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LEGALIZATION OF USURPERS' POWER IN BYZANTIUM
FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE FIRST HALF
OF THE NINTH CENTURY

The history of Byzantine throne was very stormy in the period from the seventh to the first half of the ninth century. Fifteen emperors out of twenty five who ruled in those times gained power due to the removal of their predecessors¹.

Although usurpers obtained the throne by violation of the law, they tried to legalize their elevations. They fulfilled conditions which were obligatory for taking over the power legally. According to Byzantine constitutional tradition a new emperor was proclaimed by the senate and the army and acclaimed by the people of Constantinople and then crowned by the patriarch of the capital². In this article first of all I am going to analyse these usurpations which ended successfully because only in these cases the procedure of legalization could be fully realized.

The army was the main source of strength which served the fight for power. It was also used in the process of legalization of usurper's power. High commanders were often those who inspired the activity of army. Thanks to their position and popularity and also favourable opportunities they could struggle for power. Soldiers supported usurpers without any special objections. The causes of such attitude were principles of military discipline and also hope for reward. The fact of great importance was that in case of defeat only leaders of rebellions were punished³.

¹ They were: Phocas 602, Heraclius 610, Constans II 641, Leontius 695, Tiberius II 698, Justinian II 705 (return), Bardanes Philippicus 711, Artemios-Anastasius 713, Theodosius III 716, Leo III 717, Irene 797, Nicephorus I 802, Michael I 811, Leo V 813, Michael II 820.

² Cf. N. H. Baynes, *The Byzantine Empire*, London 1946, p. 64; J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius I. to the Death of Justinian*, t. 1. New York 1958, p. 5-6; A. Demandt, *Die Spätantike. Römische Geschichte von Diocletian bis Justinian 284-565 n. Chr.*, München 1989, p. 214-216.

³ On the activity of the army see the following: F. Winkelmann, *Zum byzantinischen Staat (Kaiser, Aristokratie, Heer)*, [in:] *Byzanz im 7. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 1978, p. 213-219;

This is how Heraclius (610–641) began his way to the throne. His father was an exarch Africa. Using his office he could cut off deliveries of grain to Constantinople, conquer Egypt, and later he sent his troops, with his son as their commander, against emperor Phocas. It must be remembered however that it happened in the situation of internal crisis of the State and in the face of external threat⁴.

In the seventh century the so-called Theme System was organized in Byzantium. At the head of a theme (provincial military district) was strategos who possessed military and civil power⁵. The *strategoi* were those who most often used their troops to seize the imperial throne⁶.

And so for example in 716 strategos of Anatolikon Theme – Leo was proclaimed the emperor by the army whose commanded in chief he was⁷.

W. E. Kaegi, *Byzantine Military Unrest 471–843: An Interpretation*, Amsterdam 1981, p. 120–269; idem, *Patterns of Political Activity of the Armies of the Byzantine Empire*, [in:] idem, *Army, Society and Religion in Byzantium*, London 1982, VII, p. 5–35; J. F. Haldon, *Ideology and Social Change in the Seventh Century. Military Discontent as a Barometr*, „Klio” 1986, Bd. 68, p. 139–190.

⁴ On Heraclius' usurpation see the following: N. Pigulevskaja, *Vizantia i Iran na rubeže VI i VII vekov*, Moskva–Leningrad 1946, p. 182–190; F. Thiess, *Die Griechischen Kaiser. Die Geburt Europas*, Hamburg–Wien 1959, p. 364f.; J. Kulakovskij, *Istoria Vizantii*, t. 3, London 1973, p. 18–28; A. Cameron, *Circus Factions. Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium*, Oxford 1976, p. 282–285; G. Rösch, *Der Aufstand der Herakleioi gegen Phocas (608–610)*, „Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik” 1979, Bd. 28, p. 52–62; A. N. Stratos, *Byzance au VII^e siècle, t. 1: L'Empereur Heraclius et l'Expansion Arabe*, Payot Lausanne 1985, p. 81–91; J. Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom*, Oxford 1987, p. 189–192.

⁵ On Theme System, see G. Ostrogorski, *Dzieje Bizancjum*, Warszawa 1968, p. 101–103 (bibliography of older studies – note 25, p. 101); Winkelmann, *op. cit.*, p. 52; J. F. Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription in the Byzantine Army C. 550–950. A Study on the Origins of the Stratiotika Ktemata*, Wien 1979; idem, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century. The Transformation of a Culture*, Cambridge 1990, esp. chapter VI: *The State and its Apparatus: Military Administration*, p. 208–253; R. Lillie, *Die zweihundertjährige Reform: zu den Anfängen der Themenorganisation im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert*, „Byzantinoslavica” 1984, t. 45, p. 27–39; E. P. Glušanin, *Voенно-государственное землевладение в ранней Византии (к вопросу о генезисе феодального строя)*, „Византийский Временник” 1989, t. 50, p. 14–25.

⁶ On the role of *strategoi* in military rebellions, see Kaegi, *Byzantine Military...*, p. 201–203. The scholar rightly emphasized that: „The revolts of the seventh and eighth centuries were not due solely to a fusion civil-military power in the hands of thematic strategus”. (*Ibidem*, p. 201–202).

⁷ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM 6208, Lipsiae 1883, p. 387 (later Theoph.); Nicephorus, *Historia syntomos*, Lipsiae 1880, p. 52 (later Niceph.). On Leo's usurpation, see J. B. Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire from Arcadius to Irene (395 A.D. to 800 A.D.)*, t. 2, London 1889, p. 374–378; Kulakovskij, *op. cit.*, t. 3, p. 319ff; Thiess, *op. cit.*, p. 791; F. Winkelmann, *Quellenstudien zur Herrschenden Klasse von Byzanz im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 1987, p. 37–38; W. Treadgold, *Seven Byzantine Revolutions and Chronology of Theophanes*, „Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies” 1990, t. 31, p. 222–224.

He also won the support of strategos of the Armeniakon Theme – Artabasdos⁸. Joined forces of Anatolikon and Armeniakon had no problem in removing incompetent emperor Theodosius III. Twenty five years later the above mentioned Artabasdos who became the strategos of Opsikion⁹, stood up against Constantine – Leo III's son. When Constantine with his troops marched out against Arabs and was in the area of Opsikion he was attacked by the local army. He had to escape and Artabasdos was proclaimed the emperor¹⁰. In 813 strategos of Anatolikon Theme – Leo made his troops proclaim him the basileus¹¹.

It must be mentioned that high commanders did not always instigate military rebellions for the purpose of seizing the throne for themselves. Sometimes they prepared the military support of usurpations which were organized by others. For example, in 811 Stephanus – domestic of the Schools supported Michael Rhangabe – emperor's Stauracius brother's – in – law. Stephanus summoned the troops who were used to proclaimed Michael¹².

It must be observed that soldiers did not always have to be inspired to revolt by their commanders. Sometimes they themselves began unrest. It was often caused by a particularly severe attitude of emperors towards the troops or by rivalry between parts of Byzantine army. From time to time these rebellions were used by ambitious commanders who wanted to realize their political ambitions.

In 602 for instance the Danuban army revolted against emperor Maurice. The cause of this revolt was the impolitic activity of the emperor. He did

⁸ Theoph., AM 6209, p. 395; Leonis Grammatici, *Chronographia*, Bonnae 1842, p. 172 (later LG); *Slavjanskij perevod chroniki Simeona Logotheta*, London 1971, p. 75 (later *Sim. slav.*); Zonaras, *Epitome historiarum*, XIV, 28 (later Zonaras), *Patrologiae cursus completus...*, *Series graeca...*, a curante J. P. Migne, t. 134, col. 1317 (later PG). Leo gave Artabasdos his daughter as a wife and the title of Curopalates. Cf. P. Speck, *Artabasdos, der rechtgläubige Vorkämpfer der göttlichen Lehren*, Bonn 1981, p. 49–51; Winkelmann, *Quellenstudien...*, p. 37, 76.

⁹ Speck, *op. cit.*, p. 153; cf. Herrin, *op. cit.*, p. 327, esp. note 66.

¹⁰ Theoph., AM 6233, p. 414; LG, p. 182; Niceph., p. 59. On Artabasdos' usurpation – Speck, *op. cit.*; I. Rochow, *Bemerkungen zur Revolte des Artabasdos aufgrund bisher nicht beachteter Quellen*, „Klio” 1986, Bd. 68, p. 191–197.

¹¹ Theoph., AM 6305, p. 502; Theophanes Continuatus, Bonnae 1838, p. 16 (later – ThC); LG, p. 340; *Sim. slav.*, p. 90; cf. Genesisius, *Regum*, Bonnae 1834, p. 5–6 (later Genesisius). On Leo's usurpation, see J. B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basile I*, New York 1965, p. 27–30; Winkelmann, *Quellenstudien...*, p. 65–66; W. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival 780–842*, Stanford 1988, p. 186–189; D. Turner, *The Origins and Accession of Leo V (813–820)*, „Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik” 1990, Bd. 40, p. 187–197.

¹² Theoph., AM 6303, p. 493. On Michael's usurpation, see Bury, *A History of the Eastern...*, p. 16–21; Treadgold, *Byzantine...*, p. 175–177.

not ransom Byzantine prisoners of war from Avar captivity and therefore they were executed¹³. Besides, he did not pay solidiers regularly. The impulse to revolt was the order of spending the winter on the Slavonic side of the Danube. It was very dangerous¹⁴. Rebellious troops proclaimed centurion Phocas their commander (*ἑξάρχος*) and marched out against emperor Maurice¹⁵. The unpopularity incurred by Maurice and some of his commanders increased for many years. It had to lead to an attempt of removal of the emperor from the throne. It must be stressed that soldiers did not feel animosity against Maurice's family if they offered the throne to the emperor's son, Theodosius¹⁶. It testified to the soldiers' attachment to the ruling dynasty.

A similar case occurred in 715 when an expedition against Arabs was organized. The place of concentration of the Byzantine army was Rhodes. Here the troops of Opsikion revolted against the emperor Anastasius II and murdered the commander of the expedition – John the Deacon and then came back to Opsikion Theme. In Adramyttium soldiers forced a certain Theodosius, the local tax – gatherer to accept the imperial power¹⁷. This was a spontaneous action as the troops did not even have the imperial candidate. The cause of the soldiers' action is unknown. There is a hypothesis that the activity of Opsikians was due to the events of 713. Then they removed emperor Bardanes Philippicus. However, their commander Georgios Buraphos did not become emperor, and the new ruler, Anastasius,

¹³ Theoph., AM 6092, p. 280. Cf. G. B. Hicks, *St. Gregory and the Emperor Phocas*, „Downside Review” 1904, t. 4, p. 61; L. M. Whitby, *Theophanes' Chronicle Sources for the Reigns of Justin II, Tiberius and Maurice (A. D. 565–602)*, „Byzantion” 1983, t. 53, p. 333–336.

¹⁴ Theoph., AM 6094, p. 286; Theophylacti Simocattae, *Historiae*, VIII, 6, 2, Lipsiae 1887 (later – ThS). On Maurice's policy towards the troops – Pigulevskaja, *op. cit.*, p. 166–167.

¹⁵ Theoph., AM 6094, p. 287; ThS, VIII, 7, 7; *Chronicon Paschale*, t. I, Bonn 1832, p. 693 (later – ChP); *Joanne Diacono Vita S. Gregorii Magni*, IV, 19 (later *Vita S. Gregorii Magni*), *Patrologiae cursus completus... series latina...*, accurate J. P. Migne, t. 75 (later PL). Joannes Antiochenus (*Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, t. V, frag. 218d) states that Phocas was proclaimed emperor; the same LG, p. 142; Zonaras, XIV, 13, col. 1269. On Phocas' usurpation, see Pigulevskaja, *op. cit.*, p. 164–175; Kulakovskij, *op. cit.*, t. 2, p. 488–494; Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 265–266; V. V. Kučma, *K voprosu o socialnoj suščnosti <<revolucii>> Foki (602–610)*, [in:] *Vizantijskie očerki*, Moskva 1977, p. 182–194; Stratos, *op. cit.*, p. 45–59.

¹⁶ Theoph., AM 6094, p. 287; ThS, VIII, 8, 4–5.

¹⁷ Theoph., AM 6207, p. 384–385; Niceph., p. 51; Georgii Monachii, *Chronicon*, t. 2, Lipsiae 1904, p. 734 (later Georgios Mon.); LG, p. 171–172; Zonaras, XIV, 27, col. 1313. On Theodosius' usurpation see the following: Kulakovskij, *op. cit.*, p. 324; L. Lamza, *Patriarch Germanos I. von Konstantinopel (715–730)*, Würzburg 1975, p. 104–107. On chronology of events, see Treadgold, *Seven...*, p. 220–222.

ordered to blind and banish him¹⁸. Besides, soldiers did not get a customary reward. And therefore they seized the first occasion to revolt against emperor Anastasius¹⁹. It is worth emphasizing that the revolt of Opsikion was the next symptom of the troops' activity which increased at the end of the seventh and at the beginning of the eighth century²⁰.

Not every usurpation began with the action of an ambitious commander or spontaneous rebellion of the troops. Sometimes an army joined usurpations which were organized by other forces. Such was the case in 711 when the troops under Maurus were sent by Justinian II to pacify Cherson. Soldiers could not execute the emperor's order and therefore joined Chersonites who had already proclaimed the emperor – Bardanes Philippicus before that²¹.

The senatorial circles were next force which was of importance during usurpations. Having the important state offices at their disposal, they had the possibility of acting, conspiring, using their influences and connections.

The senate played an important role in Heraclius' usurpation. Priscos, Phocas' son-in-law, started corresponding with Heraclius Elder as a representative of the senate. He asked him for intervention in order to remove the emperor Phocas²². Senatorial circles were very active in the fight against this emperor, as evidenced by numerous unsuccessful plots in earlier times²³.

The senate also played a great role in 802. High state officials under the leadership of Nicephorus logothete of the treasury revolted against empress Irene²⁴. They included Nicetas – patrician and domestic of the Schools, his brother Sisinnios – patrician²⁵, Theoctistos – patrician and

¹⁸ Theoph., AM 6205, p. 383; Niceph., p. 49; LG, p. 170–171; *Sim. slav.*, p. 75. On Anastasius' usurpation, see Thiess, *op. cit.*, p. 784–786; Winkelmann, *Zum Byzantinischen Staat...*, p. 218–219. On chronology – G. V. Summer, *Philippicus, Anastasius II and Theodosius III*, „Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies” 1976, t. 17, p. 289–291; Treadgold, *Seven...*, p. 218–219.

¹⁹ Kulakovskij, *op. cit.*, t. 3, p. 324; Treadgold, *Seven...*, p. 219; on activity of troops of Opsikian Theme in those times – W. E. Kaegi, *The Byzantine Armies and Iconoclasm*, „Byzantinoslavica” 1966, t. 27, p. 50.

²⁰ Kaegi, *Patterns...*, p. 25; Haldon, *Ideology...*, p. 185–188.

²¹ On Bardanes-Philippicus' proclamation by Chersonites – Theoph., AM 6203, p. 379; Niceph., p. 46. On military support of his usurpation – Theoph., *loc. cit.*; Niceph., *loc. cit.* Wider on Philippicus' usurpation see the following: Bury, *A History of the Later... (395–800)*, p. 363–366; Kulakovskij, *op. cit.*, p. 297–303; Treadgold, *Seven...*, p. 215–217.

²² Theoph., AM 6100, p. 295–296; Joannes Antiochenus, fr. 218e, f. Winkelmann (*Zum Byzantinischen...*, p. 175–211) discusses the role of the senate in elevation of the emperors till the beginning of the 8th century. See also H.-G. Beck, *Senat und Volk von Konstantinopel. Probleme der byzantinischen Verfassungsgeschichte*, München 1966.

²³ Pigulevskaja, *op. cit.*, p. 180–182; Stratos, *op. cit.*, p. 68–72.

²⁴ On Nicephorus' plot, see Bury, *A History of the Eastern...*, p. 1–8.

²⁵ Sisinnios was early strategos of Thraakesion Theme (Theoph., AM 6291, p. 474). Omnipotent eunuch Aetius regarded Nicetas and Sisinnios as his supporters because they were coming out against his opponent eunuch Stauracius (Bury, *A History of the Eastern...*, p. 5).

questor²⁶, Gregorios²⁷, Leo Serantapechos²⁸ and Peter²⁹ – patricians as well as Leo of Sinope – patrician and sakelarios³⁰. Among plotters there were also *τινας τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ λαοῦ τῶν ταγμάτων*³¹ whose names are not known. Winning the support of palace guards they proclaimed Nicephorus the emperor³².

The people of Constantinople was the next force which played an important role in usurpations, especially in the seventh century. Every usurper tried to seize the capital. In this situation of course the support of its inhabitants could facilitate the gaining of this aim. However, the importance of that support can not be reduced only to military matters. We have to remember that Constantinopolitan inhabitants had the same rights as *populus Romanus* and among others the right to acclamation of new emperors. And that is another reason why usurpers who wanted to legalize their power strove for the support of Constantinopolitan population.

Emperor Maurice (in the later days of his reign) decided to have patrician Germanos executed. The emperor suspected him of the desire to seize the throne. Germanos was warned by his son-in-law Theodosius (Maurice's son) and found shelter in a church. Maurice sent soldiers to capture him. A crowd which gathered in front of the church Hagia Sophia, prevented the soldiers from doing it. The emperor was not popular among the City population³³ which took advantage of this moment to stand up against him. It is known that Germanos was connected with the Blues³⁴. It can be assumed that the Blues controlled actions of the crowd which gathered in front of Hagia Sophia. This event became an impulse to begin

²⁶ Theoph., AM 6295, p. 476.

²⁷ Under Leo IV Gregorios was count of Opsikion (Theoph., AM 6270, p. 451). Gregorios' position is not known at the time of the plot. Winkelmann (*Quellenstudien...*, p. 59) qualifies him as *Mitglied der Militäraristokratie*.

²⁸ Leo is known only from Theophanes' mention (Winkelmann, *Quellenstudien...*, p. 59). On familiar relation between empress Irene and family of Serantapechos, see Theoph., AM 6291, p. 474.

²⁹ Theoph., AM 6295, p. 476. Peter appeared once more in Theophanes' Chronicon (AM 6303, p. 491) as one of victims of the war with Bulgarians (811).

³⁰ Winkelmann, *Quellenstudien...*, p. 59.

³¹ Theoph., AM 6295, p. 476.

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ On the cause of Maurice's unpopularity, see Kulakovskij, *op. cit.*, t. 2, p. 487–488; Stratos, *op. cit.*, p. 45–46. Activity of inhabitants of the capital could be caused by religious matters too. According to Theophilactus Simocatta (VIII, 9, 3) and Theophanes (AM 6094, p. 288, 18) the crowd accused the emperor of heresy shouting: „*Μαυρικε Μαρκιανιστά*“, Cf. *Vita S. Gregorii Magni*, IV, 19. On that subject, see I. Rochow, *Der Vorwurf des Heidentums als Mittel der Innenpolitischen Polemik in Byzanz*, [in:] *Paganism in the Later Roman Empire and in Byzantium*, Kraków 1991, p. 145.

³⁴ Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

disturbances in the capital. They disorganized a defence because members of demes left their positions and joined the rebellious people³⁵. In this situation Constantinople was defenceless towards Phocas' troops. The emperor Maurice understood it and fled the city³⁶. At the moment the Greens played especially important role. At first they refused to support patrician Germanos when he wanted to seize the throne after Maurice's escape³⁷. Then they met Phocas half-way and gave him an oration³⁸. This way they strengthened his position which can not have been too strong, as the soldiers had not decided to proclaim him the emperor until then, even though he commanded the army.

The Greens, who later became enemies of Phocas, played an important role during Heraclius' usurpation. When Heraclius was near Constantinople, Phocas ordered the Greens to guard the harbours – Caesarius and Sophia. Having these strategic positions, the Greens enabled Heraclius' fleet to enter the harbours. They also freed Heraclius' fiancée who was a hostage of Phocas³⁹. After Heraclius' victory the Greens burned the Blue flag in the hippodrome⁴⁰. It symbolised „the humiliation of the Blues”⁴¹ and it emphasized the role of the Greens in Heraclius' accession to the throne.

Yet from the end of the seventh century we have two mentions of remarkable role of demes during usurpations. According to them emperor Leontius was proclaimed by the Blues⁴² and Apsimar-Tiberius by the Greens⁴³. These mentions are very laconic and therefore we do not know what real role the demes played. Did they only take part in the acclamation

³⁵ ThS, VIII, 9, 4; Theoph., AM 6094, p. 288.

³⁶ ThS, VIII, 9, 7; Theoph., *loc. cit.*

³⁷ Theoph., AM 6094, p. 289; ThS, VIII, 9, 14–16. The role of demes during Phocas' usurpation was analysed by – J. Jary, *Heresies et factions dans l'Empire Byzantin du IV^e au VII^e siècle*, Caire 1968, p. 73–75; Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 265–266; A. A. Čekalova, *K voprosu o dimach v ranniej Vizantii*, [in:] *Vizantijskie očerki*, Moskva 1982, p. 51.

³⁸ Theoph., AM 6094, p. 289; ThS, VIII, 10, 1. During the night when emperor Maurice had left the capital representatives of the Greens went to Phocas' camp. They certainly informed him about situation in the capital and promised their support. However I have to emphasize that Phocas obtained the Blues' support too. Cameron (*op. cit.*, s. 266) rightly writes that Phocas „was proclaimed by Blues and Greens together”.

³⁹ Joannes Antiochenus, frag. 218f, 3–5. Cf. J. V. A. Fine, *Two Contributions on the Demes and Factions in Byzantium in Sixth and Seventh Century*, „Zbornik Radova Vizantoloszkoj Instituta” 1967, t. 10, p. 33f.; Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 282–285; A. S. Fotiou, *Byzantine Circus Factions and Their Riots*, „Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik” 1978, Bd. 27, p. 8f.

⁴⁰ ChP, p. 701.

⁴¹ Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

⁴² Georgios Mon., p. 731.

⁴³ F. Cumont, *Anecdota Bruxellensia I: Chroniques byzantines du manuscrits 11376*, Gent 1894, p. 30. Cf. A. Külzer, *Studien zum Chronicon Bruxellense*, „Byzantion” 1991, t. 61, p. 439–440.

of emperor or otherwise support an imperial candidate? It seems that they may have helped usurpers to seize the capital, at least in the case of Leontius. As he did not have any forces at his disposal, Leontius sent messengers to summon inhabitants of the capital to Hagia Sophia⁴⁴. The crowd that gathered certainly included representatives of the Blues who were able to steer its activity. Besides, we can not disregard the possibility of an earlier agreement between Leontius and the Blues. It can be suggested that the attitude of the majority of population in the capital played an important role, too. Justinian II was unpopular in Constantinople. Leontius strengthened these public feelings by rumours which said that the emperor was planning to massacre the inhabitants of the capital⁴⁵. As regards Apsimar some scholars think that the Greens helped him to seize Constantinople⁴⁶. However, recently Al. Cameron questioned this theory. According to him the Greens only participated in Apsimar's proclamation⁴⁷.

Observing the role of the people of Constantinople in later usurpations we notice some differences. The people took part in imperial proclamations but in sources we do not find such situations as those from 602 and 610. However the attitude of the capital still had a great importance for usurpers. What is the cause of this change? On the one hand it was caused by the limitations of demes' activity on the other hand by the fact that many later usurpations had the character of palace plots (for example – Nicephorus I, Michael I or Michael II). Then the military support of the inhabitants of the capital was not necessary.

In comparison with Early Byzantium a new force, which appeared on the arena of the fight for power, was the Church. Its role was not limited to the coronation of usurpers by the patriarch.

We can consider activity of the Church which supported usurpers already in case of Heraclius. Leaving Africa he carried an icon of God's Mother⁴⁸. It indicated that She kept watch on the expedition. We can think that Heraclius' action was supported by the African clergy. Before Heraclius seized the capital he received another proof of goodwill of ecclesiastical circles. Stephanus – bishop of Cyzicus gave him the wreath which decorated the icon of God's Mother in a local church⁴⁹. We can suppose that in this

⁴⁴ Niceph., p. 38; Theoph., AM 6187, p. 369; LG, p. 165; *Sim. slav.*, p. 72.

⁴⁵ Theoph., AM 6187, p. 368. During his reign Leontius was popular among the population of the capital (cf. Haldon, *Byzantium...*, p. 74). The evidence of it is the fact that people did not want to betray him to Apsimar during the siege of Constantinople.

⁴⁶ Jary, *op. cit.*, p. 537–538; Ostrogorski, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

⁴⁷ Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 267–268.

⁴⁸ Theoph., AM 6102, p. 298; Pauli Diaconi, *Historia Miscellanea*, XVIII, PL, t. 95, col. 1023.

⁴⁹ Theoph., AM 6102, p. 299; Joannes Antiochenus, frag. 218f, 2.

way the Church expressed its agreement for Heraclius' elevation⁵⁰. It is important that this way Stephanus refused to obey Phocas who was still the legal emperor.

In 695 Leontius – a new strategos of Helladic Theme revolted against the emperor Justinian II. After a liberation of prisoners from the pretorium Leontius went to patriarch Callinicus to ask for help. He got it (it is not known how) as the patriarch was addressing the crowd gathered in Hagia Sophia, the response was a stream of abuse at Justinian II⁵¹. It should also be emphasized that those who encouraged Leontius to fight for the throne were two monks – Paul from Kallistratos' monastery and Gregorius, hegumen of Floros' monastery in Constantinople⁵². It can be suppose that they represented wider groups of monks staying in Constantinople and its neighbourhood. Their support was very important for Leontius⁵³. It is worth emphasizing that Paul and Gregorius went with usurper to the patriarch⁵⁴. Their presence may have influenced patriarch Callinicus. It seems that he could not ignore representatives of monks from the capital.

We can observe a very interesting example of activity of Constantinopolitan patriarch during the usurpation of Theodosius III (715) and Leo III (717). The contemporary bishop of the capital, Germanos, was at first a mediator between Theodosius III and Anastasius II and then between Leo III and Theodosius III⁵⁵. In both cases his purpose was to bring about the abdication of the legal ruler. The activity of the patriarch had a successful end. The cause of the efficiency of the patriarch's activity

⁵⁰ G. Ostrogorski, *Evolucja vizantijskogo obriada koronovanija*, [in:] *Vizantia, južnyje slaviane, Drevnaja Rus, Zapadnaja Evropa. Isskustvo i kultura*, Moskva 1973, p. 37.

⁵¹ Theoph., AM 6187, p. 369; Niceph., p. 38.

⁵² Theoph., AM 6187, p. 368–369; Niceph., *loc. cit.*; cf. LG, p. 165; *Sim. slav.*, p. 72.

⁵³ Monks played an important role in the Byzantine society. Very often they participated in doctrinal controversies. Sometimes they served as military force used not only in ecclesiastical conflicts but also for pressing state authorities. Basiliscus knew how efficient „army” of monks could be from his own experience when in the second half of the fifth century he was trying to lead pro-Monophysite policy. Patriarch Acacius led monks under the leadership of famous Daniel the Stylite out on streets against Basiliscus (on these events – Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 7, PG, t. 86; Theodor Lector, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 33, PG, t. 86; Theoph., AM 5968; *Vita S. Danielis Stylitae*, „Analecta Bollandiana” 1913, t. 32; p. 186–200). Usurper resigned from his religious policy. However it did not save him from the fall. One the role of monks in Byzantine society, see – H. Delehaye, *Życie monastyczne w Bizancjum*, [in:] *Bizancjum. Wstęp do cywilizacji wschodniorzymskiej*, Warszawa 1964, p. 127–151; P. Charanis, *The Monk as an Element of Byzantine Society*, „Dumbarton Oaks Papers” 1971, t. 25, p. 61–84; W. H. C. Frend, *The Monks and the Survival of the East Roman Empire in the Fifth Century*, „Past and Present” 1972, No 54, p. 3–24.

⁵⁴ Theoph., AM 6187, p. 369.

⁵⁵ On the mission of Germanos to Anastasius – Lamza, *op. cit.*, p. 105–106; Summer, *op. cit.*, p. 291. On Germanos' mediation between Leo and Theodosius – Theoph., AM 6208, p. 390; Niceph., p. 51–52; see also Lamza, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

was not only his persuasiveness but first of all an extremely difficult situation of Anastasius and Theodosius. Having little prospect of the defeat of usurpers they wanted at least to save their life. It seems that the patriarch was the best guarantor of honesty of usurpers' proposals.

At the beginning of the ninth century patriarch Nicephorus played an important role in the elevation of usurpers to the throne. In 811 he tried to persuade the seriously wounded emperor Stauracius to abdicate. His imperial candidate was Michael Rhangabe⁵⁶. After his accession to the throne Michael gave the patriarch rich gifts, which was an expression of his gratitude⁵⁷. In 813 Nicephorus persuaded Michael, discouraged by the defeats in war with Bulgarians, to abdicate in return he offered him safety. He did it in the interest of Leo – the strategos of Anatolikon Theme⁵⁸. Leo wrote a letter to the patriarch in which he affirmed his own Orthodoxy and asked for blessing⁵⁹.

The role of patriarchs and the Church in usurpers' accessions was significant. Being a moral force the Church became an important political factor whose support was needed in the fight for power.

All forces which were mentioned above took part in the legalization of power which was seized by violation of the law. I am going to analyse the role of the army, senate, Church and people of Constantinople in this process.

1. The military proclamation. When usurpation was begun by a military revolt, a proclamation by soldiers was the first part of legalization of power. By way of example, such cases can be noticed during usurpations of Tiberius (698)⁶⁰, Theodosius III (715)⁶¹, Leo III (716)⁶², and in IX century – of Bardanes Turcus⁶³ or of Leo V⁶⁴. Those of them who gained

⁵⁶ Theoph., AM 6303, p. 492. On the role of the patriarch Nicephorus in the Michael's elevation – A. J. Visser, *Nikephoros und der Bilderstreit*, S-Gravenhage 1952, p. 60–62; P. J. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople*, Oxford 1958, p. 74–76; Winkelmann, *Quellenstudien...*, p. 63–64.

⁵⁷ Theoph., AM 6304, p. 493; LG, p. 206.

⁵⁸ Theoph., AM 6305, p. 502.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*. Alexander analyses the problem of Nicephorus' role in Leo's inauguration (*op. cit.*, p. 77–79).

⁶⁰ Theoph., AM 6190, p. 370; Niceph., p. 40; Georgios Mon., p. 732; Zonaras, XIV, 23, col. 1304; LG, p. 166; *Sim. slav.*, p. 73. On Tiberius' usurpation, see Bury, *A History of the Later... (395–800)*, p. 353–354; Kulakovskij, *op. cit.*, t. 3, p. 278–280; Treadgold, *Seven...*, p. 210–212.

⁶¹ Theoph., AM 6207, p. 385; Niceph., p. 51.

⁶² Theoph., AM 6208, p. 387; Niceph., p. 52; Georgios Mon., p. 737.

⁶³ Theoph., AM 6295, p. 479; Georgios Mon., p. 772. On Bardanes' usurpation – Bury, *A History of the Eastern...*, p. 10–14; Winkelmann, *Quellenstudien...*, p. 59–60; Treadgold, *Byzantine...*, p. 131–133; Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 173–176.

⁶⁴ Theoph., AM 6305, p. 502; ThC, p. 16.

power also tried to secure acceptance of the senate, the people and the Church. If a usurpation was begun by other forces than rebellious troops, the military proclamation followed legalization of power. For example we notice this case during Nicephorus' usurpation. First he was proclaimed by the members of the senate and then by the palace guards⁶⁵.

Events of 811 are explicit evidence that participation of troops in the proclamation of a new emperor was necessary. Then Stephanus *domestikos ton scholon* wanted to proclaim Michael Rhangabe emperor. He was gathering troops into the Hippodrome for whole night to call for the new emperor⁶⁶.

As we see the condition of military proclamation was fulfilled as a necessary element of legalization of power by usurpers in the seventh and the first half the ninth century.

2. Acceptance by the Senate. Starting with Phocas next usurpers tried to obtain the acceptance of the senate. Having arrived in the suburbs of Constantinople, Phocas urged the patriarch, the senate and the people to elect the emperor⁶⁷. The senate took part in the proclamation of Phocas as the emperor. Before that Phocas suggested choosing patrician Germanos for the imperial throne. Obviously Germanos refused⁶⁸. In this way Germanos, the representative of senatorial circles, admitted that Phocas was undoubtedly worthy of the imperial throne. It was of great propagandist importance. On the one hand the former centurion was somehow accepted by the Byzantine élites, on the other hand he stopped being the usurper. Everybody could see that he did not want power. He took over the throne because the most eminent man – Germanos – who should have become the emperor – did not do it.

According to Nicephorus Heraclius was proclaimed the ruler by the senate and the people⁶⁹. It was not strange because his intervention was begun just by the senate. It was characteristic that Heraclius, like Phocas, offered the throne to a member of the senate – Priscos, Phocas' son-in-law. Priscos obviously refused and pointed at Heraclius⁷⁰.

Also later usurpers were acclaimed by the senate. The sources clearly speak about the participation of senators in the proclamation of Anastasius II⁷¹,

⁶⁵ Theoph., AM 6295, p. 476; Georgius Cedrenus, Ioannis Scylitzae, *Ope*, t. 2, Bonnae 1889, p. 29.

⁶⁶ Theoph., AM 6303, p. 493.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, AM 6094, p. 289; ThS, VIII, 10, 2-4.

⁶⁸ ThS, VIII, 10, 4-5; Theoph., AM 6094, p. 289.

⁶⁹ Niceph., p. 5.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*. Cf. the letter of the senate to Persian ruler Chosroes – ChP., p. 708. On this letter, see W. E. Kaegi, *Two Notes on Heraclius*, [in:] *idem*, *Army...*, X, p. 221-227.

⁷¹ Zonaras, XIV, 26, col. 1312; *Diakon Agathon*, [in:] *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, t. XII, p. 192; *Cumont*, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

Theodosius III⁷², Leo III⁷³, Artabasdos⁷⁴, Nicephorus I⁷⁵ or Michael I⁷⁶. Also in these cases in which we have no information about participation of the senate in proclamations of usurpers we can suppose that it took place⁷⁷.

It seems obvious that the acceptance of the senate was a condition of legal power. The above cases are the evidence of it.

3. Acclamation by the people of Constantinople. After the arrival in Hebdomon and the warm welcome Phocas sent his representative Theodorus for the patriarch, the senate and the people itself. The inhabitants of the capital praised Phocas and acclaimed him as the emperor. The cause of this positive attitude could be antipathy to Maurice. Under the circumstances every new imperial candidate was better than the legal emperor. Phocas' humble birth may have played a certain role, as a cause of his popularity among inhabitants of Constantinople.

According to Nicephorus Heraclius was proclaimed by the senate and the people itself⁷⁸. I have already written about the friendly attitude of the Greens to Heraclius.

It is easy to notice the presence inhabitants of the capital in the proclamation of Leontius. He sent his supporters to summon the populace of Constantinople to Hagia Sophia⁷⁹. When they gathered and listened to the speech of the patriarch Callinicus, they rejected the name of Justinian II. Then they went to Hippodrom and proclaimed Leontius. According to Georgios Monachos the Blues played the important role in this proclamation⁸⁰.

⁷² The patriarch Germanos was sent to Anastasius with a group of senators. Cf. Lamza, *op. cit.*, p. 105–106.

⁷³ Theoph., AM 6208, p. 390; Niceph., p. 52.

⁷⁴ *Vita Germani*, 25, [in:] Lamza, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

⁷⁵ Theoph., AM 6295, p. 476; LG, p. 200–201.

⁷⁶ Theoph., AM 6303, 6304, p. 493; Georgii Cedrenii, t. 2, p. 43; Georgios Mon., p. 776.

⁷⁷ For instance Leontius, who was the strategos of Anatolic theme before his imprisonment, was a member of military aristocracy. He may have been the head of the plot of aristocracy which was not satisfied with Justinian's policy. It is possible that Leontius was recognized by the senate. The role of the senate in Leontius' proclamation mentions only anonymity chronicon – Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 30: *Λεόντιος ἀναγορεύθη ὑπὸ τῆς συγκλήτου...* (our underlining M. J. L.). On Justinian's policy towards aristocracy – M. V. Levčenko, *Venety i prasiny v Vizantii v V–VII vv.*, „Vizantijskij Vremennik” 1947, t. 1, p. 182–183. On the part of senators in the rise of Leontius – Winkelmann, *Zum Byzantinischen...*, p. 205–209. Michael II was proclaimed the emperor by people who were in the palace which suggests that among them there were members of the senate – Georgii Cedrenii, t. 2, p. 68.

⁷⁸ Niceph., p. 5; *Chronicon ad annum 1234 pertinens, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptorum Syri*, t. 56, seria III, t. 14, p. 177.

⁷⁹ Theoph., AM 6187, p. 369; Niceph., p. 38.

⁸⁰ Georgios Mon., p. 731: *Λεόντιος ο πατρικίος ἀναγορεύεται νυκτὸς ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου τῶν Βενέτων βασιλεὺς* (our underlining – M. J. L.).

According to the anonymous Byzantine chronicle the successor of Leontius – Tiberius was proclaimed the emperor by the Greens⁸¹. It seems that the emphasis of demes role in the proclamation of Leontius and Tiberius issued from their special involvement in these events. It is possible that the Blues led the acclamation of Leontius and the Greens that of Tiberius-Apsimar⁸².

There are no accounts of the participation of the Constantinopolitan people in the proclamation of Philippicus⁸³. The reign of Justinian II was not popular. It was characteristic that when Justinian II together with Bulgarians arrived in Constantinople to regain power, the populace of the capital showered slander on him⁸⁴. It seems that Constantinopolitan people may have supported Philippicus who stood up against Justinian II in 711.

Artemios-Anastasius was proclaimed the emperor in Hagia Sophia in the presence of the inhabitants of Constantinople on Whitsunday⁸⁵. The proclamation of Artabasdos also took place in Hagia Sophia⁸⁶. We notice the presence of the populace of the capital in usurpers' proclamations also in 9th century. Nicephorus I, Michael I, Leo V or Michael II were acclaimed by the people⁸⁷.

The acclamation done by the Constantinopolitan people was the necessary sequel to the legalization.

4. Coronation by the Patriarch⁸⁸. In comparison with the period of 4th – 6th century the new element which appeared in 602 was the coronation performed by the patriarch. It became the main point of legalization.

⁸¹ Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 30: 'Αψίμαρος ἀναγορεύθη ὑπὸ τῶν πρασίνων... (our underlining – M. J. L.).

⁸² Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 264, 267.

⁸³ It was mentioned above that Bardanes-Philippicus was proclaimed by population of Cherson. In this way Chersonites usurped the right of acclamation of new emperor which belonged only to Constantinopolitan people. In such situation the act which took place in Cherson was invalid and that is why it had to be repeated by inhabitants of the capital.

⁸⁴ Theoph., AM 6197, p. 374; Niceph., p. 42.

⁸⁵ Theoph., AM 6205, p. 383; Niceph., p. 49; Zonaras, XIV, 26, col. 1311–1312; LG, p. 170.

⁸⁶ Theoph., AM 6233, p. 415.

⁸⁷ Nicephorus I – Theoph., AM 6295, p. 476; Michael I – Georgii Cedrenii, t. 2, p. 43; Leo V – Gergios Mon., p. 776 (ἀναγορεύεται [...] ὑπὸ τοῦ λαοῦ); the same LG, p. 206; Michael II – Georgii Cedrenii, t. 2, p. 68.

⁸⁸ On the coronation by patriarch, see W. Ensslin, *Zur Frage nach der ersten Kaiserkrönung durch den Patriarchen und zur Bedeutung dieses Aktes im Wahlzeremoniell*, „Byzantinische Zeitschrift“ 1942, Bd. 42, p. 101–115; Ostrogorski, *Evolucija...*; F. Winkelmann, *Zur Rolle der Patriarchen von Konstantinopel bei den Kaiserwechseln in frühbyzantinischer Zeit*, „Klio“ 1978, Bd. 60, p. 467–481; P. Yannopoulos, *Le Couronnement de l'Empereur a Byzance: Rituel et Fond Institutionnel*, „Byzantion“ 1991, t. 61, esp. p. 86–89.

The first usurper, who was crowned by the patriarch, was Phocas. It took place in the church of John the Baptist in Hebdomon after he had been proclaimed by the senate, troops and people of Constantinople⁸⁹. In 610 Heraclius was crowned by the patriarch Sergios. It is not certain where it took place. Sources mention three various churches – St. Stephanus, St. Thomas and Hagia Sophia⁹⁰. It seems that the cathedral church is the most probable place of the coronation because its name was given by Chronicon Paschale, the best source that refers to events in Constantinople during Heraclius' usurpation⁹¹. Leontius and Tiberius were crowned by patriarch Callinicus. He was punished for it by Justinian II after his return to power in 705. The emperor ordered to blind him, and sent him to Rome⁹². The place of coronations was probably the church Hagia Sophia. Also other usurpers who captured Constantinople, were crowned by patriarchs⁹³. The importance of this elements is proven by the fact that the usurper Thomas the Slav who could not realize this condition, made the patriarch of Antioch crown him⁹⁴.

⁸⁹ ThS, VIII, 10, 6; Theoph., AM 6094, p. 289; ChP, p. 693; Joannes Antiochenus, frag. 218d, 7.

⁹⁰ Cf. the note 426 in: *Chronicon Paschale 284–628 AD*, Liverpool 1989, p. 152–153.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, note 421, p. 150.

⁹² On punishment of the patriarch – Theoph., AM 6198, p. 375; Niceph., p. 25–27; Zonaras, XIV, 25, col. 1308; Georgios Mon., p. 733; *Bedae Chronica Maiora, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi*, t. 13, 3, München 1981, p. 317.

⁹³ Bardanes Philippicus (Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 30; Külzer, *op. cit.*, p. 441) and Anastasius II (LG, p. 170; Georgii Cedrenii, t. 1, p. 785) were crowned by patriarch John VI; Theodosius III (Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 31) and Leo III (Herrin, *op. cit.*, p. 319) by Germanus; Artabasdos by Anastasius (cf. Speck, *op. cit.*, p. 127–131); Nicephorus I by Tarasios (Georgios Mon., p. 772; Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 32; Georgios Mon., p. 772); Michael I (Theoph., AM 6304, p. 493; *Sim. slav.*, p. 90) and Leo V (Theoph., AM 6305, p. 502; Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 32; *Sim. slav.*, p. 90) by Nicephorus and Michael II by Theodotus (Bury, *A History of the Eastern...*, p. 77–78).

⁹⁴ ThC, p. 55. The importance of this fact is rightly underlined by H. Köpstein, *Zur Erhebung des Thomas*, [in:] *Studien zum 8. und 9. Jahrhundert in Byzanz*, Berlin 1983, p. 86. I can not agree with Bury who wrote: „It may be suggested that coronation was not contrived by the wish of the pretender, but by the policy of Mamun. The respectation of the emblem of sovereignty at the hands of a Patriarch, who was the subject of the Caliph, may have been intended as a symbolical acknowledgment of the Caliph's overlordship and a pledge of his future submission as a tributary”. (*A History of the Eastern...*, p. 89). It seems that Thomas wanted to strengthen his position by this coronation. Antiochene patriarch was the most prominent representative of the Church who at the time could crown Thomas the Slav. It must also be remarked that emperor Michael ordered the patriarch of Constantinople to excommunicate the bishop of Antioch for celebrating Thomas' coronation (Treadgold, *Byzantine...*, p. 234). On the relationship between Mamun and Thomas, see *ibidem*, p. 233. Generally on Thomas' usurpation, see E. Lipšic, *Vosstanie Fomy Slavianina*, [in:] *Očerki istorii vizantijskogo obščestva i kultury VIII – pervaja polovina IX veka*, Moskva–Leningrad 1961, p. 212–228; P. Lemerle, *Thomas le Slave. Critique des sources*, „Travaux et Memoires” 1965, t. 1, p. 255–297; Köpstein, *op. cit.*, p. 61–87.

The bishops of Constantinople realized that the ecclesiastical coronation was of great importance for usurpers and tried to use it in order to gain some benefits from imperial candidates. And so patriarch Ciriac required that Phocas should take care of Orthodox faith and peace in the Church⁹⁵. It is not strange because Ciriac could not know Phocas' religious views. The usurper was an unknown person. The similar conditions were put to Michael by the patriarch Nicephorus in 811. Beside the problem of faith they were connected with sparing the Christians' blood and certain privileges for the clergy⁹⁶. In 813 Leo the strategos of Anatolikon Theme himself sent the Orthodox profession of faith to the patriarch Nicephorus⁹⁷. It is possible that similar obligations were given by the other usurpers.

The opinion that God decided about the accession to the throne became predominant in that period. He inspires the changes of the rulers. The monologue of the empress Irene to usurper Nicephorus is a significant example illustrating the Byzantine way of thinking on that matter. The deposed empress claimed that her elevation happened due to the God and her fall due to her sins. She thought that Nicephorus had obtained the throne thanks to God's will because nothing happened without God. In this case she had to bow down before Nicephorus as chosen by God⁹⁸. Irene's words were complemented by shouts of the Blues from the end of Maurice's reign: „ὁ θεός, ἀτοκράτωρ, ὁ κελεύσας σε βασιλεύειν, ὑποτάξει σοι πάντα πολεμοῦντα τὴν βασιλείαν εἰ δὲ Ῥωμαῖός ἐστιν, εὐεργέτα, <ὁ> ἀγνωμονῶν σε, εἰς δουλείαν σου τοῦτον ὑποτάξει χωρὶς αἱμάτων”⁹⁹. In my opinion the message of slogans chanted by the Blues is that if God does not do it – the ruler is not worthy of it. God decides about the elevation of rulers. He sanctions their removal, the cause of which are the sins of an emperor. The usurper who obtained the power became a legal ruler after fulfilling the conditions of legal take – over the throne. The success in the fight for power and the decision of the patriarch, the senate, troops and the people were interpreted as a manifestation of God's will. In this situation one can not be surprised by the attitude of the patriarch or other forces who left a legal ruler without any objections and supported his antagonist¹⁰⁰. Such attitudes were caused not only by religious respects but also by the actual situation. People did not support the loser and they did

⁹⁵ Theoph., AM 6094, p. 289. Cf. Winkelmann, *Zur Rolle...*, p. 476.

⁹⁶ Theoph., AM 6303, p. 493; Zonaras, XV, 17, col. 1361.

⁹⁷ Theoph., AM 6305, p. 502; Genesisius, p. 26–27; LG, p. 207; *Sim. slav.*, p. 90. On Leo's letter to the patriarch Nicephorus, see Bury, *A History of the Eastern...*, p. 56–57; Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 197–200.

⁹⁸ Theoph., AM 6295, p. 478.

⁹⁹ ThS, VIII, 7, 9.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Treadgold, *Byzantine...*, p. 243–244.

not want to incur the victor's displeasure. What must be considered is the fact that the legalization often took place after the removal of the legal ruler. In this case there was no obstacle in fulfilling an election procedure which was obligatory in the period of interregnum.

Usurpers tried to eliminate their antagonists. They had them murdered or mutilated (they were blinded or their noses were cut off). Alternatively, the antagonists were ordained. In the second and third case candidates were prevented from fighting for the throne but their lives were spared. Sometimes usurpers succeeded in achieving formal abdication for example in the case of Anastasius II, Theodosius III or Michael I¹⁰¹. These abdications were obviously forced however they changed the formal situation of usurpers. In this way they became legal emperors who received the power from their predecessor.

By way of conclusion, I would like to compare the legalization of power by usurpers in Early Byzantium with the period which was discussed in this article.

In the period from the 4th to the 6th century usurpers attempted to meet the conditions of the election procedure. During interregnum these conditions were: proclamation by the army, the senate and people of the capital and from the 5th century the coronation by the patriarch of Constantinople (this element is missing in usurpations of that period). In the lifetime of emperor – he himself had to agree to the accession of a new basileus. Imperial candidate without an agreement of a legal emperor was only a usurper. However most of the usurpers faced the first possibility¹⁰². Only Vetranion (350) and Julian the Apostate (360) tried to gain the agreement of the ruling emperor – Constantius II. Beside these ways of legalization, usurpers laid stress on their family connections with a ruling house for propagandist aims.

In the period between the seventh and ninth century we can observe the continuity of the usurpers' interest in gaining the acceptance of troops, senate and people of the capital. New elements can be seen here, i.e. the patriarch's participation in the legalization of usurpers' power. From the end of the 5th century the duty of coronation had been assigned to the patriarch of Constantinople. At first his role was not really important. However from the 7th century onwards the ceremony which was celebrated

¹⁰¹ According to Genesisius (p. 5) Michael sent to Leo imperial insignia and informed the senate to accept his successor. See also Ch. Walter, *Raising on a shield in Byzantine Iconography*, „Revue des Etudes Byzantines” 1975, t. 33, p. 138–139.

¹⁰² On legalization of power by usurpers in early Byzantium, see my article – M. J. Leszka, *Legalizacja władzy uzurpatorów we wczesnym Bizancjum*, „Acta Universitatis Lodziensis” 1993, Folia historica 48, p. 79–93.

by the bishop of the capital became an essential part of the enthronement. In that situation usurpers had to realize it.

In the period of the 7th–9th century usurpers did not ask emperors to accept their power. The substitute of that element was formal abdication of an adherent¹⁰³. After the abdication usurper became a legal ruler. However most often he had to fight for the removal of the opponent. When the throne was practically vacant he could fulfil election rules which were obligatory in the period of interregnum.

Mirosław J. Leszka

LEGALIZACJA WŁADZY UZURPATORÓW W BIZANCJUM OD VII DO POŁOWY IX W.

Artykuł poświęcony jest problemowi legalizowania władzy uzurpatorów w okresie od VII do połowy IX w. Autor skoncentrował swoją uwagę na dwóch podstawowych kwestiach: w oparciu o jakie siły podejmowane były uzurpacje w państwie bizantyńskim oraz jakie kroki podejmowali uzurpatorzy, aby zalegalizować zdobytą władzę. Sumując rozważania dotyczące pierwszego problemu autor dochodzi do wniosku, iż armia bizantyńska, kręgi senatorskie, ludność Konstantynopola oraz Kościół stanowiły podstawowe zaplecze uzurpacji. Wspomniane siły uczestniczyły również w legalizowaniu władzy uzurpatorów, bowiem to do nich, zgodnie z bizantyńską tradycją konstytucyjną, należało wyniesienie władcy w okresie interregnum. Uzurpatorzy, choć przejmowali władzę łamiąc prawo, starali się uzyskać akceptację armii, senatu i ludu Konstantynopola oraz patriarchy stolicy dla swego kroku. Wypełniali w ten sposób formalne wymogi obowiązujące przy wyborze nowego cesarza podczas interregnum i stawali się w ten sposób legalnymi władcami. Autor podkreśla fakt, iż procedura legalizacyjna analizowanego okresu jest w swej podstawowej części kontynuacją działań legalizacyjnych podejmowanych przez uzurpatorów we wczesnym Bizancjum. Nowym elementem, który dołączony został do proklamacji dokonywanej przez wojsko i senat, i aklamacji ludu stolicy, była koronacja celebrowana przez patriarchę Konstantynopola. Pojawiła się ona przy wyniesieniach legalnych władców bizantyńskich już w drugiej połowie V w., ale przy legalizowaniu władzy uzurpatorów zastosowana została dopiero przez Fokasa (602).

¹⁰³ On imperial abdications, see F. Winkelmann, *Einige Bemerkungen zu den Abdankungen Byzantinischer Kaiser*, „Etudes Balkaniques” 1974, t. 3, p. 61–70.