

Nathan Leidholm
Bilkent University

A Persian King in Constantinople? Emperor Basil I and the Historical Memory of Ancient Persia in Byzantium

The Byzantines maintained a keen interest in and knowledge of the Achaemenid Persian past. This even led to the occasional appropriation of the Persian past in the service of imperial ideology, likening and comparing Byzantine emperors and their deeds with those of Persian Kings of Kings. This paper explores the possibility that such use and interest in the Achaemenid past achieved new heights and meaning during the reign of Basil I and the dynasty he founded (867-1056). In part, this may have been a result of the fictional genealogy that became a cornerstone of the dynasty's identity, which included supposed descent from the Achaemenid dynasty itself.

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