

Episcopal elections in Late Antiquity have recently drawn attention, especially with the works of C. Rapp (2005) and P. Norton (2007). They have emphasized the importance of individual charisma, and laid out the roles played by laity and secular powers. Important as these contributions are in identifying the factors that influenced elections, they do not always do justice to the dynamics underlying particular instances. This paper will study one particular case of episcopal succession, Constantinople under the Theodosian dynasty, and focus on two Christian groups in the capital, the Nicaean church and the Novatian schism. Combining prosopographical analysis with insights drawn from modern 'elite theory', it will argue the following points:

- (a) Scholarship tends to ascribe to the emperor a key role in determining the succession of Constantinople. However, in both the Nicean and Novatian church, an 'elite' can be identified, which for most of the time managed to control the succession. Although the emperor appointed Nectarius, John Chrysostom and Nestorius, the latter two appointments were short-lived and faced by strong oppositions of the local elite. Imperial intervention was important, but it was confronted by a strong local elite.
- (b) This elite is characterized by family relationships (Nectarius and Arsacius [Niceans]; Marcian and Chysanthus [Novatians]) and patronage (Arsacius, Atticus, and Proclus [Niceans]; Agelius, Sisinnius, and Paul [Novatians]).
- (c) Internal patronage (i.e. within each church) was complemented by external patronage: Arsacius and Atticus can be shown to have had close relationships with Anthemius, the praetorian prefect who ruled the empire when Theodosius II was still a minor (until 415). The Novatians cultivated close contacts at once with the senatorial elite of the capital and the Nicean bishops: they needed patronage, for, being a minority schism, they constantly ran the risk that the relative tolerance would be revoked. Strikingly, patronage does not seem to have involved the emperor directly.
- (d) Patronage played a key role regarding conflicts. Although the Novatian elite was strong enough to deal with internal challenges, they occasionally drew on relationships of patronage to remove an internal enemy. The Nicean church was from 404 onwards wrecked by the 'Chrysostomian' schism. Arsacius and Atticus had used the support of Anthemius to chase John's followers from the city; the following years were spent in trying to heal the schism. Significantly, the chrysostomians fielded their own candidate Philip of Side three times in elections between 426 and 434, defying at once the Nicean elite and its secular supporters.
- (e) Patronage also influences the perspective of our sources. The church historian Socrates (ca. 440) had been part of the circle of Anthemius, whereas Sozomen leaned towards the Chrysostomians. This explains their diverging accounts of John Chrysostom's career.

The paper will conclude by emphasizing the role of local elites, shaped by mutual interests and patronage, in episcopal succession. Their importance even in Constantinople, in proximity of the emperor, is undoubtedly indicative of their importance elsewhere.