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Fourteen Byzantine Rulers: The Chronographia Of Michael Psellus (Classics)



PENGUIN CLASSICS

MICHAEL PSELLUS

Fourteen Byzantine Rulers



Synopsis

This chronicle of the Byzantine Empire, beginning in 1025, shows a profound understanding of the power politics that characterized the empire and led to its decline.

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Customer Reviews

Fine edition of an oft forgotten (but indeed important) opus in Byzantine literature and history. The author, Michael Psellus (1018-1078 A.D.), born of an aristocratic family, was a pupil of John Mauropous (Archbishop of Euchaita), became Professor of Rhetoric and then, after being introduced to the court by Michael V, rose to be a first hand spectator of the rise and demise of several emperors, having occupied the posts of Secretary of State, Prime Minister and Grand Chamberlain. This explains why this is a valuable memoir of a contemporary witness to Byzantine life and the workings of the imperial court, under several rulers, from the reign of Basil II (976-1025) to the reign of Michael VII (1071-1078). Originally published as the first whole translation in English of Psellus work in 1953, under the title *The Cronographia of Michael Psellus*, this revised edition is a wonderful tool for those interested in Byzantine history. The scarce or relative interest that occurred in the field of Byzantine literature until a century ago, compared to the classical period,

comprehensive of Greek and Roman history up to the reign of Justinian, has been surpassed due to the fine work of several modern scholars. But it has been clearly noticed that in addition to the well known classical works of Procopius, Menander Protector and Leo Diaconos, this opus by Psellus is unsurpassed or unique for the study of the period covered by the author. Indeed, he was in a position to fully comprehend the events that occurred at the death of Basil II (who ruled for more than 40 years, crushed rebellions, rescued the Empire's army, finances and pride) in 1078, and the particular decadence that ensued in the following generations due to the unworthiness of the following rulers.

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