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| **Despot (court title)** |
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| Seal of Demetrios Palaiologos, Despot of the Morea in 1449–1460, with the inscription "Demetrios, in Christ the God Faithful, Despot, the Palaiologos, Born-in-the-purple" |
| https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/23/Homilies_of_Gregory_the_Theologian_gr._510%2C_f_011.jpg/200px-Homilies_of_Gregory_the_Theologian_gr._510%2C_f_011.jpg |
| Empress Eudokia Ingerina with her sons Leo VI (left) and Alexander (right), both called *despotes* (ΔECΠOTHC) |
| https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/1d/Manuel_II_Helena_sons.JPG/200px-Manuel_II_Helena_sons.JPG |
| Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos with his family: empress Helena Dragaš (right), and three of their sons, the co-emperor John VIII and the despots Andronikos and Theodore |
| https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/a5/Seal_of_Constantine_Doukas_Komnenos_Palaiologos%2C_despotes_and_porphyrogennetos.jpg/200px-Seal_of_Constantine_Doukas_Komnenos_Palaiologos%2C_despotes_and_porphyrogennetos.jpg |
| Lead seal of Constantine Palaiologos, showing him in imperial regalia, and mentioning his titles of despot and *porphyrogennetos* |
| Lists of known holders |
| **Byzantine Empire** |
| **Note**: Names in *italics* indicate persons who claimed the title but were never conferred it by a reigning Byzantine emperor |
| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Name** | **Tenure** | **Conferred by** | **Notes** | | Béla III of Hungary | 1163–1169 | Manuel I Komnenos | Son-in-law and heir-presumptive until 1169, thereafter demoted to *Caesar* | | Theodore Vatatzes | unknown | Manuel I Komnenos | Married to Manuel I's sister Eudokia. His holding of the title is attested only in the seal of his son. | | Alexios Palaiologos | 1200–1203 | Alexios III Angelos | Son-in-law and heir-apparent of Alexios III, second husband of Irene Angelina. Maternal grandfather of Michael VIII | | Theodore I Laskaris | 1203–1208 | Alexios III Angelos | Son-in-law of Alexios III, he was probably granted the title of despot after the death of Alexios Palaiologos. He founded the Empire of Nicaea and was proclaimed emperor in 1205, although he was not crowned until 1208 and was still formally despot until then. | | Leo Sgouros | 1203/1204–1208 | Alexios III Angelos | Ruler of much of southern Greece, he met Alexios III after he was evicted from Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade. Sgouros married Eudokia Angelina and was named despot and heir-apparent by the exiled emperor | | John Chamaretos | 1208 – unknown | Alexios III Angelos | Lord of Laconia, mentioned as despot in a letter from 1222. He was possibly awarded the title by Alexios III after Leo Sgouros' death | | Andronikos Palaiologos | 1216 – unknown | Theodore I Laskaris | Son-in-law and heir-apparent of Theodore I. Very little is known about him with certainty. He married Irene Laskarina and was raised to despot, but died soon after. | | Manuel Komnenos Doukas | 1225/1227–1230 | Theodore Komnenos Doukas | Brother of Theodore, he was raised to the rank of despot after Theodore crowned himself emperor. As heir to Theodore and ruler of Thessalonica, Manuel held the title of emperor (*basileus*) after 1230 | | Constantine Komnenos Doukas | 1225/1227 – unknown | Theodore Komnenos Doukas | Brother of Theodore, he was raised to the rank of despot after Theodore crowned himself emperor. | | John Komnenos Doukas | 1242–1244 | John III Vatatzes | Ruler of Thessalonica, he abandoned the imperial title and acknowledged the suzerainty of Nicaea in 1242, being rewarded with the title of despot. | | Demetrios Angelos Doukas | 1244–1246 | John III Vatatzes | Inherited rule of Thessalonica from his brother John and was conferred like him with the title of despot. Deposed by John III in 1246. | | Michael VIII Palaiologos | 1258–1259 | John IV Laskaris | Leader of the nobles, he was declared regent after the murder of George Mouzalon and raised first to *megas doux* and then, within weeks, to despot. He was crowned emperor on 1 January 1259. | | John Palaiologos | 1259 – c. 1273/1275 | Michael VIII Palaiologos | Brother of Michael VIII, he was elevated to the rank of despot following his victory at the Battle of Pelagonia. He renounced the insignia and privileges of a despot, but not the title itself, after his defeat at the Battle of Neopatras in 1273/1275, and died shortly after. | | Demetrios Doukas Komnenos Koutroules | unknown | [Michael VIII Palaiologos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_VIII_Palaiologos) | Third son of Michael II of Epirus, he married Anna, one of the daughters of Michael VIII, and was named despot. | | [Constantine Palaiologos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_Palaiologos_(son_of_Michael_VIII)) | unknown | Michael VIII Palaiologos | Third son of Michael VIII, he is attested as a Despot in seals. | | John II of Trebizond | 1282–1297 | Michael VIII Palaiologos | Emperor of Trebizond, he was persuaded to renounce his own claim to be "Emperor of the Romans" and accept the title of despot and the hand of Michael VIII's daughter Eudokia. John visited Constantinople in 1282, when the title was conferred and the marriage with Eudokia took place. He nevertheless retained the imperial title in an altered form. | | Constantine Palaiologos | 1292–1320s | Andronikos II Palaiologos | Second son of Andronikos II, he was named despot on his marriage to the daughter of Theodore Mouzalon | | John Palaiologos | 1294 – unknown | Andronikos II Palaiologos | Third son of Andronikos II, he was named despot on 22 May 1294 | | Alexios II of Trebizond | c. 1297–1330 | Andronikos II Palaiologos | Son and successor of John II of Trebizond | | Demetrios Palaiologos | 1306 – after 1343 | Andronikos II Palaiologos | Fifth son of Andronikos II, named despot in 1306 | | Theodore Palaiologos | unknown | Andronikos II Palaiologos | Fourth son of Andronikos II, named despot at an unknown date, from 1305 Marquess of Montferrat | | Manuel Palaiologos | unknown – 1320 | [Andronikos II Palaiologos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andronikos_II_Palaiologos) | Second son of Michael IX Palaiologos, named despot at an unknown date, killed by mistake by his brother Andronikos III Palaiologos | | Michael Palaiologos | before 1341 – unknown | Andronikos III Palaiologos | Second son of Andronikos III, named despot at a very young age | | Momchil | 1343/44–1345 | Anna of Savoy | Bulgarian ruler of the Rhodopes, awarded the title by the Empress-regent during the Byzantine civil war of 1341–1347, in order to detach him from John VI Kantakouzenos, who titled him *sebastokrator*. Effectively independent until defeated and killed by Kantakouzenos' army. | | Manuel Komnenos Raoul Asanes | before 1358 – unknown | John VI Kantakouzenos | Brother-in-law of John VI Kantakouzenos, named first *sebastokrator* by him and despot at an unknown date | | John Kantakouzenos | 1357 – unknown | John V Palaiologos | Eldest son of Matthew Kantakouzenos, named despot on his father's abdication of his imperial title | | Michael Palaiologos | unknown | John V Palaiologos | Third son of John V, ruler of Mesembria, murdered in 1376/7 | | Andronikos Palaiologos | 1409 – c. 1424 | Manuel II Palaiologos | Third son of Manuel II, Despot in Thessalonica from 1409 until 1423 (styled "Despot of Thessaly" by Doukas), shortly thereafter he entered a monastery | | John Palaiologos | unknown | Manuel II Palaiologos | Son of Andronikos, Despot of Thessalonica. He is mentioned as holding the title in 1419. | |
| **Despots of the Morea** |
| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Name** | **Tenure** | **Conferred by** | **Notes** | | Manuel Kantakouzenos | 1347–1380 | John VI Kantakouzenos | Second son of John VI, named despot after the Byzantine civil war of 1341–1347, first "Despot of the Morea" from 1349 until his death | | Theodore I Palaiologos | before 1376–1407 | John V Palaiologos | Third son of John V, from 1383 until his death "Despot of Lacedaemon" | | Theodore II Palaiologos | 1406/1407–1448 | Manuel II Palaiologos | Second son of Manuel II, Despot in the Morea from 1407, and in Selymbria from 1443 to his death | | Constantine XI Palaiologos | unknown – 1449 | Manuel II Palaiologos | Fourth son of Manuel II and last Byzantine emperor. Despot in Selymbria until 1443, thereafter co-despot in the Morea until 1449, when he succeeded to the Byzantine throne | | Demetrios Palaiologos | 1425–1460 | Manuel II Palaiologos | Fifth son of Manuel II, despot in Lemnos from 1425 to 1449, in Mesembria from 1440, co-despot in the Morea from 1449 until the Ottoman conquest in 1460 | | Thomas Palaiologos | 1428–1460 | John VIII Palaiologos | Sixth son of Manuel II, co-despot in the Morea from 1428 until the Ottoman conquest in 1460. According to Sphrantzes, however, he was not titled despot until 1449, when his brother Constantine became emperor. | | *Manuel Kantakouzenos* | 1453 |  | Grandson of Demetrios I Kantakouzenos, he was acclaimed as leader and despot of the Morea by the local Albanian and Greek inhabitants during the failed Morea revolt of 1453–1454. He was soon eclipsed by Giovanni Asen Zaccaria. | | *Andreas Palaiologos* | 1465 – 1502 | Pope Pius II (?) | Eldest son of Thomas Palaiologos and heir of the Palaiologan line. According to Sphrantzes, he was awarded the title of Despot of the Morea by the Pope, but R. Guilland suggested that he may have already received the title before 1460. In his seal he bore the title "By the grace of God, Despot of the Romans" (Latin: *Dei gratia despotes Romeorum*).Claimant to the Byzantine throne from 1465 to 1494. | | *Fernando Palaiologos* | 1502 – unknown | Self-proclaimed | Possibly an illegitimate son of Andreas Palaiologos, he adopted the title upon the death of Andreas in 1502. His subsequent fate is unknown. | | *Constantine Arianiti* | 1502/07 – 1530 | Self-proclaimed | An Albanian nobleman, he claimed the fictional titles 'Prince of Macedonia' and 'Duke of Achaea' since the 1490s. He adopted the title of Despot of the Morea after the death of Andreas, sometime between 1502 and 1507. He was appointed governor of Fano by the Pope, and died there in 1530. | | *Gian Antonio Lazier* | 1720 – 1738 | Self-proclaimed, recognized by Charles VI | Italian impostor and pretender to the Byzantine throne who was recognized by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles VI. He claimed, among other titles, the title of 'Despot of the Peloponnese'. | | *Radu Cantacuzino* | 1735 – unknown | Self-proclaimed, possibly recognized by Charles VI | Romanian prince and pretender to the Byzantine throne who was possibly recognized by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles VI. He claimed, among other titles, the title of 'Despot of the Peloponnese'. | |  |  |  |  | |
| **Despots of Epirus** |
| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Name** | **Tenure** | **Conferred by** | **Notes** | | Michael II Komnenos Doukas | before 1246–1267/1268 | John III Vatatzes | Nephew of Manuel Komnenos Doukas, ruler of Epirus | | Nikephoros I Komnenos Doukas | before 1248/1250–1297 | John III Vatatzes | Son and heir of Michael II of Epirus, he was awarded the title on his betrothal to Maria, the granddaughter of John III. He ruled Epirus from his father's death in 1267/1268. | | Thomas I Komnenos Doukas | 1297–1318 | Andronikos II Palaiologos | Only son and heir of Nikephoros I of Epirus | | Nicholas Orsini | 1319/20–1323 | Andronikos II Palaiologos | Count palatine of Cephalonia and Zakynthos, he assassinated and usurped his uncle, Thomas I of Epirus, in 1318. He was named despot in 1319/20 in exchange for recognizing the annexation of Ioannina by the Byzantine Empire. | | Nikephoros II Orsini | 1347–1359 | John VI Kantakouzenos | Son-in-law of John VI, named despot after the Byzantine civil war of 1341–1347, ruler of Epirus in 1335–1338 and 1356–1359 | | Thomas II Preljubović | 1382–1384 | John V Palaiologos | Son of Gregory Preljub, he was given the rule of Ioannina and its region by his father-in-law Simeon Uroš in 1367. The title of despot was not formally conferred by the Byzantine Emperor until 1382 however. | | Esau de' Buondelmonti | ca. 1385 – 1411 | John V Palaiologos (?) | An Italian, he was possibly involved in the murder of Thomas Preljubović, and succeeded him as ruler of Ioannina when he married his widow Maria. | | Carlo I Tocco | 1415–1429 | Manuel II Palaiologos | Count palatine of Cephalonia and Zakynthos, he succeeded in obtaining Ioannina in 1411 shortly after the death of his uncle Esau de' Buondelmonti. To formalize his position, in 1415 he sent his brother Leonardo to Emperor Manuel to obtain confirmation as Despot. In 1416, Carlo re-united the old Despotate of Epirus by capturing Arta as well. | | *Carlo II Tocco* | 1429–1448 |  | Successor of Carlo I Tocco as Count palatine of Cephalonia and Zakynthos and ruler of Epirus. He claimed the traditional title of despot, but was never officially conferred it by a Byzantine emperor | | *Leonardo III Tocco* | 1448–1503 |  | Successor of Carlo II Tocco as Count palatine of Cephalonia and Zakynthos and titular despot of Epirus. He ruled in the islands until the Ottoman conquest of 1479, and thereafter maintained his claims in exile in Italy. | | *Carlo III Tocco* | 1503–1518 |  | Son of Leonardo III Tocco and Milica Branković, granddaughter of Thomas Palaiologos. Claimed the inheritance of "the despots of Romania and Arta" |   **Latin Empire** |
| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Name** | **Tenure** | **Conferred by** | **Notes** | | Enrico Dandolo | 1204–1205 | Baldwin I of Constantinople | Doge of Venice and the driving force behind the Fourth Crusade's capture of Constantinople, as well as behind Baldwin's election as Latin Emperor instead of Boniface of Montferrat. Named Despot as the main vassal of the Latin Empire. Şerban Marin, however, suggests that the reference to Dandolo as Despot in Greek sources was not as the court dignity, but as a Greek translation of the title *dominus*, indicating his lordship over three-eighths of the former Byzantine Empire. | | Alexius Slav | 1208/9 – after 1222 | Henry of Flanders | Autonomous Bulgarian ruler of the Rhodopes, named Despot when he married an illegitimate daughter of Emperor Henry and became a Latin vassal. | | Jacopo Tiepolo | 1219–1221 | Yolanda of Flanders (?) | Venetian Podestà of Constantinople, he may have been given the title of "Despot of the Empire of Romania" (*despotes imperii Romaniae*) by Empress-regent Yolanda to secure Venetian support, or he may have appropriated it himself. | | Marino Storlato | 1222–1223 | Robert of Courtenay | Venetian Podestà of Constantinople | | Albertino Morosini | c. 1238 | Baldwin II of Constantinople | Venetian Podestà of Constantinople | | Philip I, Prince of Taranto | 1294/97–1315, 1330–1332 | Charles II of Naples | Husband of Thamar, the daughter of Nikephoros I of Epirus. On Nikephoros' death, he was given the title "Despot of Romania" on behalf of his wife and as the ruler of all Angevin or subject territories in Albania (the "Kingdom of Albania") and Greece north of the Gulf of Corinth (Thamar's dowry in Aetolia, and the rest of the Epirote state in its capacity as an Angevin vassal). | | Philip | 1315–1330 | Philip I, Prince of Taranto | Eldest surviving son of Philip of Taranto, granted the title and claims of the "Despotate of Romania" in 1315 until his death. | | Martino Zaccaria | 1325–1345 | Philip I, Prince of Taranto | [Lord of Chios](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lordship_of_Chios), [Samos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samos) and [Kos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kos). He was awarded the title of "King and Despot of Asia Minor" by Philip in hopes of enlisting him in an effort to reclaim Constantinople. | | Robert, Prince of Taranto | 1332–1346 | Catherine of Valois | Eldest surviving son of Philip of Taranto and the titular Latin Empress Catherine. Prince of Taranto and Achaea, after 1346 himself titular Latin Emperor. |   **Bulgarian Empire** |
| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Name** | **Tenure** | **Conferred by** | **Notes** | | Jacob Svetoslav | before 1261–1275/1277 | possibly [Tsar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsar) Constantine Tikh | Powerful magnate and autonomous lord of [Sofia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sofia), he was probably named despot by a Bulgarian ruler rather than a Nicaean emperor | | George I Terter | 1278/1279–1292 | Tsar Ivan Asen III | Powerful magnate, he was given the title of despot along with the hand of the sister of Tsar Ivan Asen III to win him over in the face of the uprising of Ivaylo. George later deposed Ivan Asen and became Tsar himself. | | Shishman of Vidin | 1270s/1280s — before 1308/1313 | Tsar George I Terter | Founder of the Shishman dynasty and first semi-autonomous despot of Vidin | | Aldimir | 1280s–1305 | probably by Tsar George I Terter | Younger brother of George I, he was raised to the rank of despot by him, and received (possibly after 1298) the region of Kran as an appanage ("Despotate of Kran") | | Michael Shishman of Bulgaria | before 1313–1322/1323 | Tsar Theodore Svetoslav | Autonomous lord of Vidin, named despot at or soon after his father Shishman of Vidin's death. Became Tsar of Bulgaria in 1322/1333. | | Belaur | 1323 – c. 1331 | Tsar Michael Shishman | Half-brother of Michael Shishman, he succeeded him as autonomous lord of Vidin with the rank of despot. He resisted the rule of Ivan Alexander and was forced to flee into exile | | Sratsimir | unknown | unknown | Sratsimir was a magnate holding the territory of Kran with the title of Despot. He was the eponymous founder of the Sratsimir dynasty. | | Ivan Alexander | By 1330 – 1371 | Tsar Michael Shishman | By 1330, the importance of the city resulted in the Asen family appointing John to govern Lovech, forming the despotate of Lovech. | | Mihail Shishman of Vidin | unknown | Tsar Ivan Alexander | Younger son of Tsar Michael Shishman, he probably succeeded Belaur as autonomous lord of Vidin with the rank of despot. | | [Dobrotitsa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dobrotitsa) | after 1347 – 1386 | Tsar Ivan Alexander | Ruler of the [Despotate of Dobruja](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Despotate_of_Dobruja) |   **Serbian Empire and successor states** |
| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Name** | **Tenure** | **Conferred by** | **Notes** | | Jovan Oliver | 1334–1356 | Andronikos III Palaiologos | Autonomous Serbian magnate, named despot by Andronikos III after the Byzantine-Serbian peace agreement of 1334 | | Simeon Uroš | 1345/1346–1363 | Stephen Uroš IV Dušan | Half-brother of Stephen Dušan, he was named despot probably after Dušan's coronation as emperor. Governor of Epirus, he proclaimed himself Tsar in 1356 and tried to seize control of Serbia but failed. Ruler of Thessaly and most of Epirus from 1359 until his death c. 1370 | | John Komnenos Asen | 1345/1346–1363 | Stephen Uroš IV Dušan | Brother-in-law of Stephen Dušan, he was named despot probably after Dušan's coronation as emperor. Ruler of the Principality of Valona until his death | | Ivaniš | fl. 1348 | Stephen Uroš IV Dušan | Close relative of Stephen Dušan. Ruler of a region in Toplica. | | Dejan | After August 1355 | Stephen Uroš IV Dušan or Stephen Uroš V | Brother-in-law of Stephen Dušan. Ruler of a region in the Kumanovo region. | | Gjin Bua Shpata | c. 1360/1365 – c. 1399/1400 | Simeon Uroš Palaiologos | Albanian clan leader, in the early 1360s he was recognized as Despot and ruler of Aetolia (the "Despotate of Angelokastron") by the titular Serbian Emperor and ruler of Thessaly Simeon Uroš. He was *de facto* independent, and in 1374 annexed the Despotate of Arta and launched repeated unsuccessful attacks against Ioannina. | | Peter Losha | c. 1360/1365–1374 | Simeon Uroš Palaiologos | Albanian clan leader, in the early 1360s he was recognized as Despot and ruler of Acarnania (the "Despotate of Arta") by the titular Serbian Emperor and ruler of Thessaly Simeon Uroš. He was *de facto* independent however, and attacked Thomas Preljubović at Ioannina, before coming to terms with him. He died of the plague in 1373/1374. | | Vukašin Mrnjavčević | 1364–1365 | Stephen Uroš V | One of the most powerful Serbian magnates under Stephen Dušan, he was named despot in 1364 and then king and co-ruler by the emperor Stephen Uroš V. He became *de facto* independent by 1368, and was killed by the Ottomans in the Battle of Maritsa in 1371. | | Jovan Uglješa | 1365–1371 | Stephen Uroš V | Brother of Vukašin Mrnjavčević, he was named despot in succession to his brother and became ruler of Serres alongside Dušan's widow Helena. From c. 1368 he was a *de facto* independent ruler until his death in the Battle of Maritsa. | | Jovan Dragaš | 1365 – c. 1378 | Stephen Uroš V | Cousin of Stephen Uroš V and nephew of Stephen IV Dušan, with his brother Constantine Dragaš he governed eastern domain from Kumanovo to Velbužd). From the Battle of Maritsa on he was an Ottoman vassal. | | Stefan Lazarević | 1402–1427 | Manuel II Palaiologos | Ruler of Serbia as an Ottoman vassal. He was awarded the title of despot during a visit to Constantinople in 1402, and ruled the "Serbian Despotate" as an autonomous lord until his death in 1427. | | Đurađ Branković | 1429–1456 | Manuel II Palaiologos | Successor of Stefan Lazarević as ruler of Serbia from 1427, he received the title of despot in 1429. An Ottoman vassal from 1428. | | Lazar Branković | 1440s–1458 | Manuel II Palaiologos | Son and successor of Đurađ Branković, he received the title of despot during his father's reign. | | Stefan Branković | 1458–1459 | unknown | Son of Đurađ Branković, ruler of Serbia. Deposed in favour of Stephen Tomašević. | | Stephen Tomašević | April–June 1459 | unknown | Prince of Bosnia, he became the last independent Serbian ruler after his marriage to Helena-Maria, the daughter of Lazar Branković. He assumed the title of despot (or perhaps was awarded it by Lazar's widow, the Byzantine princess Helena Palaiologina). His capital Smederevo was conquered by the Ottomans a few months later. | | Vuk Grgurević | 1471–1485 | Matthias Corvinus | Grandson of Đurađ Branković | | Đorđe Branković | 1486–1496 | Matthias Corvinus | Son of Stefan Branković | | Jovan Branković | 1486–1502 | Vladislaus II | Son of Stefan Branković | | Ivaniš Berislavić | 1504–1514 | Vladislaus II | Married Jovan Branković's widow, Jelena Jakšić | | Stefan Berislavić | 1514–1521 | Vladislaus II | Son of Ivaniš Berislavić | | Radič Božić | 1527–1528 | John Zápolya |  | | Pavle Bakić | 1537 | Ferdinand I |  | |



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| **Compiler FLN** |