

= John Komnenos the Fat =

John Komnenos (Latinized as Comnenus) , nicknamed " the Fat " (Greek : ??????? ??????? ? ?????) , was a Byzantine noble who attempted to usurp the imperial throne from Alexios III Angelos in a short @-@ lived coup in Constantinople on 31 July 1201 (or 1200) . The coup drew on opposition to the ruling Angelid dynasty among both rival aristocratic families and the common people , who were dissatisfied by the dynasty 's failures against external foes . Hitherto an obscure figure , John became the figurehead of the uprising because of his imperial blood , as he was descended from the illustrious Komnenian dynasty (1081 ? 1185) , but the real driving force behind his coup was probably the ambitious Alexios Doukas Mourtzouphlos . With the support of the capital 's populace , the plotters managed to seize most of the Great Palace in Constantinople 's southeastern corner , which the mob proceeded to loot , and John Komnenos was crowned in the Hagia Sophia . Alexios III , however , secure in his residence in the northwestern Blachernae Palace , sent forces by sea to land in the part of the Great Palace still held by the loyal Varangian Guard . With most of the urban mob dispersed for the night , the Varangians had little difficulty in suppressing the coup . John Komnenos with many of his followers were captured and executed .

= = Origin and political background = =

John was the son of the distinguished protostrator Alexios Axouch . The Axouchoi were a prominent family of Turkish origin , which was closely associated with the Komnenian dynasty and provided a number of distinguished generals . The two families also intermarried : John 's mother Maria was the daughter of Alexios Komnenos , eldest son and co @-@ emperor of Emperor John II Komnenos (r . 1118 ? 1143) . John was thus able to claim a pedigree comparable , if not superior , to the reigning Angeloi , albeit from the maternal side .

The reign of Alexios III Angelos (r . 1195 ? 1203) had been troubled from the outset : the aristocracy conspired against him , his pressing demand for new sources of revenue was blocked by the refusal of Senate , clergy and merchants to contribute , while the lower and middle classes of the imperial capital frequently displayed their discontent with riots against corrupt officials . The most notable of these was a large @-@ scale uprising in February 1200 against the warden of the praetorium , Constantinople 's chief prison , John Lagos , which was bloodily suppressed by imperial troops .

John Komnenos himself was a rather unimportant figure in the court , and in a marginal note dating to the late 13th century , Alexios Doukas Mourtzouphlos , who briefly became emperor during Constantinople 's final siege by the Fourth Crusade , was named as the real mastermind behind the coup . He was certainly supported by a wider circle of nobles from the Komnenian era , possibly even the brothers Alexios Komnenos and David Komnenos , who later founded the Empire of Trebizond . Thus the historian Michael Angold traces the coup 's inception to the events of early 1199 , when Alexios III married his two daughters Irene and Anna to Alexios Palaiologos and Theodore Laskaris respectively . This marriage not only spoke of increasing confidence for the Emperor , but also provided for the imperial succession and began the establishment of a separate aristocratic power @-@ base , which must have displeased many noble families .

However , the revolt was also fuelled by a general feeling of discontent and humiliation at the failures of the Angeloi , especially in terms of foreign policy . This much is evident from the ? albeit embellished ? account of the eyewitness Nicholas Mesarites , whereby John Komnenos 's supporters proclaimed that henceforth everything would go well for Romania , that her enemies would be vanquished , and that the kings of all the earth would come to pay homage to Constantinople .

= = Coup = =

John 's coup was launched on 31 July 1201 , when the conspirators broke into the Hagia Sophia , where they swore to restore the Empire to its ancient bounds against the Vlach @-@ Bulgarians ,

Seljuk Turks and the Latin Crusaders . While John was being proclaimed emperor and crowned by a monk ? since Patriarch John X Kamateros hid himself inside a cupboard ? the capital 's populace rioted outside and set fire to a number of churches . Then the conspirators marched towards the Great Palace . Avoiding the Chalke Gate , which was held by the feared Varangian Guard , they made for the imperial box in the Hippodrome , the kathisma , which was connected to the palace precinct . John 's supporters indeed managed to drive off the Macedonian guard placed there and entered the palace through the Kareia Gate .

Having gained control of the western portions of the palace , John sat on the imperial throne , which broke under his great weight . He took no further actions to consolidate his position , other than appoint his chief followers to the Empire 's highest posts . At the same time , his supporters , who along with the urban mob included a sizeable group of Georgian and Italian mercenaries , began to loot the buildings . They even reached the Nea Ekklesia and the Church of the Virgin of the Pharos , the Empire 's chief depository of holy relics , which was defended by its skeuophylax , Nicholas Mesarites , with a small guard provided by John Komnenos . Mesarites and his men managed to drive the looters back , until he was wounded in the skirmish and withdrew to the Pharos Church .

With the coming of night , most of the crowd that had accompanied the storming of the palace earlier that day departed , intending to resume looting the next day . In the meantime , Alexios III , who resided in the Blachernae Palace in the city 's northwestern corner , rallied for a counter @-@ strike . A small force was dispatched with boats around the city 's peninsula to the Hodegetria Monastery north of the Great Palace . It was led by the emperor 's son @-@ in @-@ law Alexios Palaiologos , who at that point was likely regarded as his heir @-@ apparent , and quickly made contact with the Varangians who had held out in the palace 's northern parts .

The loyalist force marched to the Hippodrome , where they drove away most of John 's supporters . They then entered the palace , where they found scarce opposition from John 's attendants . John himself was captured after a short chase in the palace and his head was immediately cut off , to be displayed the next morning at the Forum of Constantine , while his body was displayed at Blachernae . A similar fate befell many of his supporters that night , while others were captured and tortured to extract the names of all the conspirators . Alexios Mourtzouphlos was likely put in prison for his role in this affair (he is known to have been in prison in 1203) , and the two Komnenos brothers , Alexios and David , seem to have fled the capital immediately after the coup 's failure .

= = Family = =

Some modern genealogical researchers consider John a possible father to Theodora Axouchina , wife of Emperor Alexios I Megas Komnenos of Trebizond (r . 1204 ? 1222) , but that is conjectural : the family name Axouchina is ascribed to her because her eldest son , the Trebizondian emperor John I Megas Komnenos Axouchos (r . 1235 ? 1238) , bore it as well .