



Summary :

Emperor of Trebizond, born into the family of the Grand Komnenoi. In September 1332 he overthrew Manuel II Grand Komnenos and ascended the throne, which he held until his death, in 1340.

Date and Place of Birth

first quarter of the 14th c., Trebizond

Date and Place of Death

April the 6th, 1340, Trebizond

Main Role

Emperor of Trebizond (1332-1340)

1. Biography

Basil Grand Komnenos was the son of the emperor of Trebizond, [Alexios II Grand Komnenos](#) (1297-1330), and of the daughter of the Laz ruler Bekha Jaqeli, («Πεκάι» in the Greek sources), a subject to the king of Georgia. He was a consanguine brother of [Eudokia Grand Komnene](#) and [Andronikos III Grand Komnenos](#) (1330-1332). He also had three half-siblings, Michael Anachoutlou, [Anna Anachoutlou](#) (1341-1342) and George Achpougas. Basil got married twice: in 1336¹ he got married to [Eirene Palaiologina](#), the illegitimate daughter of Emperor [Andronikos III Palaiologos](#) (1328-1341), in order to improve the relations with the government of [Constantinople](#), while in 1339 he married [Eirene of Trebizond](#), a descendant of a local aristocratic family. Basil, although being married to Eirene Palaiologina, was cohabiting with Eirene of Trebizond, who had two sons with, Alexios and John; the second was the future emperor [Alexios III Grand Komnenos](#) (1349-1390).² After their marriage Eirene of Trebizond gave birth to two daughters, [Theodora](#) and Maria.

In September 1332 Basil overthrew his nephew, [Manuel II Grand Komnenos](#) (January-September 1332), and ascended to the [throne of Trebizond](#). He died on April 6, 1340.³ He was a commissioner of the [Soumela Monastery](#) and he is considered to have been the **donor** of the church of [St. Basil](#) in Trebizond.⁴

2. Ascension to the Throne

On September 22, 1332, Basil Grand Komnenos, amidst the internal turmoil that prevailed after the death of the Emperor Alexios II, ascended to the throne, having overthrown the legal heir Manuel II Grand Komnenos, whom he held in detention and later assassinated. The overthrow of Manuel II was directly supported by the powerful [Scholarios family](#) of Trebizond and the court of Constantinople, where Basil had escaped during the reign of his brother, Andronikos III Grand Komnenos (1330-1332).

3. The Reign

There is scant information on the reign of Basil Grand Komnenos (1332-1340). At first, he tried to restore the internal balance of the Empire of Trebizond, previously achieved by Alexios II, by taking strict measures against the members of local aristocracy. He ordered the assassination of the **mezas doux** Lekes Tzatzintzaios and his son, the **mezas domestikos** Tzamba, and convicted his wife, the *megale doukaina* Syrikaina to be stoned to death.

In July of 1336 he successfully repelled the [Türkmens](#) raid under Sheikh Hassan. On March 3 of the following year the people of [Trebizond](#) revolted on the occasion of the solar eclipse. However, the main reasons for the revolt were the tough rule of Basil and his attitude towards Empress Eirene Palaiologina. On the other hand, his cohabitation with Eirene of Trebizond while he was still married



to Eirene Palaiologina as well as their subsequent wedding caused the intensive reaction in Constantinople, particularly on the part of the [patriarch of Constantinople](#), Isaiah (1332-1347), and the historian [Nikephoros Gregoras](#).

1. The compilers of the *Εγκυκλοπαίδεια του Ποντιακού Ελληνισμού* (Encyclopaedia of the Pontic Hellenism) suggest that Basil was first married in 1335; see Γεωργιάδης, Θ. (ed.), *Εγκυκλοπαίδεια του Ποντιακού Ελληνισμού. Ο Πόντος. Ιστορία, Λαογραφία και Πολιτισμός* 1 (Thessaloniki 1991), p. 123.
2. John took the name "Alexios" by his ascension to the throne of Trebizond. Thus, he is known as Alexios III Grand Komnenos; see Miller, W., *Trebizond. The Last Greek Empire* (London 1926), p. 55.
3. It is believed that Basil's death was caused by his first wife, Eirene Palaiologina; see Miller, W., *Trebizond. The Last Greek Empire* (London 1926), p. 46.
4. Bryer, A. – Winfield, D., *The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos I* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 20, Washington D.C. 1985), p. 220.

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	Winfield D., Bryer A. , <i>The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos, 1 (With Maps and Plans by R. Anderson, and Drawings by J. Winfield)</i> , Birmingham 1985, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 20
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	Janssens E. , <i>Trebizonde en Colchide</i> , Université Libre de Bruxelles, Bruxelles 1969, Travaux de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres XL
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	Γεωργιάδης Θ. , <i>Εγκυκλοπαίδεια του Ποντιακού Ελληνισμού. Πόντος. Ιστορία, Λαογραφία και Πολιτισμός</i> , Θεσσαλονίκη 1991

Glossary :

	donor
Whoever subscribes, financially, to the erection of a certain structure (monument etc). In the case of the buildings, donors might lawfully relate to them via a special connection (usufruct or other).	
	megas domestikos
Supreme military commander of the imperial army. High-ranking title which was generally given to close relatives of the emperor.	
	megas doukas
The commander of the Byzantine fleet (from 1092 onwards). In the Late Byzantine period, the title of the megas doukas was assigned to the highest officials of the imperial administration/army.	



Sources

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Λαμψίδης, Ο. (ed.), «Μιχαήλ του Παναρέτου περί των Μεγάλων Κομνηνών», *Αρχαίον Πόντου* 22 (1958), pp. 64-64.

Λαμψίδης, Ο. (ed.), *Ανδρέου Λιβαδηνού, Βίος και Έργα* (Αθήνα 1975).

Quotations

Nikephoros Gregoras' account of Basil Grand Komnenos

η'. Ἐν τούτῳ τῷ ἔαρι καὶ Βασίλειος, ὁ τῆς Τραπεζοῦντος τὴν ἐξουσίαν διεζωσμένος, νόσῳ βραχεία τὸν βίον ἀπέλιπεν. οἶμαι δέ τις θεομηνία τοῦ βίου τοῦτον ἐξαίφνης ἐξήγαγεν. Εἰρήνη γὰρ τῆ τοῦ βασιλέως θυγατρὶ συνοικήσας ἐπὶ σμικρὸν νομίμως ὁμοῦ καὶ δικαίως, μετὰ γε τῆς ἀνηκούσης ὁμοφροσύνης καὶ σωφροσύνης, εἶτα τοὺς γαμικούς μετενήνοχεν ἔρωτας εἰς ἑταιρίδα τινα, καλουμένην καὶ ταύτην Εἰρήνην. καὶ ταύτη λοιπὸν ἀθέσμως μινυόμενος εἰς μίσος ἐτράπετο τῆς νομίμου. τοῦ δὲ χρόνου προβαίνοντος ὁρῶν οὐκ ἀνεχομένην τὴν βασιλίδα τὸ τοῦ πράγματος ἄτοπον, ἀλλ' ἐπιβωμμένην οὐρανὸν τε καὶ γῆν καὶ πᾶσιν ἐξαγγέλλουσαν τὸ τῆς καρδίας πῦρ, ἐξήλασε καὶ τῆς αὐθεντικῆς οἰκίας αὐτῆν. τάχα δ' ἂν καὶ θάνατον ἐπὶ νενεγκεν αὐτῆ βίαιον, εἰ μὴ ἔδεδει τὸν δῆμον, σφοδρῶς κατ' αὐτοῦ δι' αὐτὸ γε τοῦτι θορυβούμενον τε καὶ στασιάζοντα. ἐν μέντοι ταῖς ἱεραῖς ὑμνωδίαις καὶ τοῖς πομπικοῖς θεάτροις τῶν πανηγυρικῶν ἑορτῶν Βασιλείου καὶ Εἰρήνης ἡ μνήμη τὴν εὐφημίαν ἐκρότει· κἀντεῦθεν ἐπλήρου τὴν τε ἔρωτικὴν ἔφειν ὁ Βασίλειος ἑαυτοῦ, καὶ ἄμα τὴν τοῦ δήμου ζήτησιν, προσποιούμενος τὸ λανθάνειν διὰ τῆς ὁμωνυμίας· ὡς καὶ ὑποψίαν διὰ ταῦτα γενέσθαι, λαθραῖαις ἐπιβουλαῖς τῆς βασιλίδος Εἰρήνης συμβῆναι τῷ Βασιλείῳ τὸν θάνατον. τελευτήσαντος δ' ὁμως εἶθ' οὕτως εἶτ' ἐκείνως αὐτοῦ, εἰσῆλθε μὲν ἡ νόμιμος ἐκείνη σύζυγος Εἰρήνη μετὰ πάσης τῆς βασιλικῆς ἐξουσίας εἰς τὰ βασιλεία· ἐξήλασε δ' ἐκεῖθεν εὐθὺς τὴν ὁμώνυμον μὲν, ἀλλοτριότροπον δὲ καὶ παράνομον Βασιλείου σύζυγον· καὶ μέντοι καὶ κοινῇ ψήφῳ τῶν Τραπεζοῦντιῶν ἐξόριστον πέμπει πρὸς τὸ Βυζάντιον ἄμα τοῖς τέκνοις.

Nicephori Gregorae, Byzantina Historia 1, ed. Bekker, I. – Schopen, L. (CSHB Bonn 1829), pp. 548-550.

Basil Grand Komnenos' reign according to Panaretos' chronicle

Κατὰ δὲ τὸν Σεπτέμβριον μῆνα κβ', ἡμέρα γ', ἰνδικτιῶνος α', ἔτους ,ζωμα', ἦλθεν ὁ μέγας Κομνηνὸς κῦρ Βασίλειος ἐκ τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, υἱὸς μὲν τοῦ μεγάλου Κομνηνοῦ τοῦ κυροῦ Ἀλεξίου, ἀδελφὸς δὲ δεῦτερος κῦρ Ἀνδρονίκου, καὶ παρέλαβε τὸ βασίλειον· ὅτε καὶ τὸν μέγαν δούκαν, Λέκην τὸν Τζατζιντζαῖον, καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, τὸν μέγαν δομέστικον τὸν Τζάμπαν, τοῦ ζῆν ἀπεστέρησε, τὸν δὲ ἀνεψιὸν αὐτοῦ κῦρ Μανουὴλ ἐπεριώρισε, τὴν δὲ μεγάλην δούκαιναν τὴν Συρίκαιναν ἐλίθασαν. Ἐν δὲ τῷ Φεβρουαρίῳ μηνὶ κα', ἡμέρα α' τῆς Ὀρθοδοξίας, τῷ αὐτῷ ,ζωμα' ἔτει, ἰνδικτιῶνος α', παραχθεὶς ὁ ἐκτομίας μέγας δούξ Ἰωάννης, ἐσφάγη ὁ κῦρ Μανουὴλ μαχαίρα.

Μηνὶ Σεπτεμβρίῳ ιβ', ἡμέρα γ', ἰνδικτιῶνος δ', ἔτους ,ζωμδ', ἦλθεν ἡ δέσποινα κυρὰ Εἰρήνη ἡ Παλαιολογίνα, ἡ θυγάτηρ κῦρ Ἀνδρονίκου τοῦ Παλαιολόγου, καὶ εἰς τὰ ιζ' τοῦ αὐτοῦ μηνός, ἡμέρα α', εὐλογήθη τὸν βασιλέα κῦρ Βασίλειον.

Κατὰ δὲ τὴν ε' τοῦ Ἰουλίου μηνός, ἔτους ,ζωμδ', ἦλθεν ὁ Σιχασάνης, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Ταμαρτάση, εἰς τὴν Τραπεζοῦντα, καὶ γέγονε πόλεμος εἰς τὸν Ἀχάντακον τοῦ ἀγίου Κηρύκου καὶ εἰς τὸν Μινθρίον· καὶ θεοῦ εὐδοκούντος ἐτράπη ὑποβρύχιος καὶ ἔφυγεν, ὅτε ἐσκοτώθη ὁ Αὐτουραΐμης, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Ρουστάμη.

Μηνὶ Μαρτίῳ γ', ἡμέρα β' τῆς ἀρχινηστήμου τῆς ἀγίας μ', ἐγένετο ἐκλειψις τοῦ ἡλίου ἀπὸ ὥρας δ' ἕως ὥρας ζ' καὶ ἐταράχθη τὸ κοινὸν κατὰ τοῦ βασιλέως, ὥστε καὶ ἔξωθεν τοῦ κοῦλᾶ συναχθέντες λίθους ἔσυραν εἰς αὐτόν, ἔτους ,ζωμε'.

Μηνὶ Οκτωβρίῳ ε', ἰνδικτιῶνος ζ', ἔτους ,ζωμζ', ἐγεννήθη ὁ Κομνηνὸς κῦρ Ἰωάννης, ὁ ἐπνομασθεὶς Ἀλέξιος, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ κῦρ Βασιλείου ὁ δεῦτερος.

Εὐλογήθη ὁ βασιλεὺς ὁ κῦρ Βασίλειος τὴν ἐκ Τραπεζοῦντος δέσποιναν κυρὰν Εἰρήνην μηνὶ Ἰουλίῳ η', ἔτους ,ζωμζ'. Ἐκοιμήθη ὁ βασιλεὺς κῦρ Βασίλειος ὁ μέγας Κομνηνὸς μηνὶ Ἀπριλίῳ εἰς τὰ ς', ἡμέρα ε', ἰνδικτιῶνος η', ἔτους ,ζωμη'.

Λαμψίδης, Ο. (ed.), «Μιχαήλ του Παναρέτου περί των Μεγάλων Κομνηνών», *Αρχαίον Πόντου* 22 (1958), pp. 64-65.



Chronological Table

first quarter of 14th century: birth of Basil Grand Komnenos

before September 22, 1332: Manuel II Grand Komnenos is overthrown

September 22, 1332: Basil is proclaimed emperor

after September 22, 1332: assassinations of Manuel II Grand Komnenos, Lekes Tzatzintzaivos, Tzamba Tzatzintzaivos and Syrikaina by order of Basil

1336: Basil marries Eirene Palaiologina. The Türkmén raid against Trebizond territory and withdraw immediately

after 1336: birth of Alexios and John, sons of Basil and his mistress, Eirene of Trebizond

March 3, 1337: the people of Trebizond revolt against Basil Grand Komnenos on the occasion of the solar eclipse.

1339: second marriage of Basil to Eirene of Trebizond.

after 1339: birth of Theodora and Maria, daughters of Basil and Eirene of Trebizond.

April 6, 1340: Basil Grand Komnenos dies in Trebizond. Eirene Palaiologina is proclaimed empress.

Auxiliary Catalogs

List of the Grand Komnenoi (emperors of Trebizond)

Alexios I (1204 -1222)

Andronikos I (Gidon) (1222 - 1235)

John I (Axouchos) (1235 -1238)

Manuel II (1238 -1263)

Andronikos II (1263 -1266)

George (Planos) (1266 - 1280)

John II (1280 -1285)

Theodora (1285)

John II (again 1285 - 1297)

Alexios II (1297 -1230)

Andronikos III (1330 -1332)

Manuel II (1332)



Basil (1332 -1340)

Eirene Palaiologina (1340 - 1341)

Anna (Anachoutlou) (1341-1342)

John III (1342-1344)

Michael (1344 -1349)

Alexios III (1349 - 1390)

Manuel III (1390 -1417)

Alexios IV (1417 - 1429)

John IV (1429 - 1458)

Alexios V (1458)

David (1458-1461, 1463 +)