The Past’s Future: The Chronographia Project in the Mid-Ninth Century

The importance of the Chronographia can only be understood if its different ends—both its literal endings and the different purposes to which it was put—are distinguished and studied individually. So far, I have considered two different endings within the Chronographia as it survives today, arguing that each serves a different end. These two endings reveal how a monumental work of historical scholarship intersected with the unavoidably capricious realities of the imperial politics of its elite authors and patrons. The unique philosophical, theological, political, and historical arguments of the Chronographia aimed to give its audience the materials with which to make sense of their present world by re-situating that world in relation to its past and future. The history of these adaptations shows subsequent readers and editors took to heart the injunction of the Preface to always be alert to seeing the fulfillment of the past in the present, and to complete what was missing.

In chapter 7, I argued that the original planned ending of the project was the entry now labeled AM 6302 (AD 809/10)—the year before emperor Nikephoros I’s death—and that the end, or goal, of this ending was to make a philosophical and historiographical case for supporting Arsaber the quaestor’s rebellion against Nikephoros I.\(^1\) The fact that this point was made in philosophical, historiographical, even ‘religious’ terms does not imply that it did not have major political implications.\(^2\) The very format of the synkellos'

---

\(^1\) On the first end(ing) of the Chronographia see chapter 7 section 7; on Arsaber and his allies see chapter 2 section 4 and chapter 8 section 1.4.

chronography invited its audience to engage with its imperial portraits as *Kaiserkritik*, to judge emperors past and present. This first end of the *Chronographia* used an extended historical argument to win a moral victory by denigrating the policies and regime of Nikephoros I in favor of the rebels (including a *synkellos*) he had punished and banished. The *Chronographia*’s first end wrote a history of the universe which was also a manifesto claiming that the cosmos called Christians to arms against an unjust emperor. The project’s first end framed the entire past to make sense of the present moment of AD 810.

However, that present moment evaporated quite quickly, and so necessitated a second ending. In chapter 8, I argued that the three entries labeled AM 6303–6305 (AD 810–813) which complete the *Chronographia* as it survives today served this second end by providing a second ending. These entries were a subsequent addition, a coda written in AD 814 or 815. They were likely written by the Theophanes of the *Preface* but more importantly were written on behalf of the entire group behind the project. This group was an iconophile contingent among those who allied to bring Leo V the Armenian (r. 813–820) to the throne and who suddenly found themselves at a crisis when he reverted to the iconoclast policies of his namesake, Leo III (r. 717–741). Thus, while the *Chronographia* invited its readers to take the failed revolt of AD 808 as the impetus for its creation, by the time the work began to circulate (in AD 815 at the earliest), its audience would have known the professed leader of the revolt, Arsaber the *quaestor*, as the father-in-law to the emperor Leo V. The final entries of the *Chronographia* updated the work to reflect this new context.

In this chapter I articulate a possible third end for the *Chronographia* by reading *PG 1710* as a source on its own moment of creation. To this point, I have read that manuscript as a source on the original form of the *Chronicle*. Now I will study that first Greek recension of the *Chronographia* in *PG 1710* as the earliest surviving reading and adaptation of the work. I assess the recension in *PG 1710* and the other ninth-century recensions of the *Chronographia* against the context of mid-ninth-century Constantinople. In doing so, my argument for how to understand the *Chronographia*’s third end does not focus on the question of whether or in which ways the text in *PG 1710* is closer to the original version, but rather uses its early date and an undoubtedly altered passage therein to argue that a major reason for the *Chronographia*’s influence and...
continued popularity was the very fact that it "does not appear to have been stable in the ninth century."  

Of all the many differences between recensions, the single most notable textual change from the original is the re-location of an entire passage which I will call "the Papal-Carolingian excursus." The version of the excursus in the Greek recensions is demonstrably an alteration to the original. I situate this alteration in the milieu of the recension of PG 1710, namely the reign of patriarch Methodios (AD 843 to 847). While it is certain that this excursus was a modification to the original, it is impossible to definitively prove that this alteration was introduced by the recension behind PG 1710 in particular. Nevertheless, it is sufficient for my purposes to merely show that it is plausible if not probable that this is the case. I only demand this modest level of probability to make my main claim: the text's instability is evidence of its continued significance.

The Chronographia continued to be read, altered, and recopied because it continued to be seen as relevant to the politics of the Roman empire in contexts such as that which I propose below. This point stands regardless of whether or not my exact hypothesis for who re-edited the Chronographia in 843–847 proves reliable through the tests of time, criticism, and further reflection. What we can already know without a doubt is that the Chronographia project continued to matter to groups of the powerful (whether in the middle of the ninth century, the end of the ninth century, or the eleventh from whence our other manuscripts survive) and that these groups gained insight into their present by reading and editing the Chronographia. Changes to the text are evidence for how the Chronographia continued to matter to and for the powerful elite of the Roman Empire. The real value in hypothesizing possible contexts for significant textual change is to open up a conversation about the unique varieties of history-writing in early and mid-ninth-century Constantinople.

7 A recent argument persuasively locates the production of Wake Greek 5 and VG 155 by still-powerful descendants of the Empress Irene in Bithynia at the turn of the tenth century. I hold ca. 870 Constantinople a more likely milieu for the recension (if not these manuscripts), but the issue is not settled. See: Juan Signes Codoñer, “Theophanes at the Time of Leo VI,” in Studies in Theophanes, ed. Marek Jankowiak and Federico Montinaro, Travaux et Mémoires 19 (Paris: Association des amis du Centre d’histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2015), 159–76.
1 Dating the Ninth-Century Recensions of the Chronographia

Before comparing how the three different ninth-century recensions of the Chronographia present the story of the eighth-century alliance between the papacy and the Carolingian Franks—what I am calling the Papal-Carolingian excursus—I will define and date those recensions. Doing so will make it possible to propose historical contexts for where the different recensions place the excursus.

In the following discussion I label the Greek recension represented by the manuscript PG 1710 as Gr1, and the Greek recension represented by the manuscripts Wake Greek 5 and VG 155 as Gr2. Gr1 could have been produced no earlier than 843 (for reasons that we will soon see). Its script is comparable to a manuscript dated 862 giving us a plausible date range of AD 843 to ca. 862. Gr2 could not have been produced any earlier than the reign of Basil I (r. 867–886). It has also been dated as late as the early tenth century, giving us a plausible date range of AD 867 to ca. 900.

I label the Latin recension La. The Latin recension of the Chronographia goes by the title of the Historia Tripartita, an edited translation made by Anastasius Bibliothecarius during his diplomatic mission to Constantinople in 870, of the same texts found in Gr2. It began with a collection of chronological lists known as the Chronographikon Syntomon of patriarch Nikephoros I (not to be confused with his historical work the Breviarium or Short History). This was followed by the Chronicle of George and Theophanes, though Anastasius heavily edited the Chronicle through the reign of Justinian I. La is represented by the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana’s manuscript Palatinus Latinus 826 (9th or 10th century), and the Montecassino Abbey’s codex Casinensis 6 (1058–1086).


I have not been able to consult the Montecassino copy, which K. de Boor considered to be the superior copy of the two. Nevertheless, the copy of the *Historia Tripartita* in the Vatican manuscript is sufficient for our purposes. *Palatinus Latinus 826* is dated to the late ninth century on paleographic grounds, this early date making it likely to be a copy of Anastasius’ own version.

The recensions *Gr1* and perhaps *Gr2* were completed before Anastasius Bibliothecarius made the edited translation *La*. Nevertheless, excluding Anastasius’ edits to the early part of the text, scholars concur that *La* was created from an earlier recension of the text than *Gr1* or *Gr2*, which share obvious evidence of adaptation. This evidence was pointed out by K. de Boor in the entry under *AM 6177* (AD 684/5), a passage known to Byzantinists as the “iconoclast scholium.” This passage discusses the relative ecumenicity of the canons of a church council known as the Quinisext Council (held in AD 691/2) and ends with a list of patriarchs who reigned after the council. There are two versions of the list of patriarchs: one version is preserved in *La*, and the other is common to the recensions *Gr1* and *Gr2*. The list of patriarchs in *La* ends with patriarch Tarasios (d. 806). *La* therefore preserves a version compiled after AD 806, but before Nikephoros I had been deposed in AD 815 (since it does not include him in the list). On the other hand, the list of patriarchs in both *Gr1* and *Gr2* runs up to John Grammatikos (deposed in AD 843). Accordingly, *Gr1* and *Gr2* preserve an addition to the list after AD 843 but before Methodios died in AD 847 (since if his reign had been complete, he would have been added to the list). These differences tell us that the surviving Greek recensions preserve a version of the *Chronographia* edited during the mid-ninth-century

---

12 This manuscript is not the only copy of Anastasius’ translation. There seem to be many more manuscripts than had been realized (Bronwen Neil, “Theophanes the Confessor on the Arab Conquest: The Latin Version by Anastasius Bibliothecarius,” in Jankowiak and Montinaro, *Studies in Theophanes*, 149–58). Nevertheless, it is the earliest copy we know, and it was the base upon which K. de Boor published his critical edition in 1883–1885. Karl de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1883–1885), dB 2:424–26.


14 The recent re-dating of *Gr1* noted above does not detract from the substance of the argument for why this is the case, first articulated by de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, 2: 404–22.

15 It is true, as W. Treadgold has pointed out, that it is difficult to reconcile the fact that *Gr1* and *Gr2* states John Grammatikos was patriarch for five years and eleven months while other sources give the span of six years and one month. Nevertheless, this issue does bear upon our point. Warren T. Treadgold, “The Chronological Accuracy of the ‘Chronicle’ of Symeon the Logothete for the Years 813–845,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 33 (1979): 178–79. See also: Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, 506n8.
reign of patriarch Methodios, while La preserves an earlier version. La was translated and edited from a version of the Chronographia compiled between AD 808 and 815, while Gr1 (and the unique textual changes it shares with Gr2) originate from a version of the Chronographia edited between AD 843 and 847. Having established the relevant dating ranges, we can turn to the key passage in question, the Papal-Carolingian excursus.

2 The Papal-Carolingian Excursus

The Papal-Carolingian excursus is a well-known passage whose origins have recently been linked to the pro-Carolingian narrative of the Gesta Pontificum Autissiodorensum. The excursus is placed in one location in La and another in Gr1 (and Gr2). The different date ranges for these recensions (established in section 1) allow us to propose a historical context for the revised version of the excursus in the Chronographia of Gr1 (PG 1710), and then to ask what parties might have cared enough about the text of the Papal-Carolingian excursus between 843 and 847 (during the patriarchate of Methodios and the joint reign of Michael III and Theodora in AD 842–857) to have moved it for that recension. The point of pursuing this question is to use the manuscript PG 1710 as a source on the period in which its recension was produced and so propose an answer to why and how the Chronographia continued to matter in the world of medieval Constantinople.

The excursus begins with Pope Stephen’s flight to Pippin, justifies the Carolingian coup over the Merovingians, describes Carolingian victories over the ‘Umayyads of Andalusia and the Lombards of Italy, and ends with the coronation of Charlemagne. It takes a positive view of these events, framing the Papal-Carolingian alliance in terms the Carolingians would have approved, defending the alliance of Rome with Francia that developed over the course of the second half of the eighth century, from 754 to 800. The recensions of the Chronographia do not vary in their wording of the excursus but in the year

---

16 It is not necessarily the case that the manuscript we have been focusing on, PG 1710, was composed in the small window of time between 843–847 even though it certainly could have been. Ronconi, “La première circulation de la ‘Chronique de Théophane.’” I work, in what follows, with the conclusion that the recension of the text which is contained in the copy of the Chronographia that is PG 1710 was composed while Methodios was still patriarch.

17 Montinaro, “Byzantium, the Merovingians, and the Hog.”
under which each placed the passage. These differing placements result in very different ideas about the connection between the imperial iconoclast policies of Leo III and Constantine V, and the empire’s relations with Rome, Rome’s territories, and the Carolingians.

Historians have noted that the Chronographia misplaces the Papal-Carolingian excursus far from both its correct date and its correct historical context. The Pope’s flight actually occurred in AD 753, and the subsequent coronation of Pippin’s sons in 754. In Gr1 (and Gr2) the excursus is placed at the beginning of the entry for AM 6216 (AD 723/4). In La the excursus is placed much later, at the end of the entry for AM 6234 (AD 741/2). But the most important question is not why the Papal-Carolingian excursus was misdated. Instead the placements of the excursus can tell us how each version of the Chronographia made meaning (within the overarching narrative) out of an alliance between the Pope and the Carolingian Franks which freed the papacy from subjection to Constantinople.

Using the dates for the recensions discussed above, along with clues from the palaeography of the relevant manuscripts and the narrative context which I will discuss below, we can establish that La preserves the original position for the Papal-Carolingian excursus at the end of the entry for AM 6234 (AD 741/2). I will make this argument by first considering the visual, palaeographic evidence in the surviving manuscripts. This evidence provides a convincing initial case that the excursus as in Gr1 and Gr2 was a modification to the original text. That case is proven by turning to the relative narrative coherence of the two different placements of the excursus. In Gr1 and Gr2 the excursus under AM 6216 (AD 723/4) strains the narrative of that entire section of the Chronographia, while on the other hand La’s placement of the excursus coherently frames the flight of Stephen II in parallel to another rebellion under the same entry (AM 6234), that of Artabasdos against Constantine V. Thus, the

---


19 During these dates the kingdoms of the Franks were dominated by the father of Pippin, Charles Martel the maior of the Palace, on which see: Paul Fouracre, The Age of Charles Martel (2000; repr., London: Routledge, 2013).

20 The excursus ends with the coronation of Charlemagne. The Chronographia did also date this event correctly with a clear second notice in the correct chronological spot: under the ninth indiction and Irene’s fourth year (AM 6293 or AD 800/801) “Charlemagne, king of the Franks” was crowned on 25 December. MS 653 / dB 475.
narrative context of the placement of the excursus in the Greek recensions (Gr1 and Gr2) and preserved in K. de Boor's critical edition and C. Mango and R. Scott's critical translation prove to be not only the more egregious chronological errors but also almost certainly not the original location in the overall narrative.21 Having established these points, the concluding section of this chapter will examine what end this new placement *does* serve, hypothesizing the reasoning behind the new placement.

2.1 *The Palaeography of the Papal-Carolingian Excursus*

The palaeographic evidence supports *La* being the original placement and *Gr1* and *Gr2* being a modification. In *La* the Papal-Carolingian excursus comes as the last story under the entry for AM 6234 (figure 9.1). The excursus is introduced with the simple transition “*Inter haec aute[m] et huius || scemodi Stephanus papa Romanus...*”22 Thus, *La* presents the excursus as palaeographically indistinguishable, with no unique palaeographic characteristics.

By contrast, the shifted Papal-Carolingian excursus in *Gr1* (and preserved in *Gr2*) disrupts the visual expectations established over the entire course of the manuscripts. The palaeography of the entry for AM 6216 highlights the...
excursus to such a degree as to make it seem as though this is the single most important entry in the entire Chronographia. First, in $Gr1$ (represented by $PG\,1710$) the entry is initiated by a majuscule header serving as a preface to the entry:

The matters concerning the blessed Stephen Pope of Rome, how he both fled into Francia and was saved, I will now relate: $\sim^{23}$

After this unprecedented first-person preface, the entry itself follows suit with a second innovation. In the Greek recensions the first letter of every entry was a littera notabilior, usually extending into the margin so as to make that letter easily visible. Over the course of the work, in any Greek recension, there is only one other entry that does not begin with the letter T (both phrases used to initiate entries begin with that letter, whether “In this year ...” or “In the Year of the World ...”).$^{24}$ However, the text of the $AM\,6216$ entry proper begins with the word “Οὗτος” in the phrase “This celebrated man Stephen ...”$^{25}$

As figures 9.2 and 9.3 below demonstrate, this highly unusual presentation is consistent between both Greek recensions, $Gr1$ and $Gr2$.

---

23 τά περὶ τοῦ μακαρίου στεφάνου τοῦ πάπα βώμ[η]ς || διόπως τε ἔφυγεν ἐν φραγγικη β[α]ἰ ἔσωθα λέξων ἑρχομαι: $\sim$ Greek as in the manuscripts cited; literal translation mine.

24 The one exception is $AM\,6033$ (AD 540/1) during the reign of Justinian I. This entry is its own interesting case but does not seem to be a case of later modification. Notably, the variation there is more minor than the variation at $AM\,6216$, simply using another annual formula: “In the fourteenth year of Justinian ...”. MS 319 / dB 219.

25 Οὗτος ὁ ἀοίδιμος Στεφάνου....
Thus, in the Greek recensions the entry containing the excursus begins with its own unique majuscule preface, with a unique phrase, and with a different *littera notabilior* extending into the margin. The narrative of the whole *Chronographia* and this unusual palaeography indicate that this placement was a change from the original plan. This hypothesis becomes more secure when we consider the new narrative context for AM 6216 and deduce what seems to have been the logic of placing the excursus at this point.

### 2.2 Context of the Excursus in the Greek and Latin Recensions

The narrative placement of the excursus in *La*, under AM 6234, gives the passage a coherent context. The entries around AM 6234 cover the early period of the reign of Constantine V. In the portion of the entry before AM 6234, the rebel Artabasdos is contextualized and made sympathetic by portraying Constantine V as the “forerunner to the Antichrist.” Though Artabasdos is a rebel against the emperor he is praised, and the entry as a whole frames both Artabasdos and Pope Stephen as conscious objectors to Constantine V’s policies, practices, and general evil.\(^{26}\)

---

\(^{26}\) Paul Speck, *Artabasdos, der rechtgläubige Vorkämpfer der göttlichen Lehren: Untersuchungen zur Revolte des Artabasdos und ihrer Darstellung in der byzantinischen Historiographie*, Poikila Byzantina 2 (Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt, 1981). The entry for AM 6234 (AD 741/742) is the second year of the reign of Constantine V (r. 741–775). It dramatized Constantine’s contest with Artabasdos as an orthodox usurper nearly wresting power away from an impious emperor. Artabasdos was routed in Asia Minor by Constantine. He fled to Constantinople, but when (under AM 6235) Constantine retook the capital, Artabasdos was forced to flee again. Artabasdos was finally captured in Asia Minor and his sons were blinded as punishment. By the end of the entry for AM 6235 Constantine V had gained unchallenged control of the empire.
As the entry moves into the excursus it makes an explicit thematic connection between the narrative of the civil war between Artabasdos and Constantine V and the story of Pope Stephen's flight: Christians were being aroused to fury and mutual slaughter.

The Devil, instigator of evil, roused in those days such fury and mutual slaughter among Christians that sons would murder their fathers without any mercy and brothers would murder their own brothers and pitilessly burn each other's houses and homes.\(^{27}\)

This transition makes Artabasdos standing up to an impious emperor the context of the story of the excursus. There Pope Stephen was “suffering many ills” at the hands of an impious ruler, the Lombard king Astulphos (Aistulf r. 749–756).\(^{28}\) The difference between the two is merely that instead of engaging in armed conflict, the pope fled to a ruler who would protect him. The *Chronographia* implies the Pope was as right to flee as Artabasdos was right to revolt. Thus, in context, the version of the Papal-Carolingian excursus in *La* uses narrative framing to make the story evidence of the disaster wrought by the emperor Constantine V upon the empire: the papacy's alliance with the Franks is a consequence of Constantine V's evils.\(^{29}\)

Besides providing a more coherent narrative frame, *La* does correctly place the excursus within the reign of Constantine V (rather than in the reign of Leo III). This placement also fits the historical context we already established for the original impetus of the *Chronographia*: the early ninth century faction behind the work supported Irene and her attempts to forge a marriage alliance with the Carolingians and so portrayed the Papal-Carolingian alliance positively. It seems to have done so to both provide a foil for the evils of Constantine V, and to portray Irene's marriage diplomacy with the Carolingians as a path to restoration for the empire (until thwarted by Nikephoros I). In the version of *La*, the flight of Pope Stephen to the Franks came as the culmination of gradually souring relations between the iconoclast emperors and the Roman popes, and signaled that the pope had sought a new protector only after exhausting all patience with the heretical and greedy Roman emperors. *La*'s excursus thus played a role in a narrative which

---

\(^{27}\) [Note: This text is from a digital copy and contains a mark `^27\) which is not part of the original text.]

\(^{28}\) [Note: This text is from a digital copy and contains a mark `^28\) which is not part of the original text.]

\(^{29}\) [Note: This text is from a digital copy and contains a mark `^29\) which is not part of the original text.]
demonstrated how over-weening emperors drove the pope—a reliable arbiter of orthodoxy—away from the Eastern empire and into the arms of the Franks through persistently abusive policies. *La* made the iconoclast controversy the fault of the emperors, a story well in line with everything we have shown about the work’s narrative agenda. The version in *La* also coherently connects with the role of the papacy and the Carolingians in the reign of Irene, where these entities offered support for a return to orthodox doctrine and a potential marriage alliance whereby to restore the ancient empire by reuniting East and West. As far as we can tell, this potential alliance was in fact a real possibility from the 780s into the ninth century but would not materialize again.30 As T. S. Brown has put it, "as a result of the events of 800, Rome burnt its boats with the Byzantine empire on a political level."31 All of this accords with the point established in chapter 6, that the original pro-Irene faction behind the *Chronographia* had an interest in presenting the Carolingians as the political saviors of the empire and the Pope as a reliable guardian of orthodoxy.

Conversely, it is impossible to read the Papal-Carolingian excursus in *Gr1* and *Gr2* as anything but a narrative interruption. Its placement right in the middle of the build-up to Leo III’s iconoclasm interjects an entirely new topic. It creates additional confusion by not explaining what happened to Pope Stephen after telling the story of his reign, for the next entry begins with another pope entirely (Gregory III). Nevertheless, it is also possible to see a logic and thus an intentionality in this altered placement. The entries preceding AM 6216 provide a narrative of the early reign of Leo. In the early period of Leo III’s reign (from AM 6210) he was described as “the pious Emperor.”32 As his story developed, Leo “became responsible for inflicting many evils upon

---

30 See: Michael McCormick, “Western Approaches (700–900),” in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire, c. 500–1492*, ed. Jonathan Shepard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 415–17. A formal agreement for Irene’s son Constantine VI and Charlemagne’s daughter Rotrud to marry was concluded in Rome in 781. To prepare for Rotrud’s move, the eunuch Elissaios was sent to Charlemagne’s court. The 787 Council of Constantinople and the Carolingian response at Frankfurt in 794 soured relations, but after the turn of the century rapprochement was restored and Charlemagne’s title of βασιλεύς was recognized for a time.


32 MS 545 / dB 396 (AM 6209 [AD 716/717]).
us."\(^{33}\) and then suddenly was given the exact opposite label: "the impious emperor."\(^{34}\) Leo's change began when in the entry for AM 6215, a "Jewish magician" persuaded the 'Ummayad Izid (Yazīd II) to "destroy the holy icons that were venerated in Christian churches throughout his dominions."\(^{35}\) The caliph's sudden death that year spared his subjects the effects of his decision, but the Chronographia made the story an explicit foreshadowing of how the Romans would suffer under Leo III's adoption of the same policies:

The emperor Leo partook of the same error, a grievous and illicit one, and so became responsible for inflicting many evils upon us.\(^{36}\)

But Gr1 and Gr2 inserted the Papal-Carolingian excursus before this prophecy about Leo could be fulfilled, and just after the entry noting Yazīd II ("Izid")'s declaration for iconoclasm. In this context the Papal exit from the Byzantine diaspora reads as a narrative non sequitur.\(^{37}\)

What were the editors of Gr1 meaning by an emphatic insistence that the Pope abandoned the Empire right at this moment? The entries following AM 6216 offer clues.\(^{38}\) AM 6217 (AD 724/5) returns to the narrative through-line that had begun in AM 6215, as Leo III's iconoclasm led to tangible consequences from Pope Gregory III.\(^{39}\)

\(^{33}\) MS 555 / dB 402.

\(^{34}\) MS 558 / dB 404.

\(^{35}\) Specifically, on the occasion of the baptism of his son Constantine who would become Constantine V, the "forerunner to the Antichrist." MS 551 / dB 400 (AM 6211 [AD 718/719]).

\(^{36}\) MS 555 / dB 402 (AM 6215 [AD 722/723]).

\(^{37}\) Sandwiched between the excursus and an unnecessary recapitulation of the excursus ("Stephen, the Pope of Rome, sought refuge with the Franks," Στέφανος δὲ, ὁ πάπας Ῥώμης, προσέφυγεν εἰς τοὺς Φράγγους, at MS 557 / dB 403) it is stated that Hisham ("Isam") succeeded to Yazīd II (Izid) and then successfully initiated both building and military campaigns. This preserves the original, continuing narrative of iconoclasm in Syria. A further non sequitur: in the entry following, AM 6217, Pope Gregory IIII (r. 731–741) arrives without any explanation as to how (according to AM 6216) Stephen would spend years working with the Carolingians when (according to AM 6217) Gregory had just taken over the office. The attentive reader is left to guess what became of Pope Stephen in Francia, and where Pope Gregory IIII fit into the story that led up to Charlemagne's coronation in AD 800.

\(^{38}\) These following entries are of course common to both Gr1, Gr2, and also La.

\(^{39}\) There are several notable issues here. First, as C. Mango, R. Scott, and others have pointed out, there are problems with the chronology of the events listed. Based on evidence internal to letters written by Gregory IIII to Leo III (which do survive), the letters to Gregory from Leo IIII cannot have been written earlier than AD 732. Furthermore, according to the Liber Pontificalis' account of the Life of Gregory II (r. 715–731), that pope withheld the taxes before the arrival of the imperial decrees of Leo IIII.
The emperor Leo started ... making pronouncements about the removal of the holy and venerable icons. When Gregory, the Pope of Rome, had been informed of this, he withheld the taxes of Italy and of Rome and wrote to Leo a doctrinal letter to the effect that the emperor ought not to make pronouncements concerning the faith nor to alter the ancient doctrines of the Church which had been defined by the holy Fathers.\footnote{MS 558 / dB 404.}

This entry also rearranged known historical events in order to place the withholding of Roman and Italian taxation in direct connection to the imperial declarations against icons. Leo III's new imperial policy led pope Gregory to correct the emperor by withholding tax payments.\footnote{In the discussion of the relations between Leo III and Gregory II, the text makes no reference to the story of Pope Stephen that had just preceded. That is, as the narrative appears in Gr1 and Gr2 there is no transition whatsoever between Pope Stephen's extended appearance at the end of AM 6216 and the election of his successor, Gregory, in the very next entry. Pope Stephen did not actually reign as Pope before Gregory, but years later, from AD 752 to 757.}

The following entry for AM 6218 (AD 725/6) begins by describing the eruption of the volcanic island of Thera, and then moves on to the famous action of Leo III to take down the icon above the Chalke gate to the palace. Historians do not take this (perhaps entirely fabricated) action as the actual beginning of iconoclasm. We now instead place that event at Leo's already-mentioned declarations.\footnote{The current consensus among historians is that this story of the Chalke icon is in fact a fabrication of the turn of the ninth century when the Chronographia was written. See: Leslie Brubaker and John F. Haldon, Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c. 680–850: A History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 128–35; and Marie-France Auzépy, "La destruction de l'icône du Christ de la Chalcé par Léon III: propaganda ou réalité?" Byzantion 40 (1990), 445–92.}

Nevertheless, in the Chronographia's narrative this is clearly an important moment for the advent of iconoclasm.\footnote{Note that the entry for AM 6218 covers two indiction years (Mango and Scott, Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor, 56in2). Furthermore, note that neither of the earliest Greek manuscripts actually date these events to the annus mundi or Year of the Incarnation (i.e., AD). The early rubricated Greek manuscripts (Wake Greek 5 and VG 155) use the tenth year of the emperor Leo III to date the entry. The non-rubricated Greek manuscript (PG 1710) heads the entry with the formulaic phrase “In this year.” This leads to a subtle but nonetheless interesting point. The event that the Chronicle proposes as the beginning of iconoclasm is dated by the “ninth indiction” rather than by the year of the world or of the incarnation. By dating the event to the indiction cycle over the course of Leo III's reign
action. The official policy of iconoclasm is recounted as immediately instigating actual violation of sacred objects as Leo II engaged in a war on icons, “filled with boorishness and complete ignorance,” extinguishing “the pious education that had lasted from St. Constantine the Great,” and above all showing himself to be “Saracen-minded” and a follower of “his mentors, the Arabs.”

In its new location the excursus disrupted this narrative. Rather than accepting that imperial Roman deviousness was to blame for the rise of the iconoclast heresy, the new placement set the Papal-Carolingian excursus right before the emperors had over-taxed Italy or proposed iconoclasm. This implied the popes had betrayed the Roman empire without cause, proposing there was a causal relationship between the Pope breaking with Constantinople and Constantinople’s subsequent turn to iconoclasm. In this context, Leo II’s iconoclasm reads as an ill-advised response to the Pope’s move to disintegrate the empire, fleeing the empire rather than helping to reform and so preserve it. The Greek recensions thus blamed the bishop of Rome for first upsetting the world order by forging an alliance with the upstart emperors of the Carolingian dynasty and so inciting the emperors’ subsequent slide into iconoclasm. Though this new story resulted in a poorly crafted narrative, it nevertheless had clear political implications.

As demonstrated in the Introduction, the Chronographia promised accuracy (ἀκριβεία) in the sense of reliably showing the significance of events. The real issue in locating the Papal-Carolingian excursus was more germane than an accurate date: was it the Pope or Leo II who was to blame for the controversy over icons? Both versions of the Chronographia framed the advent of iconoclasm vis à vis the empire’s changing relations with the papacy. The context for both stories was bad rulership.

The portion of the Chronographia surrounding the entry for AM 6216 was originally crafted to build up an account of the introduction of iconoclasm by Leo III. That is, these same entries in La (i.e., without the interjection of the story of Pope Stephen) have a coherent narrative progression which use Yazid II’s iconoclasm, his death just after issuing iconoclast edicts, and the succession of Isam after him to set up Leo’s declaration for iconoclasm and the unfortunate contrast of his successfully passing on his policy to his son and successor Constantine V. This sequence as in La is a clean narrative progression. It does

the chronographers indicate they thought of this event in terms of when it occurred in the emperor Leo’s reign: in a relative, rather than a universal, chronology.

44 MS 559–61 / DB 405–6. The narrative sequence through these entries in La clarifies the origins of iconoclasm by maintaining a narrative focus on how the idea of iconoclasm spread like some sort of epidemic.
not jump back and forth to tell the reader that Pope Stephen had allied himself with the Franks, tell the reader about Isam's succession, and then remind the reader of Pope Stephen a second time at the entry's end.

On the other hand, while the Papal-Carolingian excursus in Gr1 is a narrative disruption not incorporated into the surrounding narrative in any way (and thus clearly not original), it is visually emphasized. As such its placement in the narrative about the origins of iconoclasm, however jarring, implies that the popes were to blame for Leo III turning to iconoclasm. Leo III's iconoclasm reads as a kind of desperate measure to reinstate God's favor. Both places for the Papal-Carolingian excursus are—strictly speaking—chronological errors, for the starting events in the Papal-Carolingian excursus occurred in 752–754 rather than in 722 (Gr1) or 742 (La). The difference is whether the flight of Pope Stephen in the excursus revealed how bad things had become in the Roman Empire (the version in La), or whether Pope Stephen's flight was partly responsible for the Romans' errors (the version of Gr1). The placement of the excursus at the beginning of AM 6216 in Gr1 was meant to catch the reader's attention and set the passage apart. Thus, it is clear that either at or by the date range established for Gr1 (AD 843–847), the Chronographia was explicitly and intentionally modified to make this entry stand out. Visual and narrative oddities indicate this intervention altered the sequence of events in an effort not to correct a date but to correct a narrative. The placement of the excursus in Gr1 and Gr2 is thus non-original, and also intentional. Placing the Papal-Carolingian excursus under AM 6216 rather than 6234 was a meaning-bearing intervention in the textual tradition made in ca. AD 843–847. Having established this point, we are left with the questions of why and for whom was this intervention made. Though ultimately unknowable, the argument that follows sketches out a contemporary agenda that would align with this change to the text.

3 The Chronographia and the Triumph of Orthodoxy: AD 843–847

A probable explanation for the changed placement of the Papal-Carolingian excursus in the first Greek recension of the Chronographia edited between AD 843–847 is to be found not in foreign affairs (diplomatic relations between Constantinople, the Carolingians, and the Papacy) but in domestic politics, in the agendas of the regency of the empress Theodora and the patriarch Methodios.45 The domestic politics of the years just after 843 offer us several

45 While it is true that “on an ecclesiastical level, relations with Byzantium were strained by the second wave of iconoclasm in the east (815–843), and even after the restoration
plausible if not probable options for Constantinopolitans who would want to shift blame for iconoclasm from the Roman emperors to the Pope or Carolingians. The interests of editors and audience which are implied by the alterations would support the regency of Theodora and Methodios, pushing an agenda of the regency in the wake of the 843 Council in multiple important ways.

3.1 Theodora, Methodios, and the Greek Recension of the Chronographia

First, there is the broad alignment of the Chronographia’s narrative with women in power. Chapter 7 established that the Chronographia as a whole promoted the legitimate moral and imperial authority of the empress Irene. Furthermore, the parallels in the circumstances through which Irene and Theodora came to power are strikingly similar. Both married into a nominally iconoclast regime. Whether by personal conviction, practical political instinct, or both, each forged a new idiom for authority by departing from the policies of their dead husbands but did so without demonizing their memories. And, both reigned as regents for underage sons, relying on brilliantly strategized alliances with the ecclesiastical hierarchy to maintain their moral authority and political capital.

Irene’s positive portrait in the Chronographia is thus a perfect model for Theodora’s claim to power and provides a type for Theodora to act as empress regent. If Irene had blinded her son and yet could be portrayed as fully legitimate, the question of Theodora’s power over her son in and of itself would raise no objections. Theodora’s regency began in AD 842 and ended in 856/7. And, indeed, AD 856–857 would see Theodora accept the transition to Michael’s rule of the empire along with his uncle Bardas (Theodora’s brother) the kaisar. Rather than reclaiming power, when Michael II forced his mother Theodora and his sisters into monastic retirement at the Monastery of icons, contentious issues remained,” neither can it be said that relations between Constantinople and either Rome or Francia were disastrous in the 830s and 840s (Brown, “Byzantine Italy: 680–876,” 448). There was in fact a fairly urgent need for rapprochement after the Aghlabid occupation of Bari and sack of St. Peter’s Basilica in 846, and their sack of Ostia in 849. “In many respects, Rome remained within the Byzantine cultural orbit.” There were, for instance, frequent embassies from Theophilos to negotiate military support from the Franks and we have evidence of such embassies during and leading up to the period of the first Greek recension of the Chronographia: 833, 839, and the early 840s. McCormick, “Western Approaches (790–900),” 418.

46 The Chronographia would go on to have an afterlife in other such contexts. Signes Codoñer, “Theophanes at the Time of Leo VI.”
τῶν Γαστρίων, the empress peacefully acquiesced. In this way, Theodora would provide a fulfillment of the type established by Irene’s image in the *Chronographia*.

Second, the 843 Council, known as the Triumph of Orthodoxy, is specifically relevant to the new placement of the Papal-Carolingian excursion. This council negotiated the end of the imperial policy of iconoclasm, the deposition of the iconoclast patriarch John Grammatikos, and the ascension of patriarch Methodios. In order for these transitions to succeed, the council needed a narrative explaining the iconoclast period. The most sensitive topic was the involvement of the emperors—specifically the just-deceased Theophilos. Theodora pushed an agenda of both supporting the use of icons in worship and at the same time preserving the legacy of the deceased emperor from responsibility for the iconoclasm she now opposed.

In the excursion we found that the key issue was not rapprochement with the Romans but someone to blame for iconoclasm. Theodora similarly sought to distance her regime from a period of rule by iconoclasts without disparaging...
the entire Amorion dynasty. Though Leo V was murdered by Michael I (the founder of the Amorian dynasty to which Theodora was heir), the Amorians ruled with the support of the factions that had brought Leo V to power. Theodora insisted that the memory of her late husband not be disparaged in the council’s proceedings or conclusions. Theodora needed to maintain a positive image of the emperor Theophilos, for her claim to the throne relied on him. Nevertheless, she needed to distance herself from his iconoclast policy. It was thus that “the name of emperor Theophilos was omitted” in the synodal decrees of the 843 Triumph “to avoid stigmatising the family that was still in power, as well as to avoid alienating those who held his memory in honour” and so preserve Theophilos as a good and just emperor.

49 As L. Brubaker and J. Haldon remind us, there is “no evidence that Theodora wanted to re-establish image veneration out of purely pious sentiments.” Brubaker and Haldon, Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c. 680–850, 447–52. “[Theodora], the magistros Theoktistos, her brothers Bardas and Petronas, along with several other high-ranking political and military men—seem to have played equally important roles. We should recall that Theoktistos and others had been staunch supporters of Theophilos’ iconoclasm until his death.” Furthermore, “There appears to have been no openly iconoclast opposition to the move: clearly, it was inspired largely by matters of convenience in terms of removing a cause of internal dissension and factionalism within the dominant elite, and between the official church and the various individual opponents who continued, if not very effectivly, to voice their opposition, although the genuine faith in the theological basis for images was an equally crucial element,” p. 448. Indeed, scholars now doubt whether Theodora really was a secretive die-hard iconophile (as the legends hold) while Theophilos was reigning. Patricia Karlin-Hayter, “Icon Veneration: Significance of the Restoration of Orthodoxy?,” in Novum Millennium: Studies on Byzantine History and Culture Dedicated to Paul Speck; 19 December 1999, ed. Claudia Sode and Sarolta Takács (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 181–82; Brubaker and Haldon, Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c. 680–850, 398. And Patricia Karlin-Hayter, “Methodios and His Synod,” in Byzantine Orthodoxies: Papers from the Thirty-Sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Durham, 23–25 March 2002, ed. Augustine Casiday and Andrew Louth, SPFBS 12 (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006), 55–74. Beate Zielke, “Methodios I. (843–847),” in Die Patriarchen der ikonoklastischen Zeit: Germanos I.–Methodios I. (715–847), ed. Ralph-Johannes Lilie, BBS 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1999), 213–30.

50 Juan Signes Codoñer, The Emperor Theophilos and the East, 829–842: Court and Frontier in Byzantium During the Last Phase of Iconoclasm, BBOS 13 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 63–72. See Karlin-Hayter, “Icon Veneration,” 181, where it is noted that this is attested in several sources including Genesios, Theophanes Continuatus, and Ps.-Symeon.

51 “The well-established tradition recounting Theodora’s demand that her husband be pardoned also suggests that she would not have supported the re-establishment of the veneration of images had this not been agreed.” Discussion in Karlin-Hayter, “Icon Veneration,” e.g., p. 181.

52 Brubaker and Haldon, Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c. 680–850, 449.
Chapter 8 argued that the final entries to the work were most likely added with the knowledge that Leo V was strongly considering iconoclasm, and that these entries portrayed Leo V on the brink of following the model of Leo III: an emperor who could be called “pious” but who was then deceived into following iconoclasm. This established the type of an emperor who could be criticized without being completely demonized. Promoting the possibility of viewing an iconoclast emperor in this way perfectly fit Theodora’s established interest of not castigating her deceased husband Theophilos and the other Amorian and Armenian rulers of the Second Iconoclast Period, even as she orchestrated the Triumph of Orthodoxy.

Furthermore, the empress Theodora had something specific to gain out of the new placement of the Papal-Carolingian excursus and the recirculation of the *Chronographia*. The empress needed someone to blame for iconoclasm other than the just-deceased iconoclast emperor. The altered Papal-Carolingian excursus shifted that blame not only away from the Amorian dynasty but away from the Roman emperors altogether by putting the blame on the Papacy.

Third, Theodora’s concerns for the legacy of Theophilos is not the only issue of historical ideology at stake for the new regency in the post-843 era. The other key member of the ruling group, the new patriarch Methodios, was also treading into dangerous territory. In fact, the concern of the 843 council was as much about a statement in favor of icons as it was about electing a patriarch to succeed the just-deposed but still powerful John Grammatikos. Not only are the divisions which Methodios’ election exposed relevant to the *Chronographia*, but he is personally connected to the text through the fact that he composed a *Life* of the purported author, Theophanes the Confessor.54

This tension is further exemplified by the fact that the 843 synod (convened in early March) was held at the Blachernai palace, a location which “surely suggests that the clergy of the patriarchal church were resistant to the proposed changes.”55 Iconoclasm had been imperially sanctioned policy for decades. Thus, though the circle around Theodora and her monastic supporters worked to get rid of iconoclast clergy, removing all those who had


55 Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era* c. 680–850, 449. For, “a meeting with such crucial implications for the whole imperial church and claiming imperial and synodal authority to exclude them is odd, to say the least.”
supported the policy meant there was a clergy shortage in the capital.\textsuperscript{56} To bring about Methodios’ election the council ended up excluding a great many of the patriarchal clergy.\textsuperscript{57}

Methodios’ patriarchate was beset not only by the ousted iconclast supporters in the patriarchate of the deposed John Grammatikos, but also by the iconophile monks of St. John in Stoudios.\textsuperscript{58} And, we have seen that the Stoudite monastic community had been singled out for blame in the \textit{Chronographia}. They were accused of unnecessarily causing disunity due to intransigence in the election of patriarch Nikephoros I (r. 806–815).\textsuperscript{59} Stoudite opposition to Methodios’ election was based on similar grounds. Thus the \textit{Chronographia}’s opposition to both iconoclasm, and the Stoudites in its defense of the election of Nikephoros I offered an implicit defense for Methodios’ situation in 843.\textsuperscript{60}

3.2 \textbf{The Greek Recension and the Monks of Constantinople}

The revisions to the \textit{Chronographia} in the first Greek recension of 843–847 seem to fit aspects of both Theodora’s and Methodios’ positions. On the one hand I have not uncovered close enough of an association with either of these lords to assert something like direct patronage. On the other, the just-mentioned monastic communities of the capital were the resource out of which Theodora and Methodios rebuilt the urban clergy and bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{61}

---


\textsuperscript{58} The issue raised by the Stoudite monks was the “nature of his election, by imperial mandate and without a democratic synodal decision.” Brubaker and Haldon, \textit{Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era} c. 680–850, 450.


\textsuperscript{60} A remaining issue to consider: the important change in the text that we have described is completely at odds with noted agendas of the new patriarch who worked to cultivate a positive image of Rome. John Osborne, “Rome and Constantinople in the Ninth Century,” in \textit{Rome Across Time and Space: Cultural Transmission and the Exchange of Ideas} c. 500–1400, ed. Rosamond McKitterick, John Osborne, and Claudia Bolgia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 224.

\textsuperscript{61} P. Hatlie has pointed out that “all of this activity leaves the strong impression that the new patriarch [Methodios] drew readily upon the monastic ranks to fill his post-Iconoclast ecclesiastical vacancies.” Hatlie, \textit{Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople}, 392.
These monastic communities, now committed to supporting the agenda and ideologies of Theodora and Methodios’ regime, provide us with some specific and viable options for patronage of the new edition of the *Chronographia*.

We can presume that, as in virtually every known early medieval monastic community in both East and West, the monastic leaders were aristocrats with deep connections to the secular elite.62 Theodora and Methodios did not promote a wave of “new men” so much as shift the preference from one network within the factions of the elite to another. One example can illustrate the complexity which Theodora and Methodius faced in seeking to reconstitute the elite of Constantinople with allies and also leads us to a specific connection between these “new men” and the *Chronographia*’s new recension. Euphrosyne was considered a saint of the iconophile resistance and was also directly connected to elites involved not only in the new factions favored at the Triumph of Orthodoxy, but the ostensible *personae non gratae*, the *old* guard of the Armenian-Amorian dynasty.63 Euphrosyne’s father Leo Skleros “may well have been sent into exile” ca. 808–812 during the reign of Nikephoros, making him a possible collaborator with the faction behind Arsaber’s rebellion.64 Then, Euphrosyne’s family seems to have—like that of Arsaber—risen with the alliances that brought Leo V to the throne. Euphrosyne was related by marriage to Michael II,65 and her mother Irene was both a daughter of Bardanes Tourkos and a cousin of Leo V.66

---


63 *PBE I*: “Euphrosyne 4.” The following bibliographic sketch draws upon Hatlie, *Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople*, 265–67. Euphrosyne’s family was directly connected to the Armenian-Amorian factions that had been ruling the empire since the accession of Leo V in 813. Her father Leo Skleros’ name associates him with the Armenian factions in Constantinople, and his career with those who had come to power through the military. Between ca. 800–817 Leo was made a *patrikios* (a senatorial rank) and served as *strategos* in both Greece and Asia Minor. See: *PBE I*: “Leo 17”.

64 Hatlie, *Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople*, 266.

65 Whose first wife had been Thekla, Euphrosyne’s aunt.

66 *PBE I*: “Eirene 17” and “Anonymous 582.” Leo V was the son of one Bardas, the brother of Bardanes Tourkos; with Euphrosyne’s mother Irene being the daughter of Bardanes Tourkos, this means Irene and Leo V were cousins. The connection through Bardanes Tourkos was actually twofold for Leo V married a woman called “Barka” who was another daughter of Bardanes Tourkos and thus a sister to Euphrosyne’s mother Irene. Hatlie, *Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople*, 266. See: *PBE I* “Barka 1,” “Bardanes 3,” “Leo 15,” “Michael 10.” For all of this see: David Turner, “The Origins and Accession of Leo V (813–820),” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 40 (1993): 181, 186, 292.
Like the family of Arsaber, Euphrosyne's family was closely connected to the emperor who instituted the second phase of iconoclasm, and like Arsaber's her family had also made a name for themselves by standing against iconoclasm. Euphrosyne's familial and spiritual networks not only crossed the iconoclast-iconophile divide, but the post-843 divide between the iconophile Stoudites and the iconophile empress and patriarch. We know that Euphrosyne supported one of the empress Theodora's most important allies: Michael the synkellos whom the empress Theodora had appointed as one of two monks to be her synkelloi for Methodios. This was understood as a part of Theodora's effort to surround herself with experienced and powerful advisors beyond the patriarch Methodios and the magistros Theoktistos.

I now turn to Theodora's synkelloi Michael and Symeon. As we saw in chapter 2, these two would have immediately been very influential officials in their own right. But Theodora augmented their influential positions with power that synkelloi do not seem to have previously held. Upon their appointments, Theodora awarded her new synkelloi the abbacies of powerful monastic houses in Constantinople, suggesting that their appointments were part of

67 Irene and Euphrosyne joined the Kloubiou monastery in Constantinople and embedded themselves in the networks of the most influential iconophile leaders. Janin thinks this monastery is outside the city in the Hebdomon area. Janin, Géographie ecclésiastique de l’Empire Byzantin, 282. Another daughter (unnamed) of Irene (Euphrosyne's sister) retired at this time to Leonton. Presumably both institutions were family properties. See: Hatlie, Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople, 266. Surviving letters attest that when Euphrosyne succeeded as abbess after her mother's death in 823, she maintained direct contact with Ioannikios in Bithynia and Theodore Studites. One joint letter; eight to Irene; nine to Euphrosyne. Jason Adashinskaya et al., “English Translation of the Letters of Theodore the Studite to Eirene the Patrician,” Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU 21 (2015): 162–76; Alexander Riehle, “Theodore the Studite and His Letters to Eirene the Patrician: An Introductory Essay,” Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU 21 (2015): 154–61.

68 The connection between Euphrosyne and Michael synkellos is testified through a notification in the Life of Michael the Synkellos (Vita Michaelis Syncelli [BHG 1296]) stating that he received help and comfort from Euphrosyne when he was being persecuted by Theophilos in the 830s. Mary Cunningham, The Life of Michael the Synkellos, BBT 1 (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, Dept. of Greek & Latin, Queen's University of Belfast, 1991), 74–20 (section 16). The regency’s association with the powerful Chora monastery centered on the person of Michael the synkellos who came to Constantinople in 813, right in the midst of Leo V’s iconoclast council discussed in chapter 8. If George the Synkellos is to be associated with any “Syrian” faction in the capital, it is sure that Michael would have been connected with the same set.

69 Note the discussion of the “problem” of having two synkelloi at this time in Stephanos Efthymiadis, “Notes on the Correspondence of Theodore the Studite,” Revue des Études Byzantines 53 (1995): 153–54. We saw in chapter 2, however, that having two synkelloi of Constantinople seems rather to have been the standard at this time.
her plan to not only ensure relations with patriarch Methodios but to counter opposition from the Stoudite monastic network with a monastic network of her own.70

Of Theodora’s new synkelloi, Michael was the more important. Michael had impeccable “iconophile” credentials but he was also ultimately an outsider, making Theodora the center of his network of influence.71 Michael was in Constantinople because, as synkellos of Jerusalem, he had been sent to be the ambassador for Jerusalem’s patriarch on a diplomatic mission to Rome but was delayed en route while in Constantinople, from where he never left.72 Michael’s surviving Vita claims that prior to his appointment as synkellos either the regents Theoktistos and Theodora, or the members of the synod of 843 actually wanted to elect him as patriarch.73 When the empress Theodora failed to convince Michael to accept the patriarchal office, she settled for making him synkellos, which he accepted “by command of the orthodox emperors [Theodora and Michael II].”74 Michael’s appointment as synkellos was not, of course, a humble degradation but an election to a very powerful and influential office which we have seen was, although not as powerful as the patriarch, still the second most powerful ecclesiastical appointment an emperor could make. Michael and his co-synkellos Symeon would have been close to


71 Hatlie, Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople, 267–69.

72 When Michael’s father died, he had entered the Great Laura of St. Sabas where he lived as a cenobite from 786 to 800. He was then blessed to live as a hermit from 800 to 811. At the age of 50, he was appointed synkellos of Jerusalem where he served from 811 to 813. With the brother monks Theodore and Theophanes (known as the graptoi brothers), Michael arrived in Constantinople as ambassador for his patriarch in 814–815: the very years when Leo V was deciding for iconoclasm and when I have argued that the Chronographia was being completed. Cunningham, Life of Michael the Synkellos, 62.1–72.17 (sections 9–15).

73 In section 25 in the Life, the text simply states “they all” wanted him as patriarch since he had served as synkellos in Jerusalem and had suffered for the faith. Cunningham, Life of Michael the Synkellos, 102.14–18 (sections 25).

74 Cunningham, Life of Michael the Synkellos, 104.21–31 (section 27). Interestingly, this appointment is the only historical instance in which we can be sure of the identity of both new synkelloi; an anonymous Vita of three saints—David, Symeon, and George of Lesbos—states that at the elevation of Methodios to the patriarchal throne, one of these three, Symeon, was also appointed a synkellos. Domingo-Forasté, “Life of Sts. David, Symeon, and George of Lesbos,” 225, with n.109.
the empress' counsels, ranking among a mere half dozen elites with the privilege of dining regularly at the imperial table with the patriarch Methodios and the magistros Theoktistos.\textsuperscript{75} When Michael first arrived in Constantinople in 814–815 he had initially lived in the Chora monastery, the same institution over which Theodora would make him hegoumenos in 843 (at which time Michael would have been 82 years old).\textsuperscript{76} He served as synkellos and abbot of St. Savior in Chora until 846 when he died. Not only was Michael the hegoumenos over this monastic community, but from 843 the synkellos of Constantinople was the leader of all the monastic hegoumениoi of the City.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{75} We can also point to empress Theodora’s appointment of synkelloi in the context of a mid-ninth-century cleansing of the patriarchate to make way for a shift in imperial policy. See Cunningham, Life of Michael the Synkellos, 102.14–18 (section 25) and 104 21–31 (section 27).

\textsuperscript{76} In Constantinople, Michael became immediately involved in the renewed dispute over the use of icons. When the emperor declared for iconoclasm, Michael was removed from St. Savior in Chora, separated from the graptoi brothers, and imprisoned in the capital from 815 to 820. He lived under house arrest in Bithynia from about 820 to 834, and then returned to Constantinople where he was imprisoned until 842.

\textsuperscript{77} Historically the eleventh-century pattern of dual appointments as synkellos and hegoumenos seems to have originated from the political exigencies of imperial policy during the “Second Iconoclastic Period” of the ninth century. By the eleventh century the combination was somewhat unremarkable: at this time, it seems to have actually been more significant to be the hegoumenos than the synkellos. Nevertheless, in the ninth-century imperial context from which the tradition of dual appointments originated, this combination would have made the synkelloi of Constantinople uniquely formidable power brokers within the capital. Evidence for how imperial control over the synkelloi came to be related to leading the imperial monasteries—and how this development subsequently established the eleventh-century pattern—comes from the aforementioned Life of Michael the Synkellos. At the same time Michael the Synkellos was appointed synkellos to patriarch Methodios, he was also made hegoumenos (abbot) of the very important suburban Chora monastery. Among the significant imperial monasteries, the most prominent at this time were the Chora, the Sergios and Bacchos, and the Philippikou. See: Hatlie, Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople, 335, especially 178. Both the Chora, and Sts. Sergios and Bacchos were imperial monasteries whose properties and hegoumenos were completely subject to imperial control. The career of the patriarch before Methodios, John VII Grammatikos, had followed the same path. When John had been appointed synkellos in 829 he was also made hegoumenos of the monastery of Sts. Sergios and Bacchos, located immediately outside the imperial palace walls to the south of the Hippodrome. See: PmbZ no. 3199. Thus, in the cases of Michael Synkellos and John Grammatikos, the interests of emperor and patriarch were aligned: the appointment of these synkelloi seems to have been a means to reinforce and implement religious policy as decreed by the palace. P. Hatlie describes imperial monasteries as “more or less absolutely subject to imperial control,” since “their properties were freely transferable in accordance with imperial wishes.” The Studios monastery was an exception to this statement. In terms of institutional arrangement, it was both an imperial monastery and a
All of this gives us a means of connecting the *Chronographia*, Michael the synkellos, and the empress Theodora in the mid-840s. This book has identified the original *Chronographia* with a group of non-Stoudite iconophiles who associated with the patriarchate of Nikephoros I. If, as I have just proposed, the first Greek recension was put together by the ideological heirs of this earlier group—a non-Stoudite pro-icon monastic community—then the monks of the Chora monastery are prime candidates. I have shown that Michael the synkellos and hegoumenos of Chora was as close to the inner circle of supporters of Theodora as one could be. In addition to the general associations between Theodora's own agendas and those of the work (noted above), the more specific indications of an interest in Syria that we have tracked in the final entries of the *Chronographia* would have had positive implications for Theodora's own reliance on a synkellos who hailed from Syria. Finally, Michael the synkellos arrived in Constantinople in 814/15, the very years in which I have argued the *Chronographia* was completed, and he stayed at the Chora monastery, with which a copy of the *Chronographia* has been directly associated.\(^7\) There is much in Michael the synkellos' personal history and in what we can know of his politics to make the agendas of the *Chronographia* a good fit for his own.\(^8\)

The manuscript *PG 1710* itself can offer one more argument for the plausibility of this connection. This manuscript is likely a surviving codex of the first Greek recension of the *Chronographia* rather than merely a copy of that recension. As such characteristics of that codex such as its small size, less tidy handwriting, and lower quality parchment tell us about the economic status of the production. If the manuscript *PG 1710* is an original copy of this recension of the period from 843–847 it is unlikely to have been directly patronized by Theodora or produced by the imperial scriptorium. This all fits with the hypothesis that it was copied by less well-endowed supporters of Theodora, such as at the Chora monastery where Michael the Synkellos was hegoumenos.
Perhaps the monks at Chora possessed a copy of the original *Chronographia* and desired the empress to see herself in the model of Irene. Or perhaps Michael the Synkellos’ circle of Syrian refugees saw themselves in the work’s original author and in the final entries’ explicit incorporation of the Christians of Syria within the Byzantine ὀἰκουμένη.

It is impossible to prove conclusively that the associates of Michael the Synkellos and the Chora Monastery were patrons of the new edition of the *Chronographia* crafted for ca. 843. However, all I have sought to show here is that while we may not be able to associate this recension with anyone in particular within the circle of Theodora, that circle is certainly the most likely intended audience. My end in this has been to return to the initial question of this study not by proving the exact reception of the *Chronographia*, but by using the discussion of a plausible scenario to identify how and for whom history-writing continued to matter in ninth-century Constantinople.

What about the *Chronographia* made it such a dominant force in Byzantine historiography? Byzantium did not leave a great number of historical texts from the ninth century, but it did leave a great one: the *Chronographia* of George and Theophanes. That the *Chronographia*’s era perceived it as great is revealed by the many times powerful intellects returned to the text to make meaning of their present. Why did they do so? The preceding chapters answered this question by reading the work as a literary whole, grounded in the presentation of the text in its surviving manuscripts, especially in *PG* 1710. But this manuscript also has its own story to tell about the afterlife of the text. The differences in the version of the *Chronographia* preserved in this manuscript must not only be read as the means to uncover an early or original version, but also (if not more so) as evidence for continuation, adaptation, and use. Changes in the text tell us of new ways the text was read, or made to signify, at the time those changes were made, at the time of the different recensions, and as such they tell us how the text continued to matter.

We can use this material for more productive historical ends than we have. Further study of the writing and each subsequent re-writing of the *Chronographia* as historiographical events in their own right can continue to unveil the intellectual climate at the courts of Constantinople. Beyond the first Greek recension, other recensions can tell us how the text of the *Chronographia* continued to be adapted to provide insights into the political landscape of the Byzantine world. The idea that the *Chronographia* could be a mirror for princes has been amply demonstrated over the course of this book. We know that the *Chronographia* continued to matter not only during the reigns of Theodora (r. 842–857) but of Michael I (r. 857–867) and Basil I (r. 867–886). Furthermore, J. Signes Codoñer has shown that descendants of
empress Irene thought the work had value for shaping imperial behaviors well into the tenth-century Macedonian period. Likewise, F. Montinaro has shown how the material of the Chronographia was incorporated into the speculum principis that is the De Administrando Imperio of Constantine VII.

4 Writing Time in the Early Middle Ages

In this chapter, I have returned to the question of how and why the Chronographia not only survived but became the dominant, definitive work of history described in the Introduction. This afterlife was by no means guaranteed. Uniquely among early medieval chronographers, George the Synkellos had designed his Chronographia to undermine the reigning power, the emperor Nikephoros I (r. 802–811). This emperor (Nikephoros I) was never decried as a heretic and would die in battle in an effort to save the empire. And yet, the Chronographia accuses that emperor as being—or at the very least serving the interests of—the Antichrist. Later George’s completing author, Theophanes, changed the impetus of the argument to both support the legitimacy of the new regime of Leo V (r. 813–820), and to urge Leo not to turn to iconoclasm. The success of the regime of Leo V in re-establishing a policy of iconoclasm should have rendered the Chronographia a doomed project, and it must have seemed to be one for decades after AD 815. Leo V was followed by Michael I the Amorian who—though he is almost certainly a part of the conspiracy to murder Leo—explicitly continued Leo V’s policy of iconoclasm. Iconoclasm was in turn continued by Michael’s son the emperor Theophilos. The Chronographia lay dormant until these iconoclasts had been removed from power: for decades after AD 815 it cannot have circulated widely or seemed to have much chance of fulfilling its destiny as the definitive chronography of the empire.

But while the Chronographia lay dormant, it was not forgotten. Regardless of who they were, the editors of the Chronographia in the 840s determined that George and Theophanes’ universalizing chronographic project was designed to continue to rewrite ancient time for new political realities, and so the text was edited once again to have a new, third end (or purpose) in addition to...
the two just described. We have seen that the *Chronographia* had originally depicted the Carolingians as the potential saviors of a Byzantine empire slipping into heresy and thus as the solution to Irene's problems. However, the 840s editors' work to shift the narrative about iconoclasm's origins mitigated this idea by making a Pope in flight the cause of Byzantium's embarrassing legacy of heretical emperors. The updated narrative about the origins of iconoclasm would also—apparently by felicitous chance—keep the work in sync with the relations that would develop with the West into the 860s, when intensifying competition between Carolingian Rome and Constantinople came to a head over competing alliances with Boris, king of the Bulgars. Indeed, the updated “western” policy of the first Greek recension fit the anti-Latin agendas of Basil I in the late 860s and early 870s even better than it did the last Amorians of the 840s.\(^81\) Perhaps supporters of the regime of Basil I wanted to recover and claim for the new dynasty the definitive historical account which had become associated with the “Armenian” emperors from Leo V through Michael III. Adopting the *Chronographia* as their own would prevent the formidable ideological power of this masterwork from being used by opponents of Basil’s vulnerable regime. If so, we can state that the 840s reframing of the *Chronographia* would seem to have prevented the work from falling once again into obscurity.

The *Chronographia* was a text of political rhetoric and, by a fortunate combination of design and chance, the way it was written made it possible to be revised to meet new political ends that its authors could never have imagined. The *Chronographia* was thus a work born of a failed rebellion, completed during a crisis among the ruling faction. But more important for its survival, and certainly the key to the secret of its continued relevance, it was incisively re-edited when new political needs demanded a new historical framework.\(^82\) This is the miracle of the late success of the *Chronographia*, for a chronography finely and carefully crafted for a fleeting moment in 808–810 still managed to

\(^81\) Based on the dates of the list of patriarchs at the beginning of the manuscript *Wake Greek 5*, this second Greek recension (*Gr2*) was likely produced during the reign of Basil I while Photios was still patriarch but before Ignatios would be appointed to his second term: right around Basil’s accession in AD 867.

\(^82\) Today we invest no such political capital in chronographic enterprises, in no small part because time is no longer malleable, no longer so directly subject to changing political fortunes. In the pre-modern world, any historical time was only as universal as any single polity’s *auctoritas*. Annual time consisted of the reckoning of local political successions: counting years meant listing rulers. For this reason, it was always also possible for a medieval chronographer to re-write time when a political *auctoritas* changed its domain, or its mythology.
be considered definitive when it was re-issued in the 840s, thirty years after its intended moment.

Byzantinists do not have the plethora of surviving annalistic historical texts that scholars of the Carolingian world have spent the last decades productively reading and re-reading. Nevertheless, no individual product of the Carolingian courts can compare to the masterwork that is the *Chronographia*, nor to the afterlife made possible by its subsequent reworkings. It is of course possible that the editing activities behind the surviving manuscripts may be different from what I have described but if so, the truth will be even more complex than what I have hypothesized: we may not even know half of the story and what I have defined as two Greek recensions may in fact be the product of a dozen. My proposal is cautious in its details because my goal is to provide the contours of how the *Chronographia* conveyed meaning in and beyond its own era and so remained the definitive Byzantine chronography for centuries. But by treating the *Chronographia* of George and Theophanes as a source on what it meant to write, to read, and to re-produce a chronography in Constantinople in the first half of the ninth century I have also offered that story as a means to think anew about the *praxis* of early medieval chronography in general.

The specific task of the early medieval chronographer was in the name—to rewrite time. A chronographer wrote past time into the time of their own present political community, and in doing so explained the political present in relationship to the entire past. They defined empires and framed individual reigns within not only all history but all time. A chronographer synchronized all known reckonings of time and ordered them within the sequential steps of time’s emplotment, of providence itself. It was in the nature of

---


84 G. Spiegel contextualized the later medieval chronicles of St. Denys by pursuing the “social logic” of the text “within a local regional social context of human relations, systems of communication, and networks of power.” In this vision the twelfth-century local chronicles of St. Denys are a “vehicle for the expression of fundamental ideas concerning the nature of medieval political reality,” a “political reality and its relation to the political past.” Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography*, Parallax: Re-visions of Culture and Society (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 24, 110 cf. 98.

chronographies, as with all universalizing encyclopedic projects, to convey ideological re-orientations. The ninth century of the Wider West (the culturally, politically, and economically connected zones of the Mediterranean, Europe, North Africa, and the Near East) was an age of new and renewed empires, with a newly conceived empire under the Carolingian Franks, a resurgent Roman Empire in Constantinople, and the second great Islamic dynasty under the ‘Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad. These dynasties’ new and renewed imperial claims needed legitimization. They were drawn to, among other strategies, the specific sort of world-making orientation that chronographers could produce. In doing so they inspired a shift in the craft of telling and writing the past away from the distinctly literary genre of historia and towards the distinctly “scientific” genre of not only annalistic accounts generally but chronica specifically.

What made this particular form of writing the past fit the ninth-century political and diplomatic landscape cannot be fully clarified here, for the need to re-situate the present in terms of the past is not sufficient to explain the appeal of chronicles. Other genres besides chronica did so, such as historia, astronomies, legal codifications, martyrologies, theological florilegia, encyclopediae, or geographia (Eratosthenes, for instance, rewrote the space of the world to contextualize imperial universality). What we can say is that there is an

87 Modern historians forget that actively creating historical time was long a political activity. See: Denis C Feeney, Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History, Sather Classical Lectures 65 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).
88 Annals are year-by-year accounts beginning with a recent point in time. “Universal” or “world” chronicles are comprehensive surveys of all past time that begin with the creation of matter and investigate the very method of ordering events in time. The misconception that the annal and chronicle are forms of the same genre is based on the fact that they are both accounts of the past structured by the passage of time. This anachronistically imposes later medieval conceptions upon the early medieval form. Thus, Hayden White's brilliant conclusions about the form of medieval chronicles using a tenth-century version of the Annales of San Gall should not be directly applied to early medieval universal chronicles: Hayden V. White, The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 14–25, especially 16–18.
undeniable connection between chronographies and imperial power in the Early Middle Ages. Something about this genre tapped into the lifeblood of ninth-century political discourse. While all empires of the Wider West came to use the chronicle form to articulate their claims to universality, the Carolingians and Byzantines shared an additional, specific characteristic in their approach to chronicling: the assumption that political universality was based on the same Roman past.\footnote{Feeney, \textit{Caesar's Calendar}; Michele Renee Salzman, \textit{On Roman Time: The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity}, \textit{TCH} 17 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).} In this context, immense political and cultural capital was invested in making a historical and diplomatically recognized claim to Rome.\footnote{On the importance of Rome for Latin chronicles see: Rosamond McKitterick, \textit{Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages} (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006). See also: Rosamond McKitterick, “Roman Texts and Roman History in the Early Middle Ages,” in \textit{Rome Across Time and Space: Cultural Transmission and the Exchange of Ideas c. 500–1400}, ed. Rosamond McKitterick, John Osborne, and Claudia Bolgia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 19–34; Rosamond McKitterick, “Transformations of the Roman Past and Roman Identity in the Early Middle Ages,” in Gantner, McKitterick, and Meeder, \textit{Resources of the Past}, 225–44.} In the hundred years between Charlemagne (r. 768–814) and Basil I the Macedonian (r. 867–886), the ability to portray one’s empire as holding the place of Rome within God’s providential plan meant the difference between being remembered as the founder of a golden age dynasty, a murdering usurper or even, as we have seen, the Antichrist.\footnote{Providential chronology held imperial Rome as the successor to the Hebrew past, an idea established in late antique exegesis of prophetic texts where time not only had a beginning at the Creation, but a terminus coinciding with the collapse of the last empire of the last age. That empire was always Rome. On early medieval divisions of the past into periods progressing towards an apocalyptic or messianic end see: Oded Irshai, “Dating the Eschaton: Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Calculations in Late Antiquity,” in \textit{Apocalyptic Time}, ed. Albert I. Baumgarten, Numen Book Series 86 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 114–53. On eschatology and history, see: Paul Magdalino, “The History of the Future and Its Uses: Prophecy and Propaganda,” in \textit{The Making of Byzantine History: Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol on his 70th Birthday}, ed. Roderick Beaton and Charlotte Roueché (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1993). In particular, see pp. 3–5 on the common eschatological frameworks of Daniel’s “Four Kingdoms” and the “Six Days of Creation.” The most popular early medieval apocalyptic text, the \textit{Apocalypse} of Pseudo-Methodius (extant in Syriac, Latin, and Greek), divided history into seven epochs. Still essential is Paul J. Alexander, \textit{The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition}, ed. Dorothy Abrahamse (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Francis Dvornik, \textit{The Photian Schism: History and Legend} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) remains the most comprehensive account of exchanges over the idea of the Antichrist in the later ninth century, though it should be read with V. Grummel’s review in \textit{Revue des Études Byzantines} 10 (1952): 282–283, and F. Dvornik’s update, “The Patriarch Photius in Light of Recent Research,” in \textit{Berichtete}.}
early medieval chronographer was to define present political ambitions in relation to the most powerful of historic empires—to rewrite the past so that present emperors became the successors to the empires of the Romans, Greeks, or Persians. The chronographers of ninth-century emperors turned tenuous grasps on power into the sort of magnificent historical synthesis that could legitimize usurpers as founders of dynasties. I shown that the *Chronographia* became a dominant force in Byzantine historiography because it was open to continuation and adaptation depending on the political moment. Its own multiple endings and later adaptations testify to this component of its lasting value. This *time-writing* was meant to stand forever. It did so for so long because it changed with the times. That chronographies had not merely a political bent but a political theory of their own is no longer a surprise, but a starting presumption. The question now is not whether there is a politics of time, but what were—and are—its ends.