A GENEALOGY OF THE GRAND KOMNENOI OF TREBIZOND

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ABSTRACT

The empire of Trebizond, founded by a grandson of emperor Andronikos I Komnenos in the chaos following the sack of Constantinople in 1204 and the last Byzantine state to fall to the Ottoman Turks (in 1461), occupied a unique position in the later middle ages as a focus for transcontinental commerce and as a state which had close ties with the Georgian and Turkomen polities to its east as well as the Byzantine, French and Italian states to its west. These ties were solidified by a series of astute dynastic marriages that make the Grand Komnenoi, the ruling dynasty of Trebizond for the period of its history as an empire, of particular interest to the genealogist and prosopographer. The present paper corrects the accreted errors of past generations and sets out, for the first time, a scholarly account of the genealogy of the Grand Komnenoi.

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The State of Trapezuntine Scholarship

The first significant published genealogy of the emperors of Trebizond was that written by the French Byzantinist, Charles Du Fresne, Seigneur Du Cange, in his seminal genealogical compilation, the *Historia Byzantina* (1680, pp.189-196). He constructs a broadly accurate pedigree from Gregoras, the pseudo-Chalkokondyles, Ducas, Sphrantzes and other historians who were known to scholars of the seventeenth century, but he was unaware of the chronicle of Panaretos and other specifically Trapezuntine documents which have since come to light, rendering his genealogy of the Grand Komnenoi ultimately insufficient and wanting. Several other attempts were made in the succeeding centuries to trace this genealogy but it was only after the publication of the works of Bryer, Kuršankis, Toumanoff, Vasiliev, and other modern Trapezuntine scholars, that an accurate rendering of the genealogy of the Grand Komnenoi became possible[2]. The three principal modern attempts are those of Toumanoff in 1976 (pp.505-508), Sturdza in 1983 (pp.278-281), and Schrenck-Notzing in 1984 (ES, vol.2, tables 175-176).

Toumanoff's brief sketch contains neither documentation nor arguments to support his conclusions (two problems which handicap his *Manuel de Généalogie* throughout). Besides dubious conclusions concerning the wives of the early generations (he makes the wife of the *sebastokrator* Isaakios a daughter of *knyaz* Volodar of Przemysl and the wife of Andronikos I a daughter of Dmitri I of Georgia), it includes certain patently absurd matches, such as those of a daughter of Manuel III to an ancestor of the Ypsilanti and of a daughter of David to an ancestor of the Mourouzai (pp.507, 508), fictions which were presumably derived from a nineteenth or early twentieth century Phanariot genealogy of the Grand Komnenoi. Sturdza was aware of these fantasies

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[2] Modern students of Trapezuntine genealogy also benefitted from the publication of two relatively accurate, although now outdated, histories of Trebizond: Miller's *Trebizond* (1926) and Janssens' *Trébizonde en Colchide* (1969), both of which, used in conjunction with the scholarly monographs and articles of the 1960s and after, are crucial to an understanding of the Trapezuntine state.

and decisively rejected them in his version of the genealogy (p.281) but elsewhere presents the wives and children of Manuel I in a very confused manner and gives Ioannes V far more children than the sources indicate him as having, besides repeating such time-honoured errors as including a daughter of Alexios IV (perversely named "Basile" by Sturdza) who is repeatedly claimed to have married George Brankovič and the various shadowy daughters who may or may not have married certain Turkoman princes. He provides a bibliography, although no individual citations or discussion of the pedigree, and incorporates some of the work of both Bryer and Kuršankis but not enough to make his work a reliable source for the genealogy of the Grand Komnenoi.

The magisterial *Europäische Stammtafeln* (ES), currently under the editorship of Detlev Schwennicke, contains, in the 1984 edition of *band* II, a detailed (but inevitably sketchily documented) genealogy of the Grand Komnenoi apparently written by Niklas, Freiherr von Schrenck-Notzing, the compiler of many of the eastern European and Byzantine genealogies contained in the ES. It is far more accurate than the two works mentioned before but it suffers from a tendency to trust Sturdza too unquestioningly and in some places (particularly the ancestry of Alexios I) it presents an undigested mishmash of mutually contradictory theories. Certain aspects of the charts which represented the latest scholarly thought in 1984 (particularly the final generations of the family) have since been rendered obsolete by the work of Thierry Ganchou and others informed by Massarelli's genealogy of the Kantakouzenoi as well as by reinterpretation of older sources. In conclusion, it can be stated with confidence that there exists no truly reliable genealogy of the Grand Komnenoi which could serve as a foundation for further study of their marriage ways, succession practices, or other dynastic customs.

Origin of the Emperors of Trebizond

The Grand Komnenoi descend from the *sebastokrator* Isaakios Komnenos, a younger son of emperor Alexios I (Vasiliev, 1936b, p.5), about whom relatively little is known, though he was the son of one emperor and the father of another. It has been proposed that his wife was a certain Kata or Irene, daughter of David II/IV "the Builder" of Georgia but there appears to be no strong evidence to support this claim[3]. His son was the luckless emperor Andronikos I (c.1118/20-1185) who was murdered by a mob after his deposition in September 1185 (Kazhdan, 1991, vol.1, p.94)[4]. Andronikos' second wife is known to have been Agnes of France but the identity of his first wife, the grandmother of Alexios I of Trebizond, was unknown to Du Cange (1680, p.190) and has been disputed by later historians. Vasiliev (1936b, pp.5-6) and Toumanoff (1940, pp.299-312) argue that a passage in the *Georgian Chronicle* describing Andronikos' visit to Giorgi III of Georgia, *circa* 1170, implies that Andronikos' wife was a sister of Giorgi, but the language is obscure. Choniates (Bekker, 1835a, p.348; Magoulias, 1984, p.149) states that his wife at the time of

[3] This hypothesis was discussed on the internet news group soc.genealogy.medieval in May 2005 and an unpublished article by the Polish genealogist, Rafał T Prinke, was cited as evidence but efforts to contact the author have been unsuccessful and the only primary source put forward in the discussion was the passage from the Georgian Chronicle concerning Andronikos' visit to Giorgi III which is considered below.

[4] The Georgian Princes Andronikashvili claim descent from Alexios, the illegitimate son of Andronikos I but the evidence marshaled by Kuršankis (1977, pp.239-242) suggests that this is only a legend at best if not an outright fabrication. Toumanoff (1976, pp.57-61) accepts it uncritically but the extremely fragmentary nature of the early Andronikashvili pedigree is nonetheless evident in his charts.

the death of Empress Maria in 1183 was a sister of "the *sebastos* Georgios" whom Kuršankis identifies with the *sebastos* and *megas hetareiarches* Georgios Doukas Palaiologos (Kuršankis, 1977, p.242) but Cheynet and Vannier (1986) observe that this identification can hardly be correct given that the latter died c.1168, some time before the action of the *sebastos* named by Choniates. He proposes instead that Choniates is referring to an otherwise unknown brother of Andronikos' legitimate wife, Theodora Komnena but the evidence for this is somewhat weak (Cheynet & Vannier, 1986, pp.182-183). A passage from the *Seljuknameh* preserved in the Bibliotheque Nationale (Supp. Persan 1553), however, names the father of Alexios I as one "kir Luga" which Cheynet & Vannier (pp.182-183) proposes may be a corruption of "Doukas", suggesting that Manuel's mother may have been an unnamed Doukaina.

The *sebastokrator* Manuel Komnenos Doukas, father of the founder of Trebizond, was thus evidently the son of emperor Andronikos I Komnenos, possibly by a Doukaina of uncertain parentage[5]. He was blinded at the time of his father's deposition and appears to have died soon after (Vasiliev, 1936b, p.8), leaving two sons, Alexios and David. No source makes any mention of his wife but as early as 1854 the Russian scholar Kunik proposed that the reference to T'amara of Georgia as Alexios I's "paternal aunt" (see Fallmerayer, 1827, pp.41-43) could best be explained by assuming Manuel's marriage to Rusudan, T'amara's otherwise obscure sister (Vasiliev 1936b, p.8). Other theories concerning Alexios' maternity have included Kuršankis' suggestion that she was a Doukaina (Kuršankis, 1977, p.243), a suggestion which is unnecessary onomastically if it is accepted that Andronikos' wife was herself a Doukaina, and the meaningless assertion of the ES (vol.2, table 175) that he was married to a daughter of "David IV" of Georgia. The theory of Kunik and Vasiliev was resurrected by Barzos (1980, pp.31, 46) and remains the most probable of those discussed, although none of them successfully resolve the self-evident contradiction of T'amara being the "paternal aunt" of Alexios[6].

Alexios I, Emperor of Trebizond, 1204-1222

Alexios, who had been born about 1182, first appears in 1204 when he and his younger brother, David, were living in Georgia at the court of their probable maternal aunt, Queen T'amara. In March and April of that year they led an invasion of Trebizond, backed by T'amara, and upon its successful conclusion Alexios established himself as the first emperor of Trebizond (Vasiliev, 1936b, *passim*). David conquered Paphlagonia and held it until his death without issue at Sinope on 13 December 1212, when it passed to the Nicaean state (Kazhdan, 1991, vol.1, pp.589-590). Alexios himself died on 1 February 1222, aged 40, and was succeeded by his son-in-law, Andronikos I Gidos or Gidon (Miller, 1926, p.19).

Alexios' wife is not directly named in the surviving sources but Kuršankis (1970b, pp.112-113), supported by Barzos (1975, p.173), convincingly argues, on the strength of Ioannes I's surname and Alexios I's known political affiliations, that he was married, probably about 1201, to a daughter of Ioannes Komnenos "the fat"

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[5] His traditional appellation of "Manuel Komnenos Palaiologos" derives from Kuršankis' identification of the sobriquet "Kir Luga" in the *Seljuknameh* as a corruption of "Palaiologos" (Kuršankis 1977, pp.242-243) but if Cheynet's emendation is accepted his surnames would instead be Komnenos and Doukas (Cheynet & Vannier, 1986, p.182).

[6] Fallmerayer (1827, pp.41-43), ignorant of Georgian history, assumed T'amara to be a Komnene and so explicated the passage in the *Georgian Chronicle* to his own satisfaction but that is clearly fabulous.

(d.1200), son of the *protostrator* Alexios Axouch and a granddaughter of emperor Ioannes II Komnenos (see Mekios, 1932).

Issue, probably by Na. Axouchina (Miller, 1926, pp.24-25):

i. **Anonyma**. She married **Andronikos I Gidos** or **Gidon**, Emperor of Trebizond, 1222-1235, who died in 1235 and was buried in the Church of the Theotokos Chrysokephalos in Trebizond (Miller, 1926, p.24).

ii. **Ioannes I Axouch**, Emperor of Trebizond, 1235-1237/38. He was killed in 1237/38 while playing polo. On his death his son, Ioannikos, was placed in a monastery (Miller, 1926, p.25).

iii. **Manuel I**, see below.

Manuel I, Emperor of Trebizond, 1237/38-1263

Manuel (Trapp, 1976, no.12113) succeeded his brother, Ioannes I, in 1237 or 1238 and died in March 1263 (Lampsidis, 1958, pp.61-63). Two theories have been offered concerning the order and rank of his three known consorts, one (Kuršankis, 1975, pp.187-209) arguing that Anna Xylaloë, referred to as *despoina kyra*, and Eirene Syrikaina, referred to as *kyra*, were his wives, while Rusudan was merely a mistress, while the other (de Vajay, 1979, pp.281-291) argues that all three women were the legitimate spouses of Manuel and that Rusudan should be placed between Anna and Eirene in chronological succession. De Vajay's theory, although it rests principally upon the absence of any anti-legitimist rhetoric against Theodora (p.282), is the more convincing and allows for the following probable reconstruction of Manuel's marriages:

He was first married to **Anna Xylaloë**, a native Trapezuntine (Kuršankis, 1975, p.198), sometime in or before 1238 (de Vajay, p.283). She was accorded the rank of *despoina* by Panaretos (Lampsidis, 1958, p.62) and died probably about 1240-1242 (de Vajay, p.284). He married secondly, apparently between 1242 and 1245 (de Vajay, p.286) **Rusudan**, who is designated by Panaretos as being "from Iberia" (Lampsidis 1958, p.63), and who de Vajay (pp.284-285) deduces was probably an illegitimate daughter of Giorgi IV *Lasha*, King of Georgia[7]. She must have been deceased by 1253, for in that year Joinville records that a Trapezuntine ambassador was sent to Louis IX of France requesting the hand of one of his daughters for the widowed emperor (cited in Kuršankis, 1975, p.199) and the date of his third marriage, to the *kyra* **Eirene Syrikaina**, also of noble Trapezuntine origin, must be placed sometime after that date (Kuršankis, 1975, pp.200-201). If the "*Annals of Sebastian*" are to be trusted (for which, see below), she was still living and actively countenancing her son's ruin in June 1280 (Bryer, 1973, p.343).

Issue by Anna Xylaloë (Lampsidis, 1958, p.62):

i. **Andronikos II,** Emperor of Trebizond, 1263-1266 (Trapp, 1976, no.12087). He was probably born shortly before 1240-42 (de Vajay, 1979, p.284), succeeded his father in 1263, "*having been singled out and promoted by him*" (Bryer's [1973, p.333] translation of the relevant passage in Lampsidis,

[7] Giorgi's illegitimate son, David, later succeeded to his father's throne as David V *Ulu* in joint kingship with his cousin, David IV *Narin* (Allen, 1932, p.114). It is not known whether he was full or half-brother to Rusudan.

1958, p.62), and died in 1266, apparently unmarried and without issue (Lampsidis, p.62).

Issue by Rusudan "from Iberia" (Lampsidis, 1958, p.63):

ii. **Theodora**, Empress of Trebizond, 1284/1285 (Trapp, 1976, no.12067). She was born between 1242 and 1253 (de Vajay, 1979, p.286), briefly usurped the throne from her half-brother, Ioannes II, sometime between the autumn of 1284 and the birth of her nephew Michael in 1285 (Kuršankis, 1975, p.201) but fled suddenly in the latter year and is not heard of again (Lampsidis, 1958, p.63). Although de Vajay (p.286) reasonably supposes that she may have fled to Georgia, the homeland of her mother, Kuršankis (1976, p.113) proposes, doubtfully, that she may be identical with her half-sister, Anonyma II.

Issue by Eirene Syrikaina (Lampsidis 1958, p.62):

iii. **Georgios**, Emperor of Trebizond, 1266-1280 (Trapp, 1976, no.12094). He was born after 1253 (de Vajay, 1979, p.286) and succeeded his half-brother, Andronikos II, in 1266 (Lampsidis, 1958, p.62) but, after siding against Michael VIII Palaiologos and the Ilkhan Abağa, was taken by the Trapezuntine *archontes* to the vicinity of Tabriz, the Ilkhan's capital, in June 1280 and delivered by them, his mother, and his sisters to the Ilkhan[8]. He may have been murdered by the Ilkhan, as stated in several Armenian annals, but it appears more likely that Panaretos is to be trusted and that he reappeared (under the sobriquet "the Vagabond") in Trebizond in 1284, only to be imprisoned by his enemies, the *archontes* (Bryer, 1973, pp.349-350). Although his sisters Anonyma I and Anonyma II were incorrectly stated to be his daughters by Bryer (1973, pp.332, 342), he seems to have died unmarried and without issue. He appears to have been the first member of the dynasty to use "*Megas Komnenos*" as an official title (the initials "MK" appear on his coins) rather than as an unofficial sobriquet (Macrides, 1975, p.240; see also Polemis, 1970, pp.18-22).

iv. **Anonyma I**. She was married in 1271 (Bryer, 1973, p.342, who incorrectly makes her Georgios' daughter) or 1277 (Toumanoff, 1976, p.125) to **Dmitri II** "the Devoted," King of Kartli. He was born c.1262 and died on 13 March 1289 (Toumanoff, 1976, p.125), having been betrayed to his overlord, the Ilkhan Arğun, and executed at the Ilkhan's winter quarters on the Muğan steppes (Bryer, 1973, p.332). She was still living in 1298 when she was the representative of her son, David VI, to the Ilkhan, but is not heard of thereafter (Kuršankis, 1976, p.115). Besides David, she is known to have had four other children by Dmitri (Kuršankis, 1976, pp.114-115).

v. **Anonyma II**[9]**.** She was married in 1273 to a Georgian *didebuli* (Bryer, 1973, p.343)[10].

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[8] The only evidence for his family's complicity is the account of his alleged death in the "*Annals of Sebastian*" for the Armenian year 728, *ie* CE 1279 (cited by Bryer, 1973, p.343). It is uncertain to what extent this should be taken as reliable evidence that Eirene Syrikaina was still alive in June 1280.

[9] The "*Annals of Bishop Stephen*" say of her that, "*the emperor of Trebizond gave his daughter in marriage . . .*" (Bryer, 1973, p.343), suggesting that she was the daughter of Georgios, but as Kuršankis has demonstrated (1975, p.200), it is chronologically impossible for either her or her putative sister, the wife of Dmitri II, to be Georgios' daughters. Based upon their

vi. **Ioannes II**, see below.

Ioannes II "Kaloioannes", Emperor of Trebizond, 1280-1297

Ioannes was born c.1262/63 (Trapp, 1976, no.12106) and succeeded his brother, George. During his reign the throne was briefly usurped by his half-sister, Theodora (see above). He died in Limnia on 16 August 1297 and was buried in the Church of the Theotokos Chrysokephalos in Trebizond (Lampsidis, 1958, p.63). In 1282 (Schopen & Bekker, 1829, vol.1, p.148) he had married **Eudokia Palaiologine** (Trapp, no.12064), a daughter of Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos by his wife, Theodora Batatzaina (see ES vol.2, table 183), who founded the monastery of St. Gregory of Nyssa in Trebizond, where she was buried after her death on 13 December 1302 (Bryer, 1975a, pp.20,22).

Issue by Eudokia Palaiologine (Lampsidis, 1958, pp.63, 66):

i. **Alexios II**, see below.

ii. **Michael**, see below.

Alexios II, Emperor of Trebizond, 1297-1330

Alexios II (Trapp, 1976, no.12084) was born between September and December 1283 and succeeded his father in August 1297 (Lampsidis, 1958, p.63). His uncle, the emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos, planned for him to marry Eirene, daughter of Nikephoros Choumnos, but in 1300 he married a daughter of Beka Jaqeli, *atabeg* of Samtskhe (Lampsidis, 1958, p.63; Bekker, 1835b, vol.2, p.288; Nicol, 1965, pp.252-253)[11]. He died on 3 May 1330 in Trebizond (Lampsidis, 1958, p.64).

Issue by Na. of Samtskhe (Lampsidis, 1958, pp.64-66):

i. **Andronikos III**, see below.

ii. **Basileios**, see below.

iii. **Michael Azachutlu** (Trapp, no.12118) and iv. **Georgios Achpugas** (Trapp, no.12095)[12]. Both were murdered by their brother, Andronikos III, in May 1330 (Lampsidis, 1958, p.64).

v. **Anna Anachutlu** (Trapp, no.12059). She was a nun who fled her convent during the troubles of 1340-1341 and seized the throne on 17 July 1341 with the aid of the Laz but was strangled on 4 September 1342 (Lampsidis, 1958, pp.66-67).

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reconstructed chronology of Manuel I's family both Kuršankis (1975, p.343) and de Vajay (1979, p.291) make her and the wife of Dmitri II daughters of Manuel, apparently by Eirene Syrikaina.

[10] The *didebulni* were a group of non-hereditary state officials associated with the Georgian court (Allen, 1932, pp.244-245).

[11] The marriage is noted by Panaretos but no precise date is assigned. Kuršankis (1976, p.115) concludes that it must have occurred in 1300.

[12] Kuršankis (1976, pp.116-117) suggests that the Turkish names of Michael, Georgios, and Anna derive from the onomastic tradition of their Jaqelid mother, as such naming patterns appeared in Georgia at the beginning of the thirteenth century. He rejects the theory of Lampsidis (1958, pp.117-118) that they were the children of an otherwise unknown Turkic wife or mistress of Alexios as unsupported by the surviving sources.

vi. **Eudokia** (Trapp, no.12063). Panaretos describes her as *despoina* of Sinope (Lampsidis, 1958, p.72) and she has traditionally been thought to be the widow of Ghāzī Chelebi ibn Mas'ūd, Emir of Sinope (r.1301-1322; Bosworth, 1996, p.230), but Bryer (1975b, p.145 and 1985, vol.1, p.73) has demonstrated the untenability of this proposition and Kuršankis (1976, p.116) has proposed that she was probably the wife of either **Ibrāhīm ibn Sulaymān, Ghiyāth al-Dīn** (r.c.1340-1345), or his cousin and successor **'Ādil ibn Ya'qūb** (r.1345-c.1361), both Jāndār Oghullarï beys of Kastamonu and rulers of Sinope (Zambaur, 1927, p.149; Bosworth, 1996, p.229) although Bryer & Winfield's suggestion (1985, vol.1, p.73) that Eudokia's husband was their governor in Sinope remains possible[13]. She was apparently widowed by 11 November 1357, on which date she returned to Trebizond (Lampsidis, 1958, p.72).

vii. (possibly) **Anonyma**. Bryer (1975b, p.149) suggests the possibility that an unnamed *ulu hatun* and *presbyterissa* who died on 28 December 1342 and is named in a Greek epitaph at Erzincan may be a Trapezuntine princess, and so perhaps a daughter of Alexios II, but the nature of the evidence is too fragmentary for any definite conclusion to be reached.

Andronikos III, Emperor of Trebizond, 1330-1332

Upon succeeding his father in 1330, Andronikos (Trapp, 1976, no.12088) murdered two of his brothers, the third, Basileios, probably having fled to Constantinople (Miller, 1926, p.43). He died soon after on 8 January 1332 (Lampsidis, 1958, p.64).

Issue by an unknown wife or mistress (Lampsidis, 1958, p.64):

i. **Manuel II, Emperor of Trebizond, 1332** (Trapp, no.12114). He was born in 1323 or 1324 and succeeded his father but was deposed by his uncle, Basileios, on 23 September 1332 and was subsequently murdered in Trebizond on 21 February 1333 (Lampsidis, p.64).

Basileios, Emperor of Trebizond, 1332-1340

Basileios (Trapp, 1976, no.12092) succeeded his nephew, Manuel II, in 1332 and on 17 September 1335 he married **Eirene Palaiologine** (Trapp, no.12061), an illegitimate daughter of Emperor Andronikos III Palaiologos (Lampsidis, 1958, p.64; Schopen 1829, vol.1, p.536). Not long after their marriage he took another **Eirene** (Trapp, no.12060), "*a lady of Trebizond*" (Miller, 1926, p.45, quoting an earlier edition of Lampsidis, 1958, p.65), as his mistress and married her on 8 July 1339 in Trebizond (Lampsidis, p.65).

He died 6 April 1340 (Lampsidis, pp.64-65). After his death, Eirene Palaiologine seized control of the government and drove her rival and her rival's children into exile before being ousted by her sister-in-law, Anna Anachutlu, on 17 July 1341 (Miller, 1926, pp.46-49). His mistress, Eirene, was still living in June 1382 (Trapp, no.12060).

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[13] If she was the wife of 'Ādil ibn Ya'qūb there is a faint possibility that she may have been the mother of his son and successor, Bāyazīd Kötörüm ibn 'Ādil, Jalāl al-Dīn (r.c.1361-1384), and ancestor of the later Isfandiyār Oghullarï including Bāyazīd's granddaughter, Khadija Sultan, who Zambaur (1927, p.149) reports as a consort of Murad II, although she is not listed by Alderson (1956, table XXVI).

Issue by Eirene, his mistress (Lampsidis 1958, *passim*):

i. **Alexios** (Trapp, 1976, no.12080). He fled with his mother and brother to Constantinople in 1340 but was probably dead before the time of his brother's accession to the throne in 1349 (Lampsidis, pp.65, 69).

ii. **Ioannes**, later **Alexios III**, see below.

iii. **Maria** (Trapp, no.12070). She was married August 1352 to **Qutlugh ibn Tūr ʿAlī, Fakhr al-Dīn**, Emir of the Āq Quyūnlū (Lampsidis, p.70). She visited Trebizond on 22 August 1358 (Lampsidis, p.72) and again in July 1365 (Lampsidis, p.76). Qutlugh died in 1389 (Woods, 1976, p.49).

iv. **Theodora** (Trapp, no.12066). On 29 August 1358 she left Trebizond to marry **Hacj Omar**, Emir of Chalybia (Lampsidis, p.72; Bryer & Winfield, 1985, vol.1, pp.101-102).

Michael, Emperor of Trebizond, 1344-1349

Michael (Trapp, 1976, no.12117) was aged fifty-six in 1344 according to Gregoras (Schopen & Bekker, 1829, vol.2, p.679) and on 3 May of that year he replaced his son on the imperial throne during a palace coup. He was forced to abdicate and become a monk on 13 December 1349 (Lampsidis, 1958, pp.66-69). In 1351 he last appears as an exile in Constantinople (Nicol, 1965, p.253). Sometime in the early 14th century, certainly before 1324, he had married a daughter of the writer and politician, Konstantinos Akropolites by his wife Maria Komnene Tornikina (Nicol, pp.252-253).

Issue by Na. Akropolitissa (Lampsidis, 1958, p.67):

Ioannes III, Emperor of Trebizond, 1342-1344 (Trapp, 1976, no.12107). He was supported by the Scholarioi and the Genoese and was crowned in the Church of the Theotokos Chrysokephalos on 9 September 1342, aged twenty, but was deposed on 3 May 1344 and replaced by his exiled father (Lampsidis, pp.67ff.). He died March 1362 in Sinope (Lampsidis, p.74), perhaps of the plague that struck Trebizond in that year (Bryer & Winfield, 1985, vol.1, p.73).

Alexios III, Emperor of Trebizond, 1349-1390

Alexios (Figure 1) (Trapp, 1976, no.12083) was born with the given name of Ioannes on 5 October 1338 (Lampsidis, 1958, p.65) and exiled to Constantinople in 1340. He was raised to the Trapezuntine throne with the support of emperor Ioannes VI Kantakouzenos and was crowned in the Church of St. Eugenios on 21 January 1350 (Lampsidis, p.69). He died on 20 March 1390, age fifty-one, as appears from Panaretos (Lampsidis, pp.80-81) and an *obit* recorded by the monks of the monastery of St. George Peristereota to the south of Trebizond (Bryer, 1976, p.131).

He married **Theodora Kantakouzene** (Trapp, 1976, no. 12068), daughter of the *sebastokrator* Nikephoros Kantakouzenos, and a cousin of emperor Ioannes VI, on 28 September 1358 in the Church of St Eugenios, Trebizond (Lampsidis, 1958, p.70). She survived her husband and took the veil as the nun Theodosia but was apparently deceased by June 1400 (Nicol, 1968, p.144).



Fig 1. ***A miniature of the Emperor Alexios III of Trebizond and his Empress, Theodora, being blessed by John the Baptist, from a chrysobull in the archives of the Dionysiou Monastery.***

Issue by Theodora Kantakouzene (Nicol, 1968, p.146):

i. **Anna** (Trapp, 1976, no.12058)[14]. She was born 6 April 1357 (Lampsidis 1958, p.72) and married **Bagrat IV/V**, "the Great," King of Georgia, in June 1367 (Lampsidis, pp.76, 80). She was taken prisoner with her husband and son by Timur on 21 November 1386 and later released, but the date of her death is unknown (Kuršankis, 1976, p.118). She is known to have had at least one son, David, and Toumanoff (1949, pp.172, 176) argues that Konstantine I and Ulumpia, two other children of Bagrat, were hers, although, as Kuršankis observes (1976, p.118), this seems improbable on onomastic grounds.

ii. **Basileios** (Trapp, no.12089). He was born on 17 September 1358 in Trebizond (Lampsidis, p.73) but died before 1377 (Kuršankis, 1976, p.119).

iii. **Manuel III**, see below.

iv. **Eudokia** (Trapp, no.12062), she was betrothed to **Tāj al-Dīn ibn Doghan Shāh**, bey of Canik (Panaretos described him as "Emir of Limnia" [Lampsidis, 1958, p.80]), at Oinaion on 8 October 1379 (Lampsidis, p.78). He was killed on 24 October 1386 during an invasion of Chalybia (Lampsidis, p.80; Bryer, 1975b, p.148) and the Trapezuntine interpolator of Chalkokondyles maintains that she then married emperor Ioannes V Palaiologos (Bekker, 1843, pp.81-82) but, if Bryer's reading of Sphrantzes (the relevant passage is at Philippides, 1980, p.61) is correct, this is an error and her second husband was the *gospodin* **Konstantin Dragaš** instead. On 4 September 1395, shortly after his death, she returned to Trebizond (Lampsidis, p.81).

Issue either by Theodora or by a mistress:

v. (probably) **Anonyma I**. Bryer (1975b, p.148) infers from the relationship terminology used by Panaretos (Lampsidis, p.80) that Alexios married an otherwise unknown daughter to **Sulaymān**, Emir of Chalybia, sometime prior to 24 October 1386, on which date he is referred to as the emperor's *gambros*.

vi. (probably) **Anonyma II**. Clavijo writes that "Zaratan" (i.e., **Mutahharten**, Emir of Erzincan, *fl.*1381-1401) died without issue by his wife, "*who was daughter of the emperor of Trebizond*" (Markham, 1859, p.71). Bryer (1975b, p.149) places her as a daughter of Alexios III, or perhaps Manuel III, on chronological grounds.

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[14] An additional Anna was, very doubtfully, credited to Alexios III by the Phanariot genealogist, Rizo-Rangabé. She was alleged to have married the protovestiarios Ioannes Marouzos, who was claimed as the ancestor of the Phanariot Mourouzai. Bryer observes that the Mourouzai did have a Pontic origin and that one "Moruz" is named in the 1486 defter of Trebizond but there seems no reason to suppose that this Anna ever existed (Bryer, 1984, pp.316-317). The legend of a match between the Grand Komnenoi and the Mourouzai is repeated by Toumanoff (1976, p.508) who credits the emperor David with a daughter Maria, married to one "Constantin Muruzès".

Issue by an unknown mistress (Lampsidis, 1958, p.72):[15]

vii. **Andronikos** (Trapp, 1976, no.12086). He was born November 1355 (Lampsidis, p.72) and was initially suggested by his father as a potential husband for Gulkhan *khatun* of Georgia, but fell to his death from the top of the citadel of Trebizond on 14 March 1376 (Lampsidis, p.72) before his father's plans could be carried out (Kuršankis, 1976, p.118).

Manuel III, Emperor of Trebizond, 1390-1417

Manuel (Trapp, 1976, no.12115) was born on 16 December 1364 (Lampsidis, 1958, p.75). On 6 September 1377 in Trebizond he married **Gulkhan *khatun***, who had taken the Greek name Eudokia upon her coronation the previous day, daughter of David VII, King of Georgia (Lampsidis, pp.78, 80-81) by his wife Sindukhtar, daughter of Qwarqware II, *atabeg* of Samtskhe, who died 2 May 1395 (Kuršankis, 1976, p.120).

In 1395, less than a year after his first wife's death, Manuel married **Anna Philanthropene Komnene**, daughter of the *caesar* Manuel Angelos Philanthropenos, lord of Thessaly, and kinswoman of both the *sebastokrator* Ioannes Angelos (d.1348) and emperor Ioannes VI Kantakouzenos (Ferjančič, 1974, pp.265-277; ES, vol.3/1, table 183). Clavijo (Markham, 1859, p.61) describes Manuel's second wife as, "*a relation of the Emperor of Constantinople*," but Bryer (1966, p.33) and Ganchou (2000a, p.224) agree that this should probably be transposed with the similar description of Alexios IV's wife as "*the daughter of a knight of Constantinople*," although this emendation seems somewhat questionable given that both Anna and Theodora were apparently close relations of Ioannes VI.

Manuel appears to have died, possibly at the direction of his son, on 5 March, certainly after 1414 and probably in 1417 (Lampsidis, 1958, p.81; Bryer, 1984, pp.315-316; Bryer & Winfield, 1985, vol.1, p.208).

Issue by Gulkhan *khatun* of Georgia (Lampsidis, 1958, p.81):

i. **Alexios IV**, see below.

ii. (possibly) **Basileios**. See the discussion *sub* Alexios IV.

Alexios IV, Emperor of Trebizond, 1417-1429

Alexios (Trapp, 1976, no.12082) was said by Clavijo to be about twenty-five years old in 1404 (Markham, 1859, p.61) but his birth is not recorded by Panaretos while that of another, otherwise unknown, son of Manuel III, Basileios, is recorded on 19 June 1382 (Lampsidis, 1958, p.80). Kuršankis (1976, p.119) proposed that Alexios was initially named Basileios and later changed his name, probably after the death of his grandfather, Alexios III, but Bryer (1984, p.315) suggests that Basileios may have been the disinherited brother of Alexios mentioned by Clavijo (see Bryer, 1984, p.314). His assassination has traditional been dated to the beginning of October 1429 (Kuršankis, 1976, p.124), and certainly by the twenty-eighth of that month (Laurent, 1955, pp.139-140), but Bryer (1984) has shown that it occurred on 26 April 1429. He was buried outside the Church of the Theotokos Chrysokephalos in Trebizond (Bryer, 1984, pp.325-327).

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[15] The ES (vol.2, table 176) claims an additional illegitimate son, Ioannes, for Alexios III but he does not appear in Trapp (1976) and his existence is doubtful.

He married **Theodora Kantakouzene** (Trapp, 1976, no.12069) shortly after 5 September 1395, when she arrived at Trebizond from Constantinople (Lampsidis, 1958, p.81). She died at Trebizond on 12 November 1426 and was buried in the church of the Theotokos Chrysokephalos in the family mausoleum of the emperors (Lampsidis, p.81). Ganchou (2000a), citing Massarelli's unpublished *Dell'Imperadori Constantinoplitani* (Vat. Lat. MS. 12127, f. 349^{v}-353), shows that she was a daughter of Theodoros Palaiologos Kantakouzenos (d.1410), the Byzantine ambassador to France and Venice, 1397-1398, and *theios* of Emperor Manuel II Kantakouzenos (Nicol, 1973, pp.312-313)[16].

Following Sphrantzes (probably the passage that appears at Philippides, 1980, pp.60-62), Du Cange (1680, p.337) gives Alexios IV an unnamed daughter married to George Brankovič, Despot of Serbia, but Bryer (1966, pp.28-35, corrected by Ganchou, 2000a, p.223) has demonstrated that the relationship between the Brankoviči and the Trapezuntine Komnenoi arises from their marriages into the Kantakouzenoi and that there is no reason to believe that George had any wife or wives other than Eirene Kantakouzene.

Kuršankis (1979, p.246) summarizes by stating that he believes Alexios to have had five children: Ioannes, Alexander, David, Maria and the anonymous wife of Qara Yoluq. He doubts the existence of the other three daughters.

Issue by Theodora Kantakouzene (Nicol, 1968, pp.169-170):

i. **Ioannes IV**. See below.

ii. **Alexander**. See below.

iii. **David**. See below.

iv. **Maria**. She married emperor **Ioannes VIII Palaiologos** in Constantinople, September 1427, died without issue on 17 December 1439, and was buried in the church of the Pantokrator monastery in Constantinople (Nicol, 1968, p.171).

v. (possibly) **Anonyma I**. She was married to **Qara Yoluq 'Uthmān ibn Qutlugh**, emir of the Āq Quyūnlū and son of Qutlugh ibn Tūr 'Alī (although whether by his Trapezuntine wife is uncertain), prior to 1421 (Magoulias 1975, pp.127, 290-291). She has been previously claimed as a daughter of Alexios III, but Kuršankis (1979, p.245) demonstrates that she must have been a daughter of Alexios IV (*cf.*, however, Ganchou, 2000a) instead and suggests that Anonyma III's existence may be owed to the confusion that has arisen over the many intermarriages between the Āq Quyūnlū and the Trapezuntine Komnenoi. Qara Yoluq died of wounds sustained in battle against the Qarā Quyūnlū in August or September 1435 (Woods, 1976, p.64).

vi. **Anonyma II**, named as a daughter by Massarelli, who states that she married the "*Imperator di Iveria in le parte di Soria*" (Ganchou, 2000a, pp.216, 218). It is probable that this "*imperator*" is to be identified with the emperor

[16] Nicol (1968, pp.176-192) published an accurate account of Theodoros' children but mistakenly attributed them to the *sebastokrator* Demetrios Kantakouzenos (d.c.1384), an error which Hunger noted in his edition of Chortasmenos and which Nicol corrected in his addenda (1973, pp.312-313). Brook (1989, pp.6-8) establishes that Theodoros' wife, and consequently Theodora's mother, was Helena Uroš Doukaina, daughter of Ioannes Uroš Doukas, Emperor in Thessaly, c.1371-1372, and grandson of Stefan Uroš III Dečanski, King of Serbia.

David's *gambros*, **Mamia**, who was *eristavi* of Guria by 1459 and may be the "Gürgi *tekvur*" who lost his Trapezuntine holdings after 1461 (Bryer, 1986, p.70)[17]. He has been traditionally believed to be David's son-in-law (see, for example, Kuršankis, 1976, pp.126-127) but *gambros* could plausibly be translated as brother-in-law, a relationship which would accord better with what is known of David's family[18]. Ermerin (1889, pp.148-150) and Toumanoff (1976, pp.193-197) both give fragmentary genealogies of the later rulers of Guria.

vii. (possibly) **Anonyma III**. Numerous secondary sources claim that **'Alī ibn Qara 'Uthmān, Jalāl al-Dīn**, Emir of the Āq Quyūnlū (r.1435-1438) and son of Qara 'Uthmān, married a daughter of Alexios IV but Bryer's investigation of this marriage (1975b, p.149) revealed only an obscure and doubtful passage in Chalkokondyles (Bekker, 1843, p.462) as its source.

viii. (possibly) **Anonyma IV**. The Pseudo-Chalkokondyles claims that she was married to **Jahān Shāh ibn Qara Yūsuf**, Emir of the Qarā Quyūnlū (r.1439-1467; Bekker, 1843, p.462), but Kuršankis (1979, pp.245-246) questions this marriage.

Ioannes IV, Emperor of Trebizond, 1429-1460

Ioannes (Trapp, 1976, no.12108) was born before 1403 (Kuršankis, 1979, p.239) and married, while exiled in Georgia and in rebellion against his father, a daughter of Alexander I, King of Georgia (Bekker, 1843, p.462), by his first wife, Dulandukht, daughter of Beshken II Orbeliani, Prince of Siunia (Toumanoff, 1949, pp.182-184) about 1426 (Kuršankis, 1976, p.113). Toumanoff (p.182) supposes that she must have been born about 1411/1412 and she probably died in Georgia prior to 1429 (Kuršankis 1976, p.125). He assassinated his father in 1429 and succeeded him as emperor (Laurent, 1955, pp.138-143).

The Spanish traveler, Pero Tafur, wrote that in 1438, at the time of his visit to the Trapezuntine court, Ioannes IV was married to "*a daughter of a Turk*" (Letts, 1926, p.131) and Kuršankis (1976, pp.124-125) suggests that she was probably a daughter or sister of one of the khans of Salkhat, most likely either Hajji Girey or Devlet Berdi. Ganchou has demonstrated (2000b) that Ioannes IV was believed by the Genoese authorities in Caffa to have been alive on 19 April 1460 (pp.119-120) but was certainly dead prior to 22 April, the date of his brother, David's, famous letter to the Duke of Burgundy (pp.123-124).

In the 1574 compilation, *Delle Navigationi et Viaggi* by Giambattista Ramusio, it is stated that the explorer Caterino Zeno called Theodora, wife of Uzun Hasan, his "aunt" (Kuršankis, 1970a, p.95) and this was explained by Ramusio as being due to the marriage of Zeno's father-in-law, Niccolò Crispo, Lord of Santorini (for the Crispi see Hopf, 1859, pp.37-39, chart II), to one "Valenza Comnena," daughter of the emperor of Trebizond. It was further implied by Ramusio (Milanesi, 1978, vol.3, p.367) that both Theodora and Valenza were the daughters of "*Irene, unica figliuola di*

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[17] The *eristavni* were the highest rank of the Georgian aristocracy and governed the principal provinces of the kingdom of Georgia (Allen 1932, pp.237-239).

[18] This hypothesis was first developed by Pierre Aronax on *soc.genealogy.medieval*, 29 April 2004.

Constantino, ultimo imperatore di Constantinopoli", an evident absurdity[19]. Kuršankis proves the chronologically impossibility of Crispo's wife being a daughter of Ioannes IV and establishes that his only known wife, mentioned in 1418, was Genoese, but in his first article on the subject allows that "Valenza" could conceivably have been a second unknown wife of Crispo and perhaps a daughter of Alexios IV, thus accounting for the relationship between Theodora and Crispo (Kuršankis, 1970a, pp.94-105). Later, in his article (1979, p.246) on the descendants of Alexios IV, he argues that her existence rose due to a confusion between Trebizond and a similar toponym (perhaps Trebisacce or Trebbia) in Italy. No evidence exists suggesting that Crispo ever married a Trapezuntine woman, princess or otherwise, nor do his children bear characteristically Byzantine names, and the lateness and vagueness of the statement of Zeno's relationship to Theodora makes "Valenza's" existence very unlikely.

Issue (Kuršankis, 1978, p.77), presumably by his Turkish wife:

> i. **Theodora**. She was probably born after Tafur's visit in 1438 (Kuršankis, 1978, p.77) and in 1458, perhaps at Diyarbekir (Bryer, 1975b, p.150), married **Uzun Hasan ibn 'Alī, Abu 'l-Nasr**, Emir of the Āq Quyūnlū, who was born c.1425, died 5 January 1478 in Tabriz and was buried in the Nasriye Mosque there (Bierbrier, 1997, p.233). She died between 1478 and 1507 and was buried in St George's Church (Mar Jurjis) at Diyarbakir (Bryer, 1975b, pp.150-151). They had six children (Bierbrier, 1997, p.233)[20].

Alexander, Possibly Co-Emperor of Trebizond

Alexander (Trapp, 1976, no.12122), called Skantarios by the Pseudo-Chalkokondyles, was the second son of Alexios IV (Kuršankis, 1979, p.239). He was exiled at the time of his father's assassination and married **Maria**, daughter of Dorino I Gattilusio, Lord of Lesbos, by his wife, Orietta Doria, shortly before March 1438 (Miller, 1913, p.421; Kuršankis, 1979, p.241, citing Letts, 1926, p.150). It is possible that he was later associated as emperor with his brother Ioannes IV (Kuršankis, 1979, p.242). He was dead at the time of the conquest of Trebizond at which time his widow returned to Mytilene, only to be captured in her turn by Mehmed II the next year (Bekker, 1843, p.527)[21]. She was taken into his harem but is not known to have been the mother of any of his children (Alderson, 1956, table XXVII).

> i. **Alexios** (Trapp, 1976, no.12085). He was born in 1454 (Kuršankis, 1979, p.242) and captured by Mehmed II during the fall of Trebizond, at which time he was described as the son of the previous emperor (Bekker, 1843, p.497). He is said to have become one of Mehmed's pages (Miller, 1913, p.442) and was executed at Constantinople with his uncle and cousins on 1 November 1463 (Powell, 1937, p.360).

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[19] This passage was first noted and commented upon by Peter Stewart on *soc.genealogy.medieval*, 29 April 2004.

[20] Her daughter, Halima Beg Aqa, married Abul Wilayet Sultan Haydar Safavi and was the mother of Ismail I, Shah of Iran (Bierbrier, 1997, pp.233-234).

[21] Babinger (1949, pp.205-207) has demonstrated that the date of the conquest of Trebizond by Mehmed II must have been 15 August 1461.

David, Emperor of Trebizond, 1460-1461

David (Trapp, 1976, no.12097) was born between c.1407 and 1409 (Kazhdan, 1991, vol.1, p.589). He married **Maria of Gothia** in November 1429 (Kuršankis, 1976, p.124). She was the daughter of Alexios, Prince of Gothia or Theodoro-Mankup (Vasiliev, 1936a, pp.197-198)[22]. On the authority of Spandounes (Nicol, 1997, p.41) it has long been supposed that David was married secondly to Helena Kantakouzene, a sister of Georgios Palaiologos Kantakouzene (Nicol, 1968, pp.188-190), but Ganchou (2000a) demonstrates that Spandounes is in error and that it was Georgios' sister, Theodora, wife of Alexios IV, who married into the Trapezuntine imperial family rather than "Helena."

David succeeded his brother in 1460 and on 22 April of that year he wrote his famous letter to the duke of Burgundy (Ganchou, 2000a, *passim*). Western help was not forthcoming, however, and Trebizond was conquered by Sultan Mehmed II on 15 August 1461 (Babinger, 1949, p.207). The sultan allowed the Trapezuntine imperial family to settle at Adrianople but, two years later, he accused them of treachery and executed all but Maria, one son, and one daughter in Constantinople on 1 November 1463 (Nicol, 1968, p.189; Nicol, 1997, pp.40-41). Spandounes, in his sensational account of their execution, claims that Maria (whom he calls "Helena" – see above) died of grief a few days afterwards (Nicol, 1997, p.41).

Issue by Maria of Gothia (Kuršankis, 1979, pp.246-247):

> i. **Basileios** (Trapp, 1976, no.12091), ii. **Manuel** (Trapp, no.12112), and iii. **Georgios** (Trapp, no.12093). They were executed with their father and cousin in Constantinople on 1 November 1463 (Powell, 1937, p.360).
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> iv. **Anna**. She was refused by Mehmed II for his harem, then married **Zagan Paşa** (Bekker, 1843, p.527; Alderson, 1956, table XXVII) and is said to have later "*fled to the mountains south of Trebizond*" (Bryer, 1975b, p.151), although Alderson claims that she converted to Islam and was married secondly to **Elvanbeyzade Sultan** (Alderson, 1956, table XXVII).
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> v. (possibly) **Anonymus**, doubtfully identified by Nicol (1968, p.190) with Georgios. He was said by Spandounes, who is the sole source for his existence, to have been three years of age at the time of his family's murder, to have been made a Turk and given as a gift to his cousin's husband, Uzun Hasan, from whom he later escaped to "Gurguiabei," a king of Georgia. He married the king's daughter, "*by whom he had children who are still alive today*" (Nicol, 1997, p.41). Nicol suggests (1968, p.190) that "Gurguiabei" is to be identified with Mamia of Guria, or, less probably, Konstantine II of Georgia.

Descendants of the Grand Komnenoi

The inadequate nature of the Türkmen sources which survive makes it impossible to trace the descendants, if any, of many of the Trapezuntine princesses who married emirs of the Āq Quyūnlū and other tribes, but Morris L Bierbrier (1997, *passim*) has traced numerous lines of descent, including that of the Safavid shahs of Iran, from

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[22] Her grandfather emigrated to Russia about 1391 and is referred to in Russian sources as Stephan Vasilyevich Khovra, suggesting a descent from the Byzantine family of Gabras which had extensive connections with the Black Sea region (Vasiliev, 1936a, pp.200-201 and *passim*).

Theodora, wife of Uzun Hasan, to the twentieth century, and it seems likely that sufficient archival work on the part of scholars knowledgeable in Arabic would reveal descendants of others of the princesses who were married to Islamic rulers[23].

Marriages by the Grand Komnenoi into Georgian princely and royal families are fewer but better documented. The descendants of Dmitri II of Kartli and his Trapezuntine wife appear to have died out with their grandson, Giorgi V "the Little", unless their daughter, Rusudan, had issue by her Mongol husband, Bugha (Toumanoff, 1976, p.125), and, if Kuršankis is right (1976, p.118), Anna Komnene and Bagrat IV/V's only child, David, died without issue (Toumanoff, 1976, p.126). The only possible Georgian descent from a Trapezuntine princess stems from the much-debated, but obscure reference to Mamia, *eristavi* of Guria, as emperor David's *gambros*. If the reconstruction preferred in this article (making Mamia's wife a daughter of Alexios IV) is correct and if, as seems likely given the repetition of the name Mamia in later generations, Mamia and his Trapezuntine wife were the parents of Kakhaber Wardanisdze, also *eristavi* of Guria, who declared himself independent of Georgia in 1469 (Ermerin, 1889, p.149), then many families of the Georgian and Russian aristocracy can trace a descent from the emperors of Trebizond (Toumanoff, 1976, *passim*)[24]. This marriage, as uncertain as it is, remains the only probable link between the Grand Komnenoi and the nobility of Europe, the traditional Serbian and Genoese marriages having been disposed with.

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[23] Partial genealogies of the Āq Quyūnlū and Qarā Quyūnlū can be found in Zambaur (1927, pp.257-259), and the Āq Quyūnlū is extensively treated in Woods (1976, *passim*).

[24] One of the more notable descendants of Kakhaber was Princess Salomé Dadiani of Mingrelia (1848-1913), descended from Mamia III, *eristavi* of Guria, through the kings of Kakheti and the Dadians of Mingrelia (Toumanoff, 1976, pp.149-156, 466-467), who in 1868 married Prince Achille-Napoléon Murat (1847-1895), a descendant of Joachim Murat, the revolutionary (Ermerin, 1889, p.234; Almanach de Gotha, 1907, pp.389, 397-398).

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