 Epitaphien und Monodien aus dem byzantinischen Jahrtausend* [WBS 19], Wien 1994, 157.

4. W. HÖRANDNER, *Theodoros Prodromos, Historische Gedichte* [WBS 11], Wien 1974, n° II, 185-190.

A further prose monody about the same personage was written by Michael Italikos⁵. In this poem, Prodrornos, after referring to other earlier deaths of beloved relatives that had saddened the empress, stated that she had lost two sons almost simultaneously; a cruel fate had cut the thread of Andronikos' life and deprived Isaakios of his strength, who was wandering far away in the East like a living-dead⁶. Therefore, it is certain that the defection of Isaakios and the death of his brother Andronikos constitute the *terminus post quem* of the death of Irene Doukaina.

In 1907, Eduard Kurtz dated both Andronikos' death and Isaac's flight to 1122⁷, a date that was accepted in 1908 by A. Majuri⁸, who first published both the poem dedicated to Irene Doukaina and Theodore Prodrornos' monody on Andronikos. Additionally, Wolfram Hörandner, in his new 1974 edition of the poem, following Kurtz, placed the death of Andronikos in 1122 or shortly thereafter, but definitely before February 1123⁹. However, Kurtz based his chronology on the date February 19, 1123, which he determined to be the date of the death of Empress Irene Doukaina. He came to this conclusion relying on evidence found in the Typikon of the Monastery of the Theotokos Kosmosoteira, composed by sebastokrator Isaakios Komnenos (this is the Isaakios of Prodrornos' above mentioned poem) when he founded the monastery in 1151/1152, in the fifteenth indiction¹⁰. In this Typikon, which, it should be noted, is preserved in a sixteenth century manuscript (no. 3, in the Monastery of Saint Gerasimos, Cephalonia Island)¹¹, Isaakios,

5. P. GAUTIER, *Michael Italikos, Lettres et Discours* [AOC 14], Paris 1972, 81-88. Cf. GAUTIER, *Obituaire*, 249-250; SIDERAS, *Grabreden*, 151-153.

6. HÖRANDNER, *Gedichte*, 186, n° II 25-28: *δοιοὺς γάρ τ' ἀπόλεσσας ἄμ' υἱέας, ἄγριε Τελχίν, / Ἄνδρονίκιο βίην, Ἰσαακίου δέ τε ῥώμην, / οὐ μὲν ἐπ' ἀντολίης μακρὰ πείρατα πλαζομένοιο, / ζωοῦ τεθνεῖωτος, ἰὸν βαρυσύμφορε μοῖρα.*

7. E. KURTZ, *Unedierte Texte aus der Zeit des Kaisers Johannes Komnenos*, *BZ* 16 (1907), 86 and 102.

8. Majuri, *Anecdota Prodromea*, 545.

9. HÖRANDNER, *Gedichte*, 188 and f.n. 23. The same date is accepted by SIDERAS, *Grabreden*, 157.

10. G. K. PAPAZOGLOU, *Τυπικὸν Ἰσαακίου Ἀλεξίου Κομνηνοῦ τῆς Μονῆς Θεοτόκου τῆς Κοσμοσώτειρας Φερρών (1151/1152)*, Thessaloniki 2014², 63.3-4, see, also, 45-46.

11. Regarding the manuscript and its editions, whether excerpts of or the entire Typikon and related bibliography, see PAPAZOGLOU, *Τυπικόν*, 29-51; A. TSELIKAS, *Τα χειρόγραφα της μονῆς αγίου Γερασίμου στην Κεφαλλονία, Κεφαλληνιακά Χρονικά* 3 (1978/79), 25-27.

referring to his parents' annual memorial service wrote: *for she* [i.e., his mother Irene Doukaina] *departed in a holy way for the Lord during the first indiction, on the 19th of February, [while] the emperor, my master and father* [Alexios I Komnenos] *left life on Thursday the 15th, the day of the Holy Dormition of the Mother of God*¹² (transl. Nancy Patterson Ševčenko).

Kurtz calculated that February 19 of the first indiction coincided either with the year 1138 or the year 1123. Ruling out 1138, since, in October 1136, the Pantokrator Typikon reported that Irene Doukaina was deceased, he concluded that Irene Doukaina died on February 19, 1123¹³.

In 1912, Ferdinand Chalandon had already expressed doubts about the attested dating, citing information from the texts by Prodromos and Italikos on the military career of Andronikos, whose death he placed at some time after 1129; he also maintained that, according to testimony from Michael the Syrian, Isaakios defected in 1130. Consequently, Irene Doukaina must have died in 1133 rather than 1123, because, according to him, the reference to the first indiction might be the result of a copyist's error instead of the eleventh¹⁴.

While the two rhetors, Michael Italikos and Theodore Prodromos made lengthy references to the military feats of Andronikos Komnenos alongside both his father, Alexios I Komnenos, and his brother, John II¹⁵, the

12. καὶ γὰρ αὕτη πρὸς Κύριον ἱεροπρεπῶς ἐξεδήμησε κατὰ τὴν πρώτην ἰνδικτιῶνα, ἡμέρα ἔννεακαιδεκάτη τοῦ φεβρουαρίου μηνός, τοῦ αὐθέντου καὶ πατρός μου καὶ βασιλέως τοῦ βίου ἀπάραντος ἀγούστου πεντεκαιδεκάτη, ἡμέρα πέμπτη τῆς ἀγίας Κοιμήσεως τῆς Θεομήτορος: PAPAZOGLOU, *Τυπικόν*, 111.1782-1786. See, also, 178-179. See the translation in J. THOMAS - A. CONSTANTINIDES HERO - G. CONSTABLE (eds), *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founder' Typika and Testaments* [DOS 35], Washington, D.C.2000, 840.

13. KURTZ, *Unedierte Texte*, 74. The same date is accepted, albeit with some reservation, by D. POLEMIS, *The Doukai, A contribution to Byzantine Prosopography*, London 1968, 71-72 and f.n. 17 (n° 26), as well as HÖRANDNER, *Gedichte*, 188 and SIDERAS, *Grabreden*, 152-153. Different K. VARZOS, *Ἡ Γενεαλογία τῶν Κομνηνῶν*, I [Βυζαντινά Κείμενα καὶ Μελέται 20^α], Thessaloniki 1984, 106 and f.n 159; PBW (on line) Eirene 61

14. F. CHALANDON, *Les Comnène, Jean II Comnène et Manuel I Comnène*, II, Paris 1912, 15 f.n. 2.

15. *Michael Italikos*, Monody, 82.6-83.24, 84.20-85.2 (ed. GAUTIER); Theodore Prodromos, Monody, 525.21-27, 526.32-527.10, 527.26-27 (ed. MAJURI); idem, Poem II 46-59 (186-187 ed. HÖRANDNER). On Andronikos Komnenos, see GAUTIER, *Michael Italikos*, 31-34; VARZOS, *Γενεαλογία* I, 229-237 (n° 35); PBW (on line) Andronikos 108.

grandiloquent nature of their texts might justify any doubts and difference of opinions held by some researchers regarding how to precisely identify and date these campaigns, especially the ones on the northern borders in which the deceased participated¹⁶. However, this is not the case with Isaakios Komnenos' rebellion and his defection to the Danishmendids (to Ghazi II), which according to various historical sources coincides with the death of Bohemond II, Prince of Antioch, the campaign of John II against the Turks, and the establishment of a city near the Ryndakos River. It is true that the Greek historical sources provide very concise information regarding this first flight of Isaakios and his wanderings¹⁷. However, Michael the Syrian is more detailed and precise, writing:

In the same year, after Bohemond, Lord of Antioch, was killed, a king came from Jerusalem and so too Joscelin (II) from Edessa came to Antioch to reign over it (...). In the same year, John, Emperor of the Greeks, marched out in war against the Turks. He built a city on the seacoast. While he was getting ready to confront the Turks, his brother and some of his nobles acted deceitfully against him, and when he sought to seize them, his brother fled to Emir Ghazi. The latter was very much rejoiced in him and honoured him greatly and sent him to Gabras in Trebizond. As for the emperor, he returned to Constantinople and threw in exile all those who acted deceitfully against him¹⁸.

16. While everyone agrees that Andronikos participated in the campaign of Alexios I against the Turks in 1116 and in the campaign of John II against the Petsenegoi in 1122, it is unclear whether Prodromos actually discussed any participation on Andronikos' part in the two-year Byzantine-Hungarian War in 1127–1129; questions were raised by KURTZ (*Unedierte Texte*, 88), HÖRANDNER (*Gedichte*, 188), and SIDERAS (*Grabreden*, 153 and f.n. 18-22).

17. Nicetas Choniates, *Historia* 32.33-48, ed. I. A. VAN DIETEN, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* [CFHB 11/1], Berlin-New York 1975. Regarding Isaakios Komnenos, see VARZOS, *Γενεαλογία* I, 238-254 (n° 36); PBW (on line) Isaakios 102.

18. Michael the Syrian, 16.4, trans. A. HARRAK, *The Chronicle of Michael the Great (The Edessa-Aleppo Syriac Codex), Books XV-XXI, From the Year 1050 to 1195 AD* [Gorgias Chronicles of Late Antiquity 3], Piscataway, NJ 2019, 158-160. Nicetas Choniates 20.22-23, 37.74-75 (VAN DIETEN) also mentions that John II established a city near the Ryndakos River; so, too, does Kinnamos, 15, 38, ed. A. MEINEKE, *Ioannis Cinnami Epitome* [CSHB], Bonn 1836.

Bohemond II of Antioch died in battle against the Turks in February 1130, and his death is corroborated by many non-Greek sources¹⁹.

The vast majority of modern scholars unequivocally state that Isaakios' revolt and his defection to the Turks occurred in 1130²⁰. Consequently, his mother Irene Doukaina was still alive in 1130 and the death of his brother, Andronikos Komnenos occurred after this event. Andronikos Komnenos fell ill and died on the coast of Asia Minor and his body was transported to the capital in a vessel accompanied by the Byzantine fleet. The two rhetoricians Michael Italikos and Theodore Prodromos vividly described the great storm the convoy encountered, which might indicate that the ships were sailing up the Sea of Marmara. Andronikos probably would have accompanied his brother, John II, on his campaign to the East in 1130.

In conclusion, Irene Doukaina is excluded from dying on February 19, 1123. Chalandon's proposal to correct the indiction date in the Kosmosoteira Typikon to read eleventh (ι´) rather than first (α´) is a very plausible suggestion –in this case, her death would have occurred on February 19,

19. See the collected sources in A. D. BUCK, *The Principality of Antioch and its Frontiers in the Twelfth Century*, Woodbridge 2017, 22 f.n. 3.

20. Purely indicatively see J.-CL. CHEYNET, *Pouvoir et Contestations à Byzance (963-1210)* [Byzantina Sorbonensia 9], Paris 1990, 105; P. MAGDALINO, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180)*, Cambridge 1993, 193; idem, The triumph of 1133: in A. BUCOSSI – A. R. SUAREZ, *John II Komnenos, emperor of Byzantium: in the shadow of father and son*, Farnham 2016, 63; A. PAPAGEORGIOU, *Ο Ιωάννης Β΄ Κομνηνός και η εποχή του (1118-1143)*, Athens 2017, 220-221, 316-317; A. R. SUAREZ, The life and reign of John II Komnenos (1087-1143) a chronology: in BUCOSSI-SUAREZ, *John II*, xx; M.C.G. LAU, *The Reign of Emperor John II Komnenos, 1087-1143: The transformation of the old order*, Dphil History Thesis, Oriel College, Oxford University 2015 (unpublished), 176-178. Exceptions are J. ANDERSON (The Seraglio Octateuch and the Kokkinobaphos Master, *DOP* 36[1982], 86) and SIDERAS (*Grabreden*, 152 f.n. 17). The latter speculates that Prodromos might have been referring to a previous attempt by Isaakios to seize the throne. However, this suggestion must be ruled out. Such an attempt by Isaakios and, indeed, prior to 1122 –Sideras (*Grabreden*, 153) accepts this date for the death of Andronikos – not only is not attested by any historical source but is also improbable; Zonaras (III, 748, ed. T. BÜTTNER-WOBST, *Ioannis Zonarae epitomae historiarum libri XVIII* [CSHB], Bonn 1897) and Nicetas Choniates (6.33-34, 8.2-9.8 VAN DIETEN) explicitly state that in August 1118, Isaakios Komnenos supported the ascension to the throne of his brother John II, as opposed to Andronikos who sided with his mother Irene Doukaina and his sister Anna Komnene. See, also, VARZOS, *Γενεαλογία Ι*, 238-239 (n° 36).

1133– but not unequivocally confirmed. It is true that in the Cephalonia manuscript, the numeral adjective “first” is written out in full;²¹ however, given that it is a much later copy of a twelfth-century text, copyist’s mistakes cannot be ruled out.

ΧΡΟΝΟΛΟΓΙΚΑ ΠΡΟΒΛΗΜΑΤΑ: Η ΑΥΤΟΜΟΛΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΚΡΑΤΟΡΟΣ
ΙΣΑΑΚΙΟΥ ΚΟΜΝΗΝΟΥ ΣΤΟΥΣ ΔΑΝΙΣΜΕΝΔΙΔΕΣ ΤΟΥΡΚΟΥΣ, Ο ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ ΤΟΥ
ΑΔΕΛΦΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΑΝΔΡΟΝΙΚΟΥ ΚΟΜΝΗΝΟΥ ΚΑΙ Ο ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΜΗΤΕΡΑΣ
ΤΟΥΣ ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΕΙΡΑΣ ΕΙΡΗΝΗΣ ΔΟΥΚΑΙΝΑΣ

Επαναξιολόγηση των φιλολογικών και ιστορικών δεδομένων για τη χρονολόγηση της αυτομολίας του σεβαστοκράτορος Ισαακίου Κομνηνού στους Δανισμενδίδες Τούρκους, του θανάτου του αδελφού του Ανδρονίκου Κομνηνού και του θανάτου της μητέρας τους αυτοκράτειρας Ειρήνης Δούκαινας. Από τον συσχετισμό των γεγονότων προκύπτει με βεβαιότητα ότι η Ειρήνη Δούκαινα αποκλείεται να πέθανε στις 19 Φεβρουαρίου 1123 αλλά μετά το 1130 και πριν από το 1136. Πιθανόν απεβίωσε στις 19 Φεβρουαρίου 1133.

21. Confirmed by a photograph of the Historical and Palaeographical Archive, National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (MIET). My warm thanks to Christine G. Kossyva, head of the Department of Document and Microfilm Digitization, for her assistance.