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## Another True Cross: Psellos, Heraklios, and the Cross of the Archangel Michael at Sykeon\*

**ABSTRACT:** This paper reads Psellos' *Oration to the Archangel Michael* as a pointed political piece couched as a pious sermon about Christian miracles. It argues that, under the narrative of the theft of the "holy cross" from the shrine at Sykeon, Psellos veils a reference to a contemporary event, namely, the rebellion of Roussel of Bailleul against Michael VII. The aim of the oration is to restore credibility to the monastic community after their misplaced support of the Norman rebel. The allusion is constructed rhetorically through an elaborate etiology for the monastery, combining the dedication to the Archangel with the True Cross through the agency of Emperor Heraklios. This unexpected reference to the precious relic has so far gone unnoticed.

**KEYWORDS:** Michael Psellos, Emperor Heraklios, Archangel Michael, Holy Cross, Sykeon, Roussel de Bailleul "Phrangopoulos"

As a hagiographical composition, Psellos' fifth oration in honor of the Archangel Michael<sup>1</sup> has attracted limited attention. No translation is yet available and the literature about it is restricted to two articles: Cyril Mango inserted some incidental observations on the cross mentioned in this text in a paper examining the so-called cross of Keroularios<sup>2</sup> and Elizabeth Fisher dedicated an article to this oration before publishing her critical edition<sup>3</sup>. Both Fisher and Mango examine a narrative about the theft of a miraculous cross inserted towards the end of the text. This passage, which will also be the focus of the present article, provides key information to locate the site of Psellos' oration at Sykeon in Galatia, and more precisely at the confluence of two rivers: the Siberis (also called Hieros) and the Sangarios<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, the episode contains an intriguing allusion to a contemporary usurper (αὐτοκράτωρ) that has drawn the attention of both scholars. Neither, however, chose to address the dilemma about this person's identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Psellos, Or. 5 (ed. E. FISHER, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes hagiographicae [Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana]*. Leipzig 1994, no. 5, 230–256) = ITER [937] ORA.43 in P. MOORE, *Iter Psellianum: A Detailed Listing of Manuscript Sources for All Works Attributed to Michael Psellos, Including a Comprehensive Bibliography (Subsidia Mediaevalia 26)*. Toronto 2005. Line numbers in this article refer to Fisher's edition and are also found in the TLG database.

<sup>2</sup> C. MANGO, La croix dite de Michel le Cérulaire et la croix de Saint-Michel de Sykeon. *CahArch* 36 (1988) 41–49. In a passing comment, Mango casts some doubt on the authorship: 'attribué à tort ou à raison à Psellos' (48). I take the question of authorship as settled by Fisher's edition.

<sup>3</sup> E.A. FISHER, Nicomedia or Galatia? Where was Psellos' Church of the Archangel Michael?, in: GONIMOS, *Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies Presented to Leendert G. Westerink at 75*, ed. J. M. DUFFY – J. PERADOTTO. Buffalo, NY 1988, 175–187. References in Fisher's article are to the *editio princeps* by E. KURTZ – F. DREXL, *Michaelis Pselli Scripta Minora*. Milan 1936, I 120–141.

<sup>4</sup> FISHER, Nicomedia or Galatia? 176–178, discusses the matter in detail. For the exact location of Sykeon, see now D. BARCHARD, Sykeon Rediscovered? A site at Kiliseler Near Beypazari. *Anatolian Studies* 53 (2003) 175–179; see also *TIB* 4: Galatien und Lykaonien, ed. K. BELKE – M. RESTLE. Vienna 1984, 228–229; D. H. FRENCH, *Roman Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor: The Pilgrim's Road = Hacı Yolu*. Oxford 1981, 17, 31, 40, 42–45, 108f.

In this paper, I review the passage in question<sup>5</sup> and suggest an identification for this unnamed usurper in the turbulent arena of Byzantine politics during the third quarter of the eleventh century. Understanding this character's identity is a little like cracking a code. What is necessary is not just a mechanical matching between Psellos' narrative and contemporary historical fact, but also a broader perception of the author's rhetorical construction of that narrative and ultimate purpose of the oration as a whole. In order to capture some of these key resonances, I propose to read the theft of the cross episode together with Psellos' etiology of the site as a foundation by Emperor Heraklios (610–641), as stated towards the beginning of the oration. Although the two passages are not placed in proximity to one another, they are knitted together by their common focus on the cross.

Reading the theft of the cross episode in the light of the Heraklian etiology on the one hand, and together with the contemporary situation in Asia Minor on the other, positions Psellos' text at the forefront of commentary on the political events in the region. On such a basis, I argue that this apparently abstrusely hagiographical and nearly folkloristic oration is all but disengaged from the networks of power politics which were Psellos' uppermost and vexing concern in the 1070s. Couching his message through pious themes, but still using very pointed language, Psellos expressed his position regarding the critical situation in Asia Minor in veiled terms. By using indirect references, he effectively rallied in support of the monks of Sykeon, protecting them, as we shall see, from possible accusations of heresy and enfranchising their stance before the Byzantine state. Psellos' attention to this shrine, to which he may have had particular personal ties<sup>6</sup>, stakes a wider claim for the continuing Byzantine presence in that area of Asia Minor based on its ancient tradition of Christian cult.

#### IDENTIFYING THE MYSTERIOUS USURPER

“And so it was that a certain man among those who happened to live here not too long before us, called Euthymios, dared a most terrible deed. For while the tyranny had cracked (so to speak) for the one who held at that time power over the Romans, this wretched man, who should have been bound by devotion to this ruler to be supportive of him, if not through anything else, by praying for him, or (something even more moderate) by remaining inoperative in his own private life, without weighing up his intentions immediately set off at full sail towards the usurper. In order to stand by him with a more propitious military standard, [Euthymios] secretly introduced himself in the temple and sacrilegiously stole the divine cross, intending to provide the cross as a truly powerful and invincible ally for the usurper.”<sup>7</sup>

Unlike other relic thefts, this act was perpetrated not out of religious piety or gain, but rather with the precise aim of supporting a political cause. Euthymios is presented as an unscrupulous, impulsive man, who rushed to this usurper's help in order to secure victory for him through this powerful standard—the cross itself—that could be displayed in battle. In this paragraph, Psellos criticizes the thief not only for his action, but also for his disloyalty to the legitimate power, with respect to which he should have instead shown allegiance through prayers or, at least, by keeping out of this matter altogether. Fisher summarizes the story in the following way:

Psellos remarks that the cross once left the church to accompany the (unidentified) emperor on campaign against an (unnamed) rebel. The miracle at the River Sangaris occurred to thwart the at-

<sup>5</sup> My English translation with parallel Greek text from Fisher's edition is printed as the Appendix to this article.

<sup>6</sup> See FISHER, *Nicomedia or Galatia?* 186. The suggestion was first made by F. HALKIN in the review of E. KURTZ – F. DREXL, *Michaelis Pselli Scripta Minora*. Milan 1936. *AB* 55 (1937) 407.

<sup>7</sup> Psellos, *Or.* 5, ll. 479–489 (250 FISHER), Greek text in the appendix.

tempts of a certain unscrupulous Euthymios to carry off the cross, “intending to provide the cross as a truly powerful and invincible ally for a usurper”<sup>8</sup>.

Neither Mango nor Fisher speculate about a possible historical background for this narrative, though it is clear that both of them consider it the most significant episode in the oration<sup>9</sup>.

I propose to set the emblematic theft of the cross side to side with an event that happened at that very place in Psellos’ own times: the rebellion of Roussel de Bailleul. Roussel de Bailleul ‘Phrango-poulos’ was a Norman mercenary ally of the Byzantines who became an independent prince in Anatolia after defecting at the Battle of Mantzikert (1071). In 1073, he declared himself the head of an independent principality in Galatia, which became the theater of action of several Byzantine attempts to repress him. At the Sangarios river, Roussel’s adversary, Nikephoros Botaneiates, himself soon after to become the successful “usurper”, showed little taste for military action, retreating instead to his comfortable estates<sup>10</sup>. In 1074, however, precisely at the Zombou bridge on the Sangarios river, Roussel was defeated by the forces of Isaak Komnenos in the person of John Doukas, commander in charge on behalf of Emperor Michael VII Doukas (1071–78)<sup>11</sup>.

It is significant that Michael VII even tried to enlist the help of the Turk Tutush I to defeat Roussel. This strategy of resorting to an alliance with the Turks against Roussel increased the criticisms against this unpopular Byzantine emperor. It is likely that the local population was ready to recognize in Roussel, a Byzantinized Westerner, a defender of the Christians and to lend him support. The clipeate image of the Theotokos on Roussel’s seal bears witness to the extent of the Norman’s inculturation into the Byzantine system of titles and emblems<sup>12</sup>. Nevertheless, only shortly after, Alexios Komnenos outmaneuvered him even in the territories where he had withdrawn after the defeat at the Sangaris river: let down by his people, Roussel’s stronghold in Anatolia was overrun at once by both Byzantine and Seljuk powers. As Skylitzes summarized the event, in an often-quoted ominous sentence: “The Emperor thought best to leave to the Turks the Greek lands than to let Rousselios find a place in a region of his Empire.”<sup>13</sup>

If the mysterious usurper that Euthymios wanted to stand by with the standard of the holy cross at Sykeon can be identified with Roussel, the political point of the oration becomes clearer. By providing strong Byzantine credentials for this place, Psellos attempts to redeem the local population from the guilt of having supported an unwanted ally, whose ultimate defeat had probably become a foregone conclusion by the time Psellos was writing (and perhaps even reading out *in situ*) his oration. Can more details from this narrative point to how Psellos himself judged these events?

### PSELLOS’ ‘ALLIANCE’ WITH THE THIEF

Does Psellos show support, or at least some sympathy, towards Roussel’s cause? Or is he simply trying to cover up an unfortunate event in Sykeon’s recent past? Although Psellos’ own opinion is al-

<sup>8</sup> FISHER, *Nicomedia or Galatia?* 185.

<sup>9</sup> Mango’s particular interest is that of determining the dimensions of this object with respect to other extant bronze crosses. Since the thief could carry it in a pouch, it cannot have been too large.

<sup>10</sup> Botaneiates’ inaction is perhaps alluded to in l. 484: τῷ καθ’ ἑαυτὸν βίῳ ἐφησυχάζειν.

<sup>11</sup> D. KRALLIS, *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline in Eleventh-Century Byzantium (Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 422)*. Tempe, AZ 2012, 160. See Michael Attaleiates, *Historia*, 136.20–25 (ed. E. Th. SOLAKIS. Athens 2011, 143 = ed. BEKKER 184); transl. A. Kaldellis – D. Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates, The History*. Washington DC 2012, 337. See also J. SHEPARD, *The Uses of the Frank in Eleventh-Century Byzantium. Anglo-Norman Studies 15 (1993) 275–305, 277* and n. 9, noting that Roussel’s precise origins remain undetermined.

<sup>12</sup> G. SCHLUMBERGER, *Deux chefs normands des armées byzantines au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Sceaux de Hervé et de Roussel de Bailleul. Revue historique 16, 2 (1881) 289–303.*

<sup>13</sup> H. ANTONIADIS-BIBICOU, *Un aspect des relations byzantine-turques en 1073–74*, in: *Actes du XII Congrès international d’Études byzantines, Ochride 10–16 Septembre 1961*. 2 vols. Ochrid 1964, II, 15–25 at 18 with reference to other primary sources that feature Rousselios/Ourselios.

ways difficult to pinpoint, there are some signs in the conclusion to this episode that show that Psellos might not be casting univocal condemnation upon these events. Despite the rising tone of horror before the sacrilege of the abduction of the cross from its church, the innkeeper, who discovers the crime, avoids punishment for the thief and intends to restore the cross to its due place without making its temporary absence public. While forgiveness is usually dependent on confession and repentance, neither of these obligatory steps are imposed here on the guilty thief. Rather, public shaming and trial for the crime are explicitly set aside in favor of a silent restoration.

Implicitly, the innkeeper recognizes that the removal of the relic for the purposes of assisting the usurper could not have taken place without the consent of the Archangel Michael, to whom the cross was dedicated, as he exclaims in his emotional speech:

“O totally daring and shameless in counsel, it’s true, you have stolen the cross! Why did you dishonor it in this way? Why did you add evil to evil? It should indeed be necessary to reveal you and to inflict on you many punishments. But since I do not know if this has happened with the consent of the great Archistrategos, whose temple you have robbed, as if you had confessed I will avoid the interrogations and the penalties: but I will return the divine cross to the church when I go there.”<sup>14</sup>

The suspension of judgement on the theft comes as a surprise after the impetuous opening invectives. The innkeeper unexpectedly entertains the possibility that the cross had been stolen with the consent of the archangel, and therefore, indirectly, that the cause of the usurper may have had divine support. The implication is that the divine powers of the cross were willing to follow the thief’s wishes. The innkeeper’s acknowledgement insinuates a first window of doubt as to the sides taken by the local population on the episode of the rebellion.

We may regard Psellos’ story within a larger tradition of holy thefts, where the perpetrator can be struck and stopped (literally, paralyzed) by the object unwilling to be moved. For example, a canon in Lucca was paralyzed for stealing the finger of St Davin, until, after confessing, he was absolved with the help of the prayers of his congregation<sup>15</sup>. A measure of negotiation between the will of the object (or of the saint through the object) and that of the people (both ecclesiastical and lay) surrounding the action of relic abduction is normally expected. Where thefts are successful, even a certain degree of leniency can therefore be contemplated. Only in extreme cases is the punishment final: the unfortunate archbishop’s acolyte who decided to steal the finger of John the Baptist with the noble intent of displaying it in a more popular venue was struck dead on the spot<sup>16</sup>. Psellos’ cross also talks, or at least produces a sound, to make the innkeeper aware of its presence. This feature of a talking object is a folkloristic motif, yet one developed metaphorically in recent scholarship interested in the power of inscriptions on relics and reliquaries to proclaim their identity<sup>17</sup>.

The Western ambiance of relic thefts may reflect an aspect of our mysterious rebel’s provenance, as does his designation as “one of the Celts”. This ethnic appellation is transferred to Asia Minor, where it is applied to people practicing incubation there in Late Antiquity<sup>18</sup>. Its use as a learned designation for a Westerner introduces us at one stroke both into the realm of the ethnic “other”, and into the thaumaturgical setting of the precinct at Sykeon in which the story was set. Psellos has just

<sup>14</sup> Psellos, Or. 5, ll. 509–517 (p. 251 FISHER). Greek text in the appendix at the end.

<sup>15</sup> P. GEARY, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*. Princeton, PA 1990, 150 (*Bibliotheca hagiographica latina* 2114).

<sup>16</sup> GEARY, *Furta Sacra*, 114, 152 (*Bibliotheca hagiographica latina* 8290).

<sup>17</sup> C. HAHN, The Voices of the Saints: Speaking Reliquaries. *Gesta* 36.1 (1997) 20–31; I. DRPIĆ, *Chrysepes Stichourgia*. The Byzantine Epigram as Aesthetic Object, in: *Sign and Design. Script as Image in Cross-Cultural Perspective (300–1600 CE)*, ed. by B. M. BEDOS-REZAK – J. F. HAMBURGER. Washington, DC 2016, 51–70.

<sup>18</sup> G. RENBERG, *Where Dreams May Come: Incubation Sanctuaries in the Greco-Roman World*. Leiden 2017, 107, 563–564 and n. 113.

described a number of healing miracles attributed to the power of this cross and of the Archangel Michael. The name of the thief, Euthymios, is the same as that of a saint who also patronized a famous healing shrine by incubation<sup>19</sup>.

The notion of ‘otherness’ is further underscored in the story by the figure of the godly innkeeper, who welcomed Euthymios at the ‘xenon’. This act is not only marked by the performance of the innkeeper’s “job” but is also portrayed simultaneously as an act of piety towards a stranger (*xeniteia*)<sup>20</sup>. This aspect of the amusing story enhances the moral value of welcoming foreigners and pilgrims.

Another clue as to Psellos’ endorsement of the theft may lie hidden in the rhetorical reduplication of the final verb in this scene: καὶ αὐτίκα τὸ σχῆμα ἱερῶς περιπτύξας καὶ μεγαλοπρεπῶς τῷ ὄντι τετιμηκῶς ἐλθὼν ἀποτίθησιν ἢ ἀνατίθησι τῷ νεῷ<sup>21</sup>. The effect of this verbal hendyadis in the theft story is to insert a kind of pun into the meaning of the innkeeper’s action. The more common meaning of *apo-tithemi* is, in fact, ‘to bury’, and the contrast with *ana-tithemi*, ‘to set up high’, is underscored by the juxtaposition. This meaning of the verb *apotithemi* is, besides that of ‘to store’, appropriate to a context where a cemetery was also included, apparently a common feature of dedications to the Archangel Michael<sup>22</sup>.

Thus, by returning the sacred object to the church, the innkeeper is not only restoring it to its proper place for public veneration (ἀνατίθησι), but also subtracting it from use (or abuse) in support of the rebellion (ἀποτίθησιν). As the function of being paraded outside of the sacred precinct for political ends is denied to it, so is its usefulness confined to the religious sphere. Such a move opens a gap for Psellos’ critical voice on the affair to be heard. Psellos is effectively introducing his own subtle criticism on this apparently simple and pious action of returning the cross to its proper place. He implies that the cross might well have been more useful performing the function for which Euthymios had removed it, namely, the support of the rebel Roussel against a weak Byzantine ruler. In this role, it would have granted the people of Sykeon a better defense against the invading Turks.

## THE CROSS OF HERAKLIOS

A key to providing a better understanding of the point which Psellos is trying to make is found in his treatment of this object, the “divine cross”, at the beginning of the oration. There, too, the cross exhibits a will of its own. It refuses to follow Heraklios, its conqueror and rightful owner, to the Byzantine capital, Constantinople. The outcome of this confrontation is most unexpected. As if adopting a parallel rhetorical strategy, here too Psellos describes the cross’s movements through a double verbal hendyadis, closely echoing his choice of verbs at the end of the theft narrative: Τίθησι μὲν οὖν ἢ ἀνατίθησιν ὁ βασιλεὺς τῷ νεῷ τὸν σταυρόν. ἔμελλε γὰρ τοῦτον αὐτίκα μετακομίσασθαι καὶ μεταθήσειν πρὸς τὴν μεγαλόπολιν<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> The Lives of the Monks of Palestine by Cyril of Scythopolis, transl. R. M. PRICE. Kalamazoo, MI 1991, 1–83; J. BINNS, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ: the Monasteries of Palestine*, 314–631. Oxford 1996, 34–35. Cyril was writing at the end of the sixth century, not long before the brutal Persian conquest of Jerusalem in 614 that was to mark a deep hiatus in the life of the region, despite Heraklios’ efforts.

<sup>20</sup> J. MCGUCKIN, *Aliens and Citizens of Elsewhere: Xeniteia in East Christian Monastic Literature*, in: *Strangers to Themselves: the Byzantine Outsider*, Papers from the Thirty-Second Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, March 1998, ed. D. C. SMYTHE. Aldershot 2000, 23–38.

<sup>21</sup> Transl.: “And straightaway he piously wrapped the cross and fittingly having paid honor to it, he went and put it back or, rather, he dedicated it in the church.” (Psellos, Or. 5, ll. 517–519 [251 FISHER])

<sup>22</sup> P. CANIVET, *Le “Michaelion” de Huarte et le culte des anges en Syrie*. *Byzantion* 50, 1 (1980) 85–117; FISHER, *Nicomedia or Galatia?* 184. Psellos twice calls the place a σηκός, which can mean both sacred precinct and burial ground.

<sup>23</sup> Transl.: “The emperor placed or better ‘set up [for adoration]’ the cross in the church. For he was about to ‘translate’ it and to take it with him to the megalopolis.” (Psellos, Or. 5, ll. 158–163 [238 FISHER]).

For Heraklios, the refusal of the cross to budge from the church at Sykeon thwarted his plans to take it with him to the capital. Psellos captures the changes through the variation in the verb, designating at first a temporary placing (τίθημι – *tithemi*) and then settling for a longer-term location, where the cross was set up for worship (ἀνατίθημι – *anatithemi*). Heraklios' subverted hopes are further marked by another matching pair of verbs of "taking": the first one, μετακομίζομαι – *metakomizomai*, bears a technical connotation and is used specifically for the translation of relics, while the second, μετατίθημι – *metatithemi*, more generically indicates a change of place, meaning "taking with". In this case, this group of verbs echoing each other underlines the emotional impact of the change imposed on the emperor by the relic's own idiosyncratic wishes.

According to Psellos, Heraklios was carrying his 'trophy' of victory over the Persians back with him to Constantinople, when he stopped at Sykeon<sup>24</sup>. The meaning of the term 'trophy' has a broad semantic range. As something conquered as a mark of victory, it can concretely translate into a set of disparate objects. In the appropriate context, it can even refer to the bodies of the martyrs or to the containers of their relics<sup>25</sup>. It becomes clear from this passage, however, that Heraklios must be holding the relic he is most famous for, namely, that of the True Cross. During this stop, Heraklios temporarily placed the holy cross in the church at Sykeon dedicated to the Theotokos. However, when he tried to pick it up again to carry it with him to its final destination, Constantinople, the cross refused to move beyond that spot, which became the permanent setting for it, apparently up to Psellos' own time.

Psellos draws a lively vignette of the tug-of-war between cross and emperor in the vain struggle to drag it further, likening the cross to a rocky promontory unshaken by the crashing waves<sup>26</sup>. Thus, surrendering to such show of power from the object itself, the emperor was forced to acknowledge its will to remain at Sykeon to be venerated there.

What cross was this trophy, if not the "True Cross"? This seems to be the obvious conclusion, though this inference was carefully avoided by both Mango and Fisher. Evidently, Psellos' narrative contradicts all accounts of the arrival of the True Cross in Constantinople in 630 or 631, after Heraklios' several failed attempts to return it safely back to Jerusalem<sup>27</sup>. In vain would we therefore seek news about the True Cross at Sykeon in current scholarship<sup>28</sup>. Nevertheless, a topographical location named "Timiou Stavrou" is in fact recorded in the ancient map of Galatia<sup>29</sup>. Psellos could be availing himself of such local knowledge. Although the story speaks clearly about Heraklios, Psellos nowhere states explicitly that this is the "true" cross. Cunningly, though, he raises the possibility that some people would indeed not be able to believe in the "truth" of his story<sup>30</sup>. What are we to make of

<sup>24</sup> ὁ δὲ γε Ἡράκλειος τοὺς γενναίους κατὰ τῶν Περσῶν ἄθλους διηνοκῶς καὶ μέγιστον κατ'ἐκείνων ἀνελιφῶς τρόπιον ἐπὶ τὴν ῥωμαίων ἐπάνεισι γῆν τροπαιοφόρος ὡς ἀληθῶς καὶ μυριάς νίκαις κατεστεμμένος τὴν κεφαλὴν. (Psellos, Or. 5, ll. 121–125 [236 FISHER]) Transl.: "And Heraklios, having brought to an end the contests against the Persians and having recovered the greatest 'trophy' from them returned to the land of the Romans truly as a trophy-bearer and crowned with a myriad victories."

<sup>25</sup> J. BERNARDI, Le mot ΤΡΟΠΑΙΟΝ appliqué aux martyrs. *Vigiliae christianae* 8, 2 (1954), 174–175. See also G. NOGA-BANAI, *The Trophies of the Martyrs: an Art-Historical Study of Early Christian Silver Reliquaries*. Oxford 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Καὶ οἱ μὲν πάσαις ἐχρῶντο δυνάμεσι, χερσὶν ἔλκοντες, ποσὶν ἀντερείδοντες, ὁ δὲ οὐδὲν ἤττον εἰστήκει ὥσπερ τις πρόβολος πέτρα τοῖς ἐμπύπτουσιν ἀτίνακτος κύμασι. (Psellos, Or. 5, ll. 169–171 [238 FISHER]).

<sup>27</sup> L. VAN TONGEREN, *Exaltation of the Cross: Toward the Origins of the Feast of the Cross and the Meaning of the Cross in Early Medieval Liturgy (Liturgia Condenda 11)*. Leuven 2000, 58.

<sup>28</sup> The literature on this question is, of course, vast. Notably, there is no entry for Sykeon in the index to H. A. Klein, *Byzanz, der Westen und das 'wahre' Kreuz: Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland, Spätantike, Frühes Christentum (Byzanz. Studien und Perspektiven 17)*. Wiesbaden 2004.

<sup>29</sup> See *TIB 4, Galatien und Lykaonien*, ed. K. BELKE – M. RESTLE. Vienna 1984, 235: "Timios Stauros ist jedoch ... von dem in Siricha in Kappadokien (TIB 2) verehrten Kreuz (stauros, timios stauros) zu trennen." It lies in East Galatia, but the precise location is unknown. I owe this information to Warren Treadgold, who had the patience to read an earlier version of this paper.

<sup>30</sup> This phrase strictly refers to belief in the miracles of the cross, rather than to the cross itself: Psellos, Or. 5, ll. 198–203 (239 FISHER).

Psellos' rhetoric? Can we simply ignore this myth when writing about the True Cross of Heraklios? Is Psellos mocking us, as he did his contemporaries?

#### HERAKLIOS' FOUNDATION AT SYKEON

Psellos constructs a detailed narrative around the event of Heraklios' return stop at Sykeon, elaborating it into a foundation myth. According to Mango, Psellos' attribution of the site's foundation to Heraklios rests on the historical fact that Heraklios stopped at Sykeon in 613 on the way to Jerusalem. The emperor's meeting with the local saint, Theodore, is recorded in the latter's *Life*<sup>31</sup>.

Heraklios' visits to Galatia, made en route to Jerusalem from Constantinople and vice-versa, delineated his profile as defender of Byzantium against the Persians. It is a parallel role that Psellos seeks to outline in the present via his flash-backs to Heraklios' time. Since Heraklios had promised Saint Theodore, on that first occasion<sup>32</sup>, to stop at Sykeon again on his way back, he did so in 628 after his victory over the Persian king Chosroes II. Apparently Heraklios' previous defeat had been caused by his refusal, during a hasty departure, to accept 'eulogia' from Saint Theodore, while his victory eventually came to fulfill the saint's promises of success.

Part of the purpose of the encounters of the saint with Heraklios in the *Life* is to enact a *rapprochement* between the saint and this emperor, redressing Theodore's previous support for the Phokas ruling family which became unwelcome at Heraklios' accession. Among the episodes that support this transition, the one dealing with the donation of a golden cross interests us here. The cross was given to Theodore by Domniziolos or Komentiolos, a general leading troops through Anatolia and a relative of the emperor Phokas, who had usurped the throne in 602. Komentiolos gave the cross as a gift to the saint in gratitude for Theodore's help in military campaigns. Theodore went on to protect his devotee when his life was in danger at the accession of Heraklios<sup>33</sup>. This situation almost perfectly mirrors that of the rebellious Roussel. As Kaegi puts it,

"Presumably Komentiolos feared for his own life, ... so he saw little future for himself if he surrendered or came to a negotiated settlement. He also had no hope of fleeing to the Persians, who had announced a strong opposition to the Phokas regime. Hence his desperate if senseless effort to prolong resistance to the newly established regime of Heraclius. He probably hoped to see if other opposition rose against it. But even his brief interlude of separate power caused a potential crisis and complicated any Heraclian efforts to make peace with the Persians and to gain control of the Byzantine armies that were in a position to resist the Persians. St Theodore of Sykeon predicted what occurred: his swift end. The Persians ... made the most of their opportunity."<sup>34</sup>

Neither the central nor the peripheral landscapes had changed several centuries on. In the eleventh century, when Psellos was writing, the mountainous region surrounding Ankyra, with its impetuous

<sup>31</sup> MANGO, *La Croix* 48; see W. E. KAEGI, *Heraclius: Emperor of Byzantium*. Cambridge – New York 2003, 73; A. J. FESTUGIÈRE, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéôn (Subsidia hagiographica 48)*. 2 vols. Bruxelles 1970, ch. 155, I: 125–6, II: 130–1. The translation by E. DAWES – N. H. BAYNES stops at ch. 148 where Heraklios is mentioned only as a chronological point of reference: "This holy, thriceblessed and saintly servant and faithful follower of Christ, Theodore, died in the third year [613 CE] of the reign of our pious and Christ-loving Emperor, Heraclius, and in the first year of the reign of his divinely protected and divinely crowned son Heraclius, the new Constantine, the eternal Augusti and Emperors, in the first indiction in the month of April at dawn of the twentysecond day, a Sunday, it being the first Sunday after Easter" (*Three Byzantine Saints: Contemporary Biographies of St. Daniel the Stylite, St. Theodore of Sykeon and St. John the Almsgiver*. London 1948). Fisher is more cautious in attributing historical value to this meeting (FISHER, *Nicomedia or Galatia?* 177 and n. 8).

<sup>32</sup> See ch. 166; FESTUGIÈRE, *Vie de Théodore*, I: 153–154; II: 157–158.

<sup>33</sup> C. RAPP, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: the Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition*. Berkeley 2005, 163.

<sup>34</sup> KAEGI, *Heraclius* 55.

rivers, still provided the backdrop for similar military actions, while the Seljuk Turks, closing in on these territories, played a parallel game of alliances with both Normans and Byzantines in turn, to draw from their internecine contrasts the greatest advantage. Just as at the time of Heraklios, when St Theodore had threatened to foster the seedbed of dissent to the Byzantine ruler, so in the eleventh century Sykeon and the area surrounding it had been at the center of a rebellious movement against Michael VII. Moreover, just as St Theodore had then played both a prophetic and an apotropaic role against the Persians, so the political contrasts of Psellos' time presented similar dynamics, which the object-subject cross could represent with like power and significance.

### THE MIRACULOUS FIRE

After the experience of the immovable cross, the emperor Heraklios was dismayed by the occurrence of a great miraculous fire that took place at the church while he was still there<sup>35</sup>. The fire is at the same time cathartic, as it cleanses the premises, and miraculous, since despite the conflagration the places themselves are not destroyed by it. For this latter feature, Psellos likens it to Moses' burning bush<sup>36</sup>. One may point out that the typology of Roussel's seal featured the clipeate image of the orans Mary, which is the same as that represented in the icons of Mary in the Burning Bush<sup>37</sup>. The comparison is appropriate because of the Marian denomination of the church that Psellos underlines in his oration. Further, the agency of Michael is perceived in the kindling of the miraculous fire of Moses' bush<sup>38</sup>, as it was in the archangel's agency through the cross at Sykeon:

Καὶ ὡσπερ ἐπὶ θεμελίῳ τῷ θείῳ σχήματι, εἰπεῖν δὲ καὶ ἀγγελωνύμφῃ, ἐπικοσμεῖ μὲν καὶ τῇ θεομήτορι τὸν νεών, οἰκοδομεῖ δὲ καὶ τῷ ἀρχαγγέλῳ οἶκον εὐκτήριον.<sup>39</sup>

The connection between Michael, Heraklios and the cross is made visible in a miniature from a lectionary from Mont-Saint-Michel dated 1060<sup>40</sup>. The miniature shows Heraklios receiving the True Cross from an oversized archangel standing on the walls of Jerusalem. While giving the cross at Sykeon a prestigious ancestry through the choice of Heraklios may have been obvious in the Byzantine context, this combination found in Northern France alerts us to the network active through the confederation

<sup>35</sup> See G. PEERS, *Subtle Bodies: Representing Saints in Byzantium*. Berkeley 2001, 171–175. Peers offers one of the rare English translations of the fire miracle passage. He remarks that “the ambiguity of Michael's appearance is ... noteworthy... Michael's will ... asserts itself through a kind of immanence and an effect on the shrine that purifies through invisible contact with the Archangel” (175). For the question of the legitimacy of the cult of angels in Christianity, see *ibid.*, 126–141.

<sup>36</sup> Εἰ δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὴν θεῖαν ἐκείνην βάτον ἀντισυγκρίνοι τὸ ἐνταῦθα γινόμενον, οὐκ ἂν παρ' ἑλαττον ἔλθοι τοῦ εἰκότος· μήποτε γὰρ καὶ τότε ἀγγελικὸν πῦρ τὸ ἄφλεκτον ἐκεῖνο φυτὸν κατεφλογίζεν. (Psellos, Or. 5, ll. 217–219 [240 FISHER]) Transl.: “Should one wish to compare what happened there to that famous divine bush [of Moses], one would not come too far from likelihood; for perhaps also then it was an angelic fire that burned the unburnable plant.” See Exodus 3:1–17.

<sup>37</sup> SCHLUMBERGER, *Deux chefs normands* 296. On the typology of Mary as the Burning Bush, see K. LINARDOU, *Depicting the Salvation: Typological Images of Mary in the Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts*, in: *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images*, ed. L. BRUBAKER – M. CUNNINGHAM. Farnham 2011, 133–149, at 139–141 and nn. 36–37. An eleventh-century example is found in the striking series of Marian typologies in the Smyrna Physiologos: see M. BERNABÒ – R. TARASCONI – G. PEERS, *Il Fisiologo di Smirne. Le miniature del perduto codice della Biblioteca della Scuola Evangelica di Smirne*. Florence 1998, 61–62 fig. 81.

<sup>38</sup> The presence of the angel is warranted by the biblical narrative and depicted in the twelfth-century Octateuchs: LINARDOU, *Depicting the Salvation*, 139 n. 29. See also the reference to Pantaleon Diaconus, *Encomion in Michael*, PG 98, 1262C1–5, given in the *apparatus fontium* of Fisher's edition *ad loc.* I once more thank Marianne Wifstrand Schiebe for having drawn my attention to this source.

<sup>39</sup> Transl.: “And as if [using this] as a foundation, [Heraklios] adorned the church dedicated to the Mother of God with the divine sign [i.e. the cross] named after the angel [Michael], and he also built a shrine to the archangel.” (Psellos, Or. 5, ll. 206–209 [240 FISHER]).

<sup>40</sup> B. BAERT, *Héraclius, l'Exaltation de la Croix et le Mont-Saint-Michel au XIe s. Une lecture attentive du ms. 641 de la Pierpont Morgan Library à New York*. *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 51 (2008) 3–20.

of monasteries dedicated to the archangel, among which Mont-Saint-Michel in the northernmost part of Normandy was a signal exponent. The Norman abbey was keen to preserve its autonomy from the papal reformers, even sending its unwanted abbot, whose task was to enforce reform, on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the middle of the eleventh century<sup>41</sup>. Thus, capturing an aspect of these relations between Michaelite foundations operative between Northern France and the Middle East may have been part of the inspiration behind Psellos' oration. Such a background would have played a determinant role in the local support for the claims of the Norman Roussel to usurp the Byzantine throne.

### THE MONASTERY AT SYKEON

Taking the cue from the angelic denomination, Psellos adds that Heraklios, furthermore, founded a monastery on that site:

Καὶ ἵνα πρὸς τὸ θαῦμα διαμιλλήσῃται, καὶ Ναζιραίων ἐνταῦθα ἐφιστάνει χοροστασίαν, ὡσπερ τάξεις ἀγγελικὰς ἐπὶ γῆς τῷ ἀρχαγγέλῳ ποιούμενος καὶ ψυχὰς αὐτῷ ἀνθρωπίνας ἀναπτερῶν καὶ μεταβιβάζων πρὸς τὸν θεόν· καὶ ἡ ὀφθειῖσα πρὶν φλόξ ταῖς τῶν ἀσκούντων ἐκεῖσε καρδίαις εἰσέτι ἐνάπτεται καὶ πάντα τούτοις ὁ ἀρχάγγελος γίνεται.<sup>42</sup>

In constructing a continuity between the far-gone past of Heraklian times and the present predicament, Psellos is careful in choosing his words. He uses his favorite designation for monks, the Nazirites, a term which may in the context not be as neutral as commonly perceived<sup>43</sup>. Moreover, he stresses the theme of angelic life in describing the monks at Sykeon as a winged choir. Psellos stresses the monks' purity in an attempt to lift up the resident community to a level of irreproachable spirituality and well-intentioned direction of souls.

Psellos elaborates upon the imagery of the flame kindled by the fire, now transformed into a spiritual flame in the heart of each monk burning with the love of God. Flames are an important theme for our philosopher-monk and the use of this imagery can be retraced in his writings. It places this community, if not also Psellos himself, in a well-defined but not uncontroversial tradition of Eastern "mysticism", together with his contemporaries, Symeon the New Theologian and Niketas Stethatos<sup>44</sup>.

### TROUBLESOME INTIMATIONS

Asia Minor was not only the theater for Roussel's rebellious feats but was also famously a breeding-ground for heresies. Psellos has a double-headed hydra to fight against in order to affirm the site as a stronghold of Byzantine power and orthodox faith. This affirmation was key to providing the region,

<sup>41</sup> C. POTTS, *Monastic Revival and Regional Identity in Early Normandy (Studies in the History of Medieval Religion 11)*. Woodbridge 1997, 99–102.

<sup>42</sup> Transl.: "And as if to contend with the prodigy, he established there also a choir of monks, setting up, as it were, angelic ranks on earth for the archangel and giving wings for him to human souls and making them turn towards God. And the flame that was formerly seen is still now kindled inside the hearts of those who practice the ascetic life there and the archangel is everything for them." (Psellos, Or. 5, ll. 209–215 [240 FISHER]).

<sup>43</sup> On this term, see M. BACCI, *The Many Faces of Christ: Portraying the Holy in the East and West, 300 to 1300*. London 2014, 118 n. 229. The Jewish background to this word may be relevant to a context where the cult of Michael is in the substratum; see also the following note. For the use in Psellos, see A. KALDELLIS, *The Argument of Psellos' Chronographia*. Leiden 1999, 84, together with my comment in B. CROSTINI, *Eleventh-Century Monasticism between Politics and Spirituality*, in: *Being in Between: Byzantium in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 45th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, University of Oxford, ed. by M. LAUXTERMANN – M. WHITTOW. London 2017, 216–230, at 226.

<sup>44</sup> A. GOLITZIN, *Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men: the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Niketas Stethatos, and the Tradition of "Interiorized Apocalyptic" in Eastern Christian Ascetical and Mystical Literature*. *DOP* 55 (2001) 125–53, esp. 131, 137.

with strong ties to Constantinople, with the necessary ideological background to secure its defense against Turkish encroachment.

Somewhere in Lykaonia was situated the dubious foundation of Morokampos<sup>45</sup>, where at the end of the tenth century the founder Eleutherios, despite various suspicions about his ethics and beliefs, underwent a process of canonization that spelled trouble in the Constantinopolitan church. The case was examined under the patriarch Alexios Stoudites. It expanded into condemnations of “mystics” such as Symeon Stoudites and his disciple, Symeon the New Theologian, whether justifiably or not. According to Gouillard, for example, “En criant au Messalianisme, l’épiscopat confondait un courant profond d’expérience spirituelle avec une de ses variantes de fâcheux renom, et qu’au demeurant il connaissait mal à travers des compilations d’hérésiologues.”<sup>46</sup> It is possible that the shrine at Sykeon and its monastic community had fallen under similar suspicions.

Indirect proof of the potential for equivocation comes from a later source which reports the bogus miracles of a famous cross. The trial of two ‘Bogomil’ bishops recorded in 1143 somewhere in Capadocia includes among the charges “that, as concerns the holy cross of the Archistrategos [of the heavenly host], they claimed that the many miracles which it performs result from diabolic activity” (τὸ περὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ τοῦ Μεγάλου Ἀρχιστρατήγου ἀπειροπληθῆ ποιούντος θαυμασία λέγειν ὅτι ἐκ διαβολικῆς ἐνεργείας ταῦτα ποιεῖ)<sup>47</sup>. While Gouillard consistently underplays the evidence from these Acts as providing any convincing links with Bogomilism<sup>48</sup>, the document has nonetheless merited inclusion in an anthology of texts concerning such dualist heresies<sup>49</sup>. So far, none of the scholars who have studied this document and referred to the miraculous cross mentioned therein have identified this object<sup>50</sup>. Only Bernard Hamilton, in a footnote, tentatively suggested its location at the Michaelic sanctuary at Chonai<sup>51</sup>. It is now possible to propose an alternative identification with the holy cross at the church of the Theotokos and the shrine of St Michael at Sykeon described in the Fifth Hagiographical Oration by Michael Psellos. We may understand, however, why Psellos had to be so careful in formulating the legitimacy of this dedication of the cross to Michael. Moreover, he goes to great lengths in certifying how its miraculous powers are due to the overlapping dedication of the cross to the archangel<sup>52</sup>.

In her article, Elizabeth Fisher is at pains to explain why in this oration Psellos is intent on making the case, plainly absurd in the face of tradition, that Sykeon is the most important shrine to Michael, when Chonai should clearly be the pre-eminent one in that region<sup>53</sup>. Fisher tries to explain this incongruous attitude by detecting parallel trajectories in the miracles of St Theodore of Sykeon, comparing this hagiography with the choice of episodes of Psellos’ narrative. In pointing to these similarities, she detects a kind of “holy rivalry” between the local saint, Theodore, and the cult of Michael the archangel with its miraculous cross at the same site. According to Fisher, in trying to negotiate a delicate balance between these rival powers through his sophisticated rhetoric, Psellos ends up overstating the case for this secondary Michaelic shrine, in which he had vested interests.

<sup>45</sup> The name has a curious Latin-Greek etymology unusually reported in the Acts of the trial: J. GOUILLARD, *Quatre procès de mystiques à Byzance (vers 960–1143). Inspiration et autorité. REB 36 (1978), 5–81, at 47 n. 6.*

<sup>46</sup> GOUILLARD, *Quatre procès* 19.

<sup>47</sup> GOUILLARD, *Quatre procès* 68–81 at 74.

<sup>48</sup> GOUILLARD, *Quatre procès* 39–43.

<sup>49</sup> J. HAMILTON – B. HAMILTON – Y. STOYANOV, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World, c. 650–c. 1450. Selected Sources (Manchester Medieval Sources Series)*. Manchester 1998, 218 n. 10.

<sup>50</sup> GOUILLARD, *Quatre procès* 4, refers to it as “l’énigmatique « croix du grand archistratège »”.

<sup>51</sup> GOUILLARD, *Quatre procès* 218 n. 10.

<sup>52</sup> The overlap of the Michaelic power with that of the cross can perhaps be visualized as the winged cross that appears to St Francis of Assisi in the stigmata iconography in early medieval Italy. See for example Jan van Eyck, *Saint Francis of Assisi Receiving the Stigmata*, c. 1430–1432, Sabauda Gallery, Turin, Italy.

<sup>53</sup> FISHER, *Nicomedia or Galatia?* 181–183.

The relationship between this oration and the *Life* of St Theodore of Sykeon is undoubtedly worth pursuing further, if perhaps in a slightly different direction<sup>54</sup>. In particular, the similar defensive power against the ‘Persians’ was passed on from Theodore’s body to that of the True Cross and vice-versa, in an intricate game of relic-power that only further study can disentangle<sup>55</sup>. But the historical context suggests a more straightforward answer to the need to establish Sykeon’s preeminence over Chonai as a Michaelic shrine: while the sanctuary at Chonai had been the center of Michaelic cult in the region, it had, by then, succumbed to destruction at the hands of the Turks who had conquered this area in 1070<sup>56</sup>. Psellos’ task is therefore to support Sykeon’s ascendancy by providing a plausible, but also powerfully significant, etiology for the origins of this shrine and its dedication to Michael. He does this by affirming that its founder was none other than the emperor Heraklios<sup>57</sup>. He also takes care to explain how the cult of the archangel overlaps with, or is seen through, the agency of the cross.

By looking at the text in this way, it also becomes clear that the tension that Fisher had sensed between local saint and archangel was more likely based on an uneasy awareness of the monastic community’s recent involvement in local political affairs. In conclusion, by focusing on this shrine rather than any other, Psellos is not only affirming Sykeon as a pivotal center in Seljuk-besieged Anatolia, but he is also staking a claim for the continuing Byzantine presence in that area based on its venerable Christian tradition.

#### PSELLOS AT THE BYZANTINE COURT

Psellos’ close friend and colleague, Michael Attaleiates, was openly supportive of the Norman Roussel of Bailleul and of his plans to establish a semi-independent principate on Byzantine lands in Anatolia, on the model of the Norman conquest of Southern Italy<sup>58</sup>. As we have seen, Roussel had become an honorary Byzantine and received noble titles that would have made him fit to claim power in the empire. Psellos’ shifting allegiances are more difficult to pinpoint. In 1072, Psellos was negotiating the marriage alliance with Robert Guiscard on behalf of Michael VII. In the two letter drafts written for the emperor to this end, he stressed “Michael’s pacifism ... and his wish for alliance and *philia* with likeminded Christian rulers like Guiscard”<sup>59</sup>. Finally, there is no evidence of Psellos’ association with the following emperor, Nikephoros Botaneiates<sup>60</sup>. Although the absence of positive

<sup>54</sup> Fisher’s strategy has been questioned by PEERS, *Subtle Bodies* 174–178. Peers also pointed to more cogent comparisons with other narratives.

<sup>55</sup> This study depends on the text of Theodore’s translation to Constantinople (*BHG* 1749): C. KIRCH, *Nicephori sceuophylacis encomium* in *S. Theodorum Siceotam*. *AB* 20 (1901) 249–72. The work is found in only one manuscript written at the Prodromos Petra Monastery in Constantinople in the second quarter of the twelfth century: Monac. gr. 3 (*Diktyon* 44446), fols. 65<sup>v</sup>–80<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> A. D. BEIHAMMER, *Byzantium and the Emergence of Muslim-Turkish Anatolia, c. 1040–1130 (Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies)*. London – New York 2017, 151 and n. 91: “the Turkish invaders reached the westernmost point of their incursion in Asia Minor, namely the city of Chonai (Honaz) in the Upper Meander Valley, where the famous church of the Archangel Michael was pillaged and partly destroyed.”; I have not considered the Michaelic shrine at Germia, about which see now Ph. NIEWÖHNER – K. RHEIDT, *Die Michaelskirche in Germia (Galatien, Türkei). Ein kaiserlicher Wallfahrtsort und sein provinzielles Umfeld*. *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 6/1 (2010) 137–160.

<sup>57</sup> KAEGI, *Heraclius*. See also J. HOWARD-JOHNSTON, *The Official History of Heraclius’ Persian Campaigns (in Memory of L. Sternbach)*, in: *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East, Proceedings of a Colloquium held at the Jagiellonian University, Krakow*, ed. E. DABROWA. Cracow 1994, 57–87. Howard-Johnston considers the picture of Heraklios as defender of Christians and the narrative of his Persian campaigns as “a generally reliable historical account” (82).

<sup>58</sup> KRALLIS, *Michael Attaleiates* 161–163, tries to minimize Attaleiates’ support by limiting his appreciation to the function Roussel had as a bulwark against the Turkish threat. Nonetheless, Attaleiates seems to endorse Roussel even in his campaign as a rebel against Michael VII Doukas, whose ineffective rule was widely criticized.

<sup>59</sup> *Epp.* S 143–144, summarized in M. JEFFREYS – M. LAUXTERMANN, *The Letters of Psellos: Cultural Networks and Historical Realities*. Oxford 2017, 380.

<sup>60</sup> S. PAPAIOANNOU, *Michael Psellos: Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium*. Cambridge 2013, 13 and n. 37. Papaioannou discusses the arguments for and against Psellos’ identification with Michael of Nikomedia, citing A. KALDELLIS, *The Date of*

evidence does not necessarily indicate hostility, it could reinforce the possibility of Psellos' negative stance towards the establishment expressed in a veiled manner in this oration.

While Psellos casts indirect doubt on the wisdom of the Byzantines in antagonizing such a strong ally as Roussel, his diplomacy, working through the rhetoric of this oration, is still aimed at consolidating Byzantine claims on Anatolia. He does so by creating an etiology, via Heraklios, for a healing shrine and its monastery threatened by the uncertain fate in the region in the last quarter of the eleventh century.

## CONCLUSION

In his oration on the cross of the Archangel Michael, Psellos has at heart the status of the monastic community at Sykeon, to whom, it has been suggested, he himself might have belonged<sup>61</sup>. By identifying the unnamed usurper with Roussel de Bailleul, a chronology for the oration can be established with greater precision. It must date sometime after Roussel's defeat on the River Sangarios in 1074. Fisher's suggestion that Psellos used this monastery as his refuge after being dismissed from the court of Michael VII would fit both this dating and the broader purpose of the piece as outlined in this paper.

Fisher notes that the oration displays "an exact and detailed knowledge of the church described". She concludes:

"It is tempting to hypothesize that Psellos left Constantinople and took up residence at the monastery of the Church of the Archangel Michael in Galatia, at once placing himself at a considerable distance from the imperial court and also gaining the protection of the Archangel whose name Michael Psellos himself bore."<sup>62</sup>

Ignoring in his narrative the cult of the local saint, St Theodore, and concentrating instead on the church of the Theotokos with the miraculous cross dedicated to the archangel and the annexed Michaelion, Psellos supported the activity of the community by celebrating the miracles at this site. By inserting at the end of his narrative the intriguing story of the theft of the cross, with its many layers of historical allusion and significance, Psellos may have hinted at his own sympathies for the Norman rebel, Roussel of Bailleul, whom he must have known from the court at Constantinople. The story also veiled the support of the local population, including its monastic community, for the "usurper". Psellos' aim in the oration was therefore also that of redeeming the local establishment from accusations of disloyalty in the aftermath of the Byzantine clamp-down on Asia Minor. Psellos' oration raised a strong voice in support of Byzantium's desperate attempt not to lose its grip on this vital hinterland for Constantinople<sup>63</sup>.

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Psellos' Death, Once Again: Psellos Was Not the Michael of Nikomedeia Mentioned by Attaleiates. *BZ* 104 (2011) 651–664, for the absence of evidence of Psellos' association with Botaneiates. On Botaneiates' early career, see O. KARAGIORGOU, On the Way to the Throne: the Career of Nikephoros III Botaneiates before 1078, in: *Hypermachos: Studien zu Byzantinistik, Armenologie und Geographik. Festschrift für Werner Seibt zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. C. STAVRAKOS – A.-K. WASSILIOU – M. K. KRIKORIAN. Wiesbaden 2008, 105–132, at 131; for his claims of descent from the Phokades, and in general questions of veridicity of such genealogical claims, see N. LEIDHOLM, Nikephoros III Botaneiates, the Phokades, and the Fabii: Embellished Genealogies and Contested Kinship in Eleventh-Century Byzantium. *BMGS* 42, 2 (2018) 185–201.

<sup>61</sup> HALKIN in the review of E. KURTZ – F. DREXL, *Michaelis Pselli Scripta Minora*. Milan 1936. *AnBoll* 55 (1937) 407, also discusses the disputed question of Psellos' origins from Nicomedia.

<sup>62</sup> FISHER, *Nicomedia or Galatia?* 186.

<sup>63</sup> On aspects of this vital symbiosis one can still refer to the seminal volume, *Constantinople and Its Hinterland, Papers from the Twenty-Seventh Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, Oxford, April 1993, ed. by C. MANGO – G. DAGRON. London 1995.

## APPENDIX: THE THEFT OF THE HOLY CROSS AT SYKEON

*(Michael Psellos, Or. hag. 5, ll. 472–519 [249–251 FISHER])*

<p>Οὐδὲν ἄρα χειρὸν γνώμης θρασεΐας καὶ πάντα τολμώσης. ὥσπερ γάρ τισι τῶν ἀπίστων ἐθνῶν καὶ ἱστορεῖται παρὰ τοῖς Κέλτοις τοῦτο, ὅτι οὐδὲν αὐτοῖς τῶν πάντων φοβερὸν καὶ ἀπόρητον, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲν μέλον αὐτοῖς, εἰ καὶ πρὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐπιτοξάσαιντο, βεβηλοῦσί τε θυσιαστήρια καὶ ποσὶν ἀνάγνοις ἱερὸν κατακροτοῦσιν ἔδαφος, οὕτω δὴ τις ἀνὴρ τῶν οὐ πολὺ πρὸ ἡμῶν τὴν οἴκησιν ἐνταῦθα λαχὼν, Εὐθύμιος τοῦνομα, πρᾶγμα τι τολμᾷ φρικωδέστατον·</p>	<p>There is nothing worse than a bold resolve that dares anything. Just as among some of the pagan nations it is also told among the Celts, that there is nothing that is for them frightening or forbidden, nor do they care if they shoot arrows against the sky, and defile the holy sacrifices and trample with dirty feet over the sacred earth. And so it was that a certain man among those who happened to live here not too long before us, called Euthymios, dared a most terrible deed.</p>
<p>Τυραννίδος γάρ (ἴν’ οὕτως εἶπω) καταρραγεΐσης τῷ τηνικαῦτα κρατοῦντι τῆς τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῆς ὁ δεινὸς οὗτος ἀνὴρ, δέον προσκεῖσθαι τῷ αὐτοκράτορι καὶ εὐμενῶς ἔχειν, εἰ μὴ τι ἄλλο, εὐχὰς ὑπὲρ ἐκείνου ποιούμενος, ἢ (τό γε μετριώτερον) τῷ καθ’ ἑαυτὸν βίῳ ἐφησυχάζειν, ὁ δὲ οὐδὲν ἀνταλάντευσας τὰς γνώμας εὐθύς ὄλοις ἰστίοις πρὸς τὸν τυραννήσαντα φέρεται.</p>	<p>For while the tyranny had cracked (so to speak) for the one who held at that time power over the Romans, this wretched man, who should have been bound by devotion to this ruler to be supportive of him, if not through anything else, by praying for him, or (something even more moderate) by remaining inoperative in his own private life, without weighing up his intentions immediately set off at full sail towards the usurper.</p>
<p>Καὶ ἵνα μετὰ χρηστοτέρου τούτῳ συνθήματος παραγένοιτο, λαθραίως ἔνδον τοῦ ναοῦ γενόμενος ἱεροσυλεῖ τὸν θεῖον σταυρὸν, συμμαχικὴν ὄντως καὶ ἀκαταμάχητον δύναμιν κομιοῦμενος τοῦτον τῷ τυραννήσαντι.</p>	<p>In order to stand by him with a more propitious military standard, [Euthymios] secretly introduced himself in the temple and sacrilegiously stole the divine cross, intending to provide the cross as a truly powerful and invincible ally for the usurper.</p>
<p>Εἰς γοῦν πήραν ἐνθεις ὥσπερ ἄλλο τι τῶν εὐκολωτάτων τὴν πρὸς ἐκεῖνον διῆει. ἐπεὶ δὲ πρὸς τῷ Σαγγάρει ποταμῷ ἐγεγόνει, ξεναγεῖ τοῦτον ἀνὴρ τῷ ὄντι θεοσεβῆς καὶ τὰ θεῖα πεπαιδευμένος τιμᾶν, ὥς γε ἡ πρᾶξις παρέστησε. ὥς γὰρ τὸν ἄνδρα ἐν τῇ ξενίᾳ καταγαγὼν ἀνέπαυσε καὶ τὰ τοῦ φόρτου αὐτῷ διετίθετο καὶ ἐν καλῷ ἐτίθετο, ἐπειδὴ αὐτῷ καὶ ἡ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἐσπούδαστο πήρα, ἤχου τινὸς ἀθρόον ἠσθάνετο· καὶ τοῦτο καταπλαγεὶς τὸν ἱερόσυλον ἤρετο·</p>	<p>So placing it in his pouch like any other ordinary object, he set off on the way towards him. But when he arrived at the Sangarios river, a truly pious man who was well instructed to honor divine things received him as a guest, as the matter went. For as he led the man into the hostel, he let him rest and arranged his luggage and placed it properly; and when the pouch of the man came into his care, he immediately perceived a kind of sound. Astonished by this, he asked the sacrilegious thief:</p>
<p>“Μὴ τί γε, ἄνθρωπε, θεῖον ἐνταῦθα κατακρύπτεις σταυρὸν ἢ τοῦ θεοῦ καταφρονῶν σχήματος;”</p>	<p>“Sir, you don’t hide here a divine cross, or are treating the divine image with contempt?”</p>

<p>Ὁ δὲ πάντα δεινὸς ἐκεῖνος καὶ ἀναιδῆς τὴν ψυχὴν μηδὲν τοιοῦτον ἔχειν ἐν τῇ πήρᾳ ἐπώμνυτο. ὁ δὲ θεῖος τύπος αἰθῆς ὑπήχει· καὶ ὁ ξενίσας τὸν ἀσεβῆ ἔτι μᾶλλον περιεργότερον ἐζήτηε τὸ πρᾶγμα· καὶ τοῦ θύλακος πυκνῶς ἐφαπτόμενος, εἶτα δὴ καὶ διελὼν τὸν θεῖον ἐωράκει σταυρὸν, εἶδεν δὲ τισὶν αἰσχίστοις ἀτιμαζόμενον, ἃ δὴ ἐπικαλύμματα τούτῳ ἐπέκειτο.</p>	<p>But the man, being completely evil and shameless, swore that he had nothing of the sort in his pouch. But the divine image again cried out. And the host even more inquisitively asked the impious man about the matter. And grasping the bundle closely, he opened it and saw the divine cross, although dishonored by some ugly shapes, which he had placed in order to disguise it.</p>
<p>Ἔγνω γοῦν αὐτίκα, ὡς ἱερόσυλος ὁ δεινὸς ἐκεῖνος ἀνὴρ ἐτύγγανεν ὧν· καὶ δεινῶ πρὸς τοῦτον ἀπιδὼν βλέμματι, “ὦ πάντα”, ἔφησε, “τολμηρὲ καὶ τὴν γνώμην παντάπασιν ἀναιδέστατε, ἔστω, κέκλοφας τὸν σταυρὸν· τί δὲ καὶ οὕτως ἠτίμωκας; τί δὲ τῷ κακῷ κακὸν προστέθεικας ἕτερον; ἔδει μὲν οὖν αὐτίκα σε ποιῆσαι καταφανῆ καὶ πολλοῖς ἐτάσαι κολαστηρίοις· ἀλλ’ ἐπειδὴ οὐκ οἶδα, εἰ κατὰ γνώμην τοῦτο τυγχάνει τῷ μεγάλῳ ἀρχιστρατήγῳ, οὗ δὴ σὺ τὸν νεὸν σεσύληκας, ὡσπερ διωμολογήκοτα σὲ μὲν ἀφήμι τῶν ἐλέγχων καὶ τῶν ἐτάσεων, ἐγὼ δὲ τὸν θεῖον σταυρὸν ἀποδώσω τῷ νεῷ ἀφικόμενος.”</p>	<p>At once, he immediately recognized that that terrible man was a sacrilegious robber. And gazing at him with a scourging look (the host) said: “O totally daring and shameless in counsel, it’s true, you have stolen the cross! Why did you dishonor it in this way? Why did you add evil to evil? It should indeed be necessary to reveal you and to inflict on you many punishments. But since I do not know if this has happened with the consent of the great Archistrategos, whose temple you have robbed, as if you had confessed I will avoid the interrogations and the penalties: but I will return the divine cross to the church when I go there.”</p>
<p>Καὶ αὐτίκα τὸ σχῆμα ἱερῶς περιπτύξας καὶ μεγαλοπρεπῶς τῷ ὄντι τετιμηκῶς ἐλθὼν ἀποτίθησιν ἢ ἀνατίθησι τῷ νεῷ.</p>	<p>And straightaway he piously wrapped the cross and fittingly having paid honor to it, he went and put it back or, rather, he set it up in the church.</p>