

= Syrgiannes Palaiologos =

Syrgiannes Palaiologos Philanthropenos (Greek : ?????????? ?????????? ?????????????? , c . 1290 ? 1334) was a Byzantine aristocrat and general of mixed Cuman and Greek descent , who was involved in the civil war between Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (r . 1282 ? 1328) and his grandson Andronikos III (r . 1328 ? 1341) . Loyal only to himself and his own ambitions , he switched sides several times , and ended up conquering much of Macedonia for the Serbian ruler Stefan Dušan (r . 1331 ? 1346) before being assassinated by the Byzantines .

= = Biography = =

= = = Family origins and early career = = =

Syrgiannes was born about 1290 . He was named after his father or possibly grandfather , a Cuman leader who became Megas Domestikos (Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief of the Army) under Emperor Andronikos II . At the time there were many Cumans in the Empire , who settled during the reign of John III Doukas Vatatzes (r . 1221 ? 1254) . The elder Syrgiannes 's original name was Sytzigan (from Cuman @-@ Turkic Sï??an , " mouse ") ; it was Hellenized to Syrgiannes (" master John ") when he was baptized . The elder Syrgiannes rose in the hierarchy of the Byzantine army , eventually reaching the supreme rank of megas domestikos . The younger Syrgiannes 's mother was Eugenia Palaiologina , a member of the ruling Palaiologos family and niece of Emperor Michael VIII (r . 1259 ? 1282) . Conscious of the prestige of his mother 's family name , young Syrgiannes chose to use that in order to advance himself in the imperial hierarchy . Syrgiannes also had a sister , Theodora , who married Guy de Lusignan , later King of Armenian Cilicia as Constantine II . Syrgiannes makes his appearance in history in 1315 , when he was placed as military governor of a Macedonian province near the Serbian border . Despite the existing treaties , and against his instructions , he resolved to attack both Serbia and Epirus . Relieved of his post , he rebelled , was captured and imprisoned . Sometime before 1320 , however , he was eventually pardoned and appointed to a command in Thrace .

= = = Support of Andronikos III = = =

In 1320 , following the death of Michael IX Palaiologos (eldest son of Andronikos II and co @-@ emperor from 1295 on) , his son Andronikos III was crowned as co @-@ emperor by Andronikos II . Although initially popular with his grandfather , the younger Andronikos and his entourage of young nobles , to which Syrgiannes belonged , had by that time caused the elder emperor 's displeasure by their extravagance . Their excesses culminated in the mistaken @-@ identity murder of the young emperor 's younger brother , Manuel ; enraged , the elder Andronikos annulled his grandson 's titles , and a deep personal rift was opened between the two .

At that time , Syrgiannes and John Kantakouzenos bought for themselves governorships in Thrace , where discontent with the old emperor was rife , and they quickly mobilized support for the younger Andronikos . Together with Alexios Apokaukos and Theodore Synadenos , they prepared to overthrow the aged Andronikos II in favour of his grandson . In Easter 1321 , the younger Andronikos came to Adrianople , and the uprising broke out . Syrgiannes led a large army towards the capital , forcing the old emperor to negotiate . Consequently , on 6 June 1321 , an agreement was reached which partitioned the empire . Young Andronikos III was recognized as co @-@ emperor and given Thrace to govern as a quasi @-@ appanage , setting up his court at Adrianople , while Andronikos II continued to rule from the capital , Constantinople , as senior emperor .

Syrgiannes was dissatisfied with the new arrangements , feeling that he had not been sufficiently rewarded for his support of Andronikos III . He also resented the greater favour shown by the young emperor to Kantakouzenos , and developed a fierce rivalry with the latter . Furthermore , chroniclers also report a story whereby Andronikos III attempted to seduce Syrgiannes 's wife . In December

1321 , Syrgiannes switched sides , fleeing to Constantinople . Rewarded with the lofty title of megas doux , he convinced Andronikos II to resume the war against his grandson . In July 1322 , however , another agreement was reached between the two Andronikoi , which left Syrgiannes in an awkward position . His own schemes having failed , he began plotting to murder the aged Andronikos II and seize the throne for himself . The plot was foiled , however , and Syrgiannes was sentenced to life imprisonment .

= = = Governorship in Macedonia , defection to the Serbs and death = = =

In 1328 , Andronikos III finally overthrew his grandfather and established himself as sole emperor . Syrgiannes was freed , and was able to restore himself to Andronikos 's favour , to the extent that in late 1329 he was entrusted with the important governorship of Thessalonica , the Empire 's second @-@ largest city , and of western Macedonia and Albania . There , he was again suspected of plotting against Kantakouzenos , this time with the emperor 's mother , Empress Maria . She lived in Thessalonica , and was supposed to keep an eye on Syrgiannes ; instead , she became so infatuated with him that she had him adopted . Following the death of the Empress in late 1333 , the plot was uncovered and Syrgiannes was arrested and brought to Constantinople to face charges of treason . Syrgiannes , however , managed to escape and flee to the court of the Serbian ruler Stefan Du?an .

Du?an put Syrgiannes at the head of a large Serbian force , with which he invaded Byzantine Macedonia in 1334 . Syrgiannes 's abilities as a general , his knowledge of the Byzantine army 's dispositions and the friendships he had maintained with several local Byzantine officers resulted in the swift capture of many important Byzantine cities , including Ohrid , Prilep , Strumica , and Kastoria . The road was open for an advance towards Thessalonica , and Syrgiannes 's army encamped before the walls of the city , facing a Byzantine relief force . Both sides remained encamped confronting each other for several days , but on 23 August 1334 , Syrgiannes was lured away from his camp with only a few retainers and murdered by Sphrantzes Palaiologos , a Byzantine general who had defected on purpose to the Serbian camp a few days earlier . With the loss of their principal military leader , the Serbs settled for a negotiated peace with the Byzantines , which was very advantageous for them as they were left in possession of most of the cities won by Syrgiannes in northern Macedonia .

= = Appraisal = =

Syrgiannes 's ambition , inveterate plotting , and multiple betrayals made him one of the darkest figures of the era in the eyes of both contemporary and later historians : the 14th @-@ century historian Nikephoros Gregoras compared his flight to Serbia with Themistocles 's flight to the Persians , while Donald Nicol likened him to Alcibiades and Angeliki Laiou called him " the most evil presence " of the civil war .